Università degli studi di Torino

Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società
Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Sociologia
-
Tesi di Laurea Magistrale

Tuners

Distinction,
atmospheric power,
hyper-mixed soundscapes,
and the sound of home

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Anno accademico 2022/23

To be a listener means to live life as a dialogue, to participate, and to be aware.

Listening is recognition.

If you feel like it, pick a portion of this work and read it out loud.

It may be as tiny as a sentence.

Utter it carefully, as if speaking to a child, or to your-inner-self.

Listen to your voice.

If you feel like it, once a week, talk with — and not *to* —

someone

who is alien to you.

Start a conversation.

Abstract

Human beings are sensuous beings, whose experiences are mediated by the sensory filters we call bodies. In our daily existence, the senses are not mere passive receptors but embodied vectors of social interactions between individuals, environments and objects. The senses stream two-way information across an hybrid network of human and non-human actors, individuals and society, subjects and objects; ultimately, they allow us to make *sense* of the world by making our bodies *porous* (Coleman, 2017; Eklund, 2019; Malmström, 2019; Stoller, 2010; Vannini et al., 2012; Zarrilli, 2004).

A sensuous practice that is vital for human life (both individual and social) is place-making; as spatial creatures, humans transform space into place by giving meaning to it. In particular, in the untamed sensory mayhem of the information society, "home" is an invaluable piece of the world where space and time can be controlled. Home is both a revolving door between the individual and society; a window where the private can look out on the public (and vice versa); and a refuge where both individual and group identities can be assembled, maintained and nourished (Appadurai, 1996; Bonini, 2010; Douglas, 1991; Simmel, 1903/2010; Tuan, 1977).

Specifically, out of the five senses, I argue that sound is a powerful yet underestimated vector of home-making practices and conflicts. Unlike sight, hearing is always on (even when we cover our ears, we hear through bones and guts): it epitomises the porosity of the body and it is a priority lane for the world to enter us. Furthermore, it is embedded in space: resonances, reverbs and echoes inform us of the material surroundings we inhabit. Also, acoustic meaning is embedded in time, for unlike photographs, acoustic signals only acquire meaning throughout their duration and interaction with other objects and our hearing system; sound shapes the temporality of our lives. Lastly, hearing is always relational: much like touch, it is always directed towards objects in the world, even when we listen to our own thoughts (Bull, 2000; Ihde, 2012; Malmström, 2021; Thibaud, 2003).Thus conceptualised, sound initiates our space-time embedded conversation with the world, making it possible to build home in meaningful soundscapes.

However, what happens when the vital strive for home-making through sound

— such is the case of immigrants who seek to make new homes far away from home (Bonini, 2010; Clifford, 1994) — is framed within a society that praises and enforces silence as the herald of a secular religion (Thurfjell, 2020; Thurfjell et al., 2019)? Such is the case of Stockholm, where gentrification intertwines with a pervasive urban planning strategy (Andersson & Turner, 2014; Magnusson, 2001; Olsson, 2008) to fight noise and prioritise quiet areas as safe, healthy and desirable features of the city.

Borrowing from Bourdieu's (2007, 2015) concepts of capital, I suggest that immigrants — considered as a specific example of people who try to re-make home through homely soundscapes — are potential carriers of what I call atmospheric power, which in its acoustic articulation is a pool of symbolic and material resources that allow individual to domesticate spaces by composing, orchestrating or receiving soundscapes that emanate homely vibes.

I adopt a phenomenological theoretical frame in which I develop an arts-based methodology to study the acoustic home-making strategies of immigrants in Stockholm, and how they relate to the overarching quietness narrative. Specifically, I implement soundwalks to assess the key sounds (Schafer, 1993) in the participants' daily lives, and participant observation (listening?) to interpret the meanings attached to specific sounds of home. In parallel, I record a reflective audio-diary to give account of my own embodied sound experience, both as a researcher and as a musician.

Introduction

Purpose and questions: why sound?

> Existence is an incessant throb, it always causes some form of noise capable of reassuring about the persistence of essential reference points. (Le Breton, 2018, p. 368)

Human beings are sensuous beings, whose experiences are mediated by the sensory filters we call bodies. In our daily existence, the senses are not mere passive receptors but embodied vectors of social interactions between individuals, environments and objects. The senses stream two-ways information across an hybrid network of human and non-human actants, individuals and society, subjects and objects; ultimately, they allow us to make sense of the world by making our bodies porous (Coleman, 2017; Eklund, 2019; Malmström, 2019; Stoller, 2010; Vannini et al., 2012; Zarrilli, 2004).

A sensuous practice that is vital for human life is place-making; as spatial creatures, humans transform space into place by giving meaning to it (Tuan, 1977). In particular, in the untamed sensory mayhem of the information society, "home" is an invaluable piece of the world where space and time can be controlled and humanised. Home is both a revolving door between the individual and society, a window where the private can look out on the public (and vice versa); and a refuge where both individual and group identities can be assembled, maintained and nourished (Appadurai, 1996; Bonini, 2010; Douglas, 1991; Simmel, 1903/2010; Tuan, 1977).

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surroundings we inhabit. Also, acoustic meaning is embedded in time, for, unlike photographs, acoustic signals only acquire meaning throughout their duration and interaction with other objects and our hearing system; sound shapes the temporality of our lives. Lastly, hearing is always relational: much like touch, it is always directed towards things in the world, even when we listen to our own thoughts (Bull, 2000; Ihde, 2012; Malmström, 2021; Thibaud, 2003); linguistic proof of such relationality is that one can only vocalise what they ear (Chion, 2015, p. 15). Thus conceptualised, sound initiates our space-time embedded conversation with the world, making it possible to build home in meaningful soundscapes.

However, what happens when the vital strive to home-making through sound — such is the case of immigrants who seek to make new homes far away from home (Bonini, 2010; Clifford, 1994) — is framed within a society that praises and enforces silence as the herald of a secular religion (Thurfjell, 2020; Thurfjell et al., 2019)? Such is the case of Stockholm, where gentrification intertwines with a pervasive urban planning strategy (Andersson & Turner, 2014; Magnusson, 2001; Olsson, 2008) to fight noise and prioritise quiet areas as safe, healthy and desirable features of the city.

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Since reflexivity is the start of this acoustic journey, I shall now disclose myself and my relationship with all things sound.

Positionality: listening as a researcher and as a sound engineer

My identity in relation to the research topic — sound — is the luggage of values, preconceptions, beliefs, motivations and experiences that I bring into listening to the world and interpreting what I hear; in short, what I bring into this project (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). Positionality, or the effort to make explicit one's ascribed and achieved orientations in relation to the research topic (id.), regards three types of assumptions: ontological, epistemological, and about human nature and agency (id.). Through active reflexivity upon my context and backstory (Darwin Holmes, 2020, p. 2), I now seek to develop some self-awareness of what sound is for me, how I believe that we perceive and conceptualise sound information, and what soundscapes have to do with society. Ultimately, positionality is an exercise of phenomenological description, for it is a first person inquiry (Beyer, 2020; Husserl & Moran, 1900/2001) — shouting in a cave, and questioning the echo of my own voice. As Darwin Holmes (2020, p. 4) puts it, positionality is an act of "soul searching" aimed to reach "empathetic neutrality" (Ormston et al., in Ritchie et al., 2013), a critical attitude that exploits self-awareness to minimise systematic bias, while recognising that social research cannot be fully neutral or objective. Here I will focus on the ontology of sound; therefore, it is fundamental that I disclose myself as both a "naive" listener and a meticulous sound engineer, stitching these two sensitivities to the bigger patchwork of my sound-life. The epistemology of sound and its impact on society will be the cores of section 3 ("Methodology") and paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3, respectively.

In their positionality guideline, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) advocate that the researcher locate themselves not only 1) about the subject, but also 2) about the participants and 3) about the research context and process. Subject- (or ontological) positionality is described here; participants- and context-positionality are developed in section 4 ("Case studies"). Now, it is time for me to look in the mirror — or, acoustically, to listen to the sound of my voice bouncing in the cave.

I spent most of my life in a flat in the outskirts of Torino — a former factory-city flipped into a tertiary hub with mixed success (Semi & Capello, 2020, p. 19) —

surrounded by repair shops and old dormitory-buildings. In the city centre, I listened to the strangling of the industrial soul of the city by the quiet noose of decor, gourmet and green, threatening to choke everything dirty, chaotic, noisy. However, in the outskirts, every day a platoon of noises would strafe the morning silence and wake me up well before the alarm fired. On top of that, eager to prove their devotion to the infernal soundscape, my neighbours made interfloor fights into a local competition; this, until Dragon Ball educated me in the blissful art of shouting, of which I became a connoisseur. I proudly remember screaming my lungs out in my bedroom, spinning a curtain rod in the air while listening to Three Days Grace's alternative rock. I was fighting my way through hordes of enemies and, clearly, my voice could reach further than my meagre weapon. This was my first experience of sounds masking other sounds (that is, my neighbours disagreements); of sounds creating conflict (as those very neighbours threatened to break down our door); and of sound creating an atmosphere and *re-signifying* space (my teenage voice making a fantasy battlefield out of my 12 m^2 room).

Well before Japanese anime entered my life, I learnt two other fundamental lessons about sound. First, that it is very hard to dampen[1]; I discovered this while trying to reconcile my adolescent desire for intimacy with the thin walls of my parents' house. Second, my mother's glucose reader taught me that the smallest sounds can be very meaningful: for her, a diabetic middle-aged woman, an unheard *bip* could tell the difference between a casual meal and coma.

So, among mechanical hums, human screams and digital chatter, I grew up in a jungle of noises. Inexplicably, however, instead of blaming the world for juvenile hearing impairment, I devoted a big part of my conscious life to soundwaves. I started as a rock drummer, then I picked up the piano, and, lastly, music production filled the silence of covid-19 years. Music is memories: my father tapping the steering wheel at every traffic light was the first drum lesson I got. I remember the day Berklee's professor Sergio Bellotti used the word "groove"; it is a synonym for beat, rhythm, and yet it also describes a long narrow line dug in the earth, like a canal, or a wrinkle on a face. As memory is dug into one's mind, sound is dug into our ear canals and deep

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[1] Sound diffuses through the *air*, the very same means that allow life on Earth. The airborne (atmospheric) nature of sound generates interesting connections between sound and issues of contamination, contagion and invasion, as we will see.

down into our experience of the world. Moreover, to me music is a job: I trained my ears to recognise both those frequencies that "cut through the mix"[2] of a song, and those that move me to tears.

So, if the world is a macrocosmic musical composition (Schafer, 1993, p. 6), then I position myself both as audience and composer, a swinging actor having both naive and technical sensitivity to the tuning of the world. In detail, I am a male Italian young adult, and I grew up in a value framework that praised loudness as a trait of masculinity (Frith et al., 1993; Kachel et al., 2018; Munson, 2007) — laughing coarsely with male friends, being loud both as a drummer and as a listener, and training my not-so-stentorian voice to sound deeper. Additionally, I have always felt that noise was commonly institutionalised as a positive celebration of social liveliness, during clamorous parades, fireworks, and live events[3]; whereas silence was institutionalised as an eerie exception, as in the case of a minute's silence, prayers, and mourning. However, alongside this "education" to noise, my personal story defied such an easy dichotomisation: the reflexive, radically empathetic and somewhat puritan lifestyle of my family trained my ears to relish the smallest tremors in silence, for they might be harbingers of undisclosed thoughts, or mood swings. Thus, silence was the norm, and noise broke it hideously. Later, social constructivism and the functionalist ear of music production brought synthesis to the dispute: I now believe that there are only vibrations in the air "out there", to which people attach meaning "in here", labelling them "sound", "noise", "silence", and everything in between.

How, then, should I write sounds?

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[2] A technical jargon among music producers to describe those frequencies in the audible spectrum (20 Hz -20 kHz) that are clearly detectable and pleasantly emphasised — naturally or as a result of processing — when played back with the other tracks (instruments, vocals and so on) in a work-in-progress song (mixing session).

[3] Of course, noise is also stigmatised as unhealthy, and usually such narratives are presented in a pseudo-objective manner, quoting scientific findings and leveraging everyday life experience in the urban environment; however, I feel that such clinical remarks leave little room to embed them into one's own narrative of their identity and their worldview. I perceive them (although they are not) as plain facts, out-there-in-the-world. Furthermore, the national TV seldom covers issues of noise disturbance, delegating the matter to local TVs, as if it were a less-istitutionalisable topic, one more tied to neighbourhood skirmishes than to national identity-building.

Writing sound: an oxymoron?

Writing sound knowledge: metaphors, heterophonies

Like a great blue heron facing you in stillness, the lush expanse of experience appears narrowed, flattened in text, virtually disappearing into typographic symbols. But when she flies, how extraordinary! (Cusick, 2017, p. 138)

Because it does not vibrate our very skin and bones, writing can never move us in the way that Carolyn Abbate has called "drastic". (Cusick, 2017, pp. 40–41)

The world presents to us in a myriad of ways: it touches us, whispers to us, punches us and vibrates through our guts, offers us warmth or cold, and the most diverse sights; in turn, we grasp it, wreck it, sound it with the frailest voice or the loudest bomb, heat it, freeze it, harness light to colour it as we please. It is an uninterrupted multisensory conversation. Therefore, I agree with Kapchan (2017, p. 2) when she argues that "a theory rooted only in the intellective is of necessity incomplete". On the same page is Stoller (2010), who advocates for a *sensuous scholarship*, a way of re-awakening the researcher's body from its Cartesian slumber and to put it to the use in the academic pursuit of knowledge[4]. In the rest of this chapter, I collect tools to think and write sounds, to prepare us for the theoretical journey into perception.

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As we approach sounds, we should be aware that *sound knowledge* is not simply about rationalising sound information — labelling it or fitting it in boxes and categories. Rather, it is a non discursive form of affective transmission (Kapchan, 2017, p. 2), a flow of embodied information, of emotions and perceptions: it is an intersubjective action that connects two resonating bodies, the speaker/listened-to and the

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[4] And, as he puts it, of an enriched quality of life (Stoller, 2010:xvi).

listener/spoken-to. Through this double phrasing I want to emphasise that sound inherently blurs the boundary between subject and object. Indeed, whereas sight sets a distance between the observer and the looked at, hearing demands proximity, interaction, and participation. Who is the subject, then? The speaker (be it a person, a tree, an atmosphere)? or the listener? The answer, according to phenomenology and sensory ethnography (Ihde, 2012; Pink, 2015; Stoller, 2010), is that both the speaker and the listener are simultaneously subjects and objects of a conversation. We are always part of the social field of listening: as I listen, I am doing phatic[5] work, actively enabling the other person to be heard, thus shaping the world around me into an exchange, instead of a soliloquy. Moreover, as sound is relayed to my brain, it gets coloured by the physiology of my hearing apparatus, my beliefs, values and lexicon, effectively putting me in the role of an active meaning-maker. Sound knowledge is always about transmission, back and forth between two subjects-objects. Aptly, Goffman describes the *Zweisamkeit*[6] of communication with his surgical style, and I argue that it especially applies to sound:

> "We commonly find that the definition of the situation projected by a particular participant [speaker] is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate co-operation [listening] of more than one participant [...] (that) could be analyzed as a type of collusion or 'understanding' [sound knowledge]" (Goffman, 1990, pp. 77–80; I added the words in brackets).

It takes two to sound the world, we might say.

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[5] Here, I am referring to Jakobson's theory of language. The "phatic" function of communication consists in linguistic instances that open up communication channels (think about the so-called icebreakers or any team-building activity) (Jakobson & Jakobson, 1989).
[6] A German word that always amazed me. It roughly translates to "two-ness", the being of two inextricable entities.

Style creates knowledge (Kapchan, 2017, p. vi).

How to *write* sound knowledge, then? Firstly, we need to recognise that scientific writing is not only descriptive, but also performative, for *how* we write affects us: "Sound writing (is) a performance […]. Not a representation. […] (It) is a gong resonating through bodies" (Kapchan, 2015, p. 2). In fact, *how* I describe society shapes your interpretation, much like the furniture of my house conveys a sense of the place: repulsive, welcoming, temporary, or permanent. Writing is first and foremost wor(l)d building (*ibid.*, p. vii).

Writing sound, in particular, involves a double compression[7]: first, a focus on one sense; second, a translation of that sense through the lexicon of another one. The first compression — concentrating on sound — is not meant as a rejection of other senses. As many authors point out (Aras-Eriksson, 2020; Eriksson-Aras, 2017; Feld, 1984, 1990; Kapchan, 2015, 2017; Schafer, 1993; Stoller, 2010), emphasising sound does not mean that all the other senses are discarded. On the contrary, the "great blue heron" of experience is fully recognized; simply, we narrow down our interest to how part of the body (sound) interacts with the rest. We might say that "what we hear depends on how we listen and what we listen for" (Kapchan, 2017, p. 5); I would push this argument further and say that what we *see* depends on how we *listen* and what we *listen for*. By this I mean that our senses are always intertwined, and one enriches the other, allowing us to perceive more, more in detail, if we are willing to pay equal attention to hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and seeing the world.

The second compression — putting sound on paper — is an *intersemiotic translation* (Jakobson & Jakobson, 1989), that is a (necessarily creative) translation of signs from one semiotic system to another (e.g. the translation of Greek tragedies into dance). Like the transformation of mechanical energy into electric energy, sound writing is a transduction[8], a transformative process through which sound is coloured by my

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[7] I introduce here a term I borrow from music production. A compressor is a tool (hardware or software) to reduce the dynamic range of a sound (dampening loud peaks and amplifying soft signals), in order to emphasise the overall perception of it as a cohesive whole (producers call it a "glued" sound). Here, the metaphor is meant exactly in this way: focusing on sound is a reduction of the complexity of perception in order to emphasise perception as a whole, in which sound plays a specific role (Oltheten & Osch, 2018).

[8] Engineering concept that indicates the translation of one form of energy into another, implying a change in the process.

interpretation: frequencies are attenuated, others are emphasised, a composition is put together, meaning is attached to it.

The creative side of transduction lies specifically in two tools I use to write sound: metaphors and recordings. Metaphors are powerful tools to think with: as intellectual concepts that speak to our intuition, they make complexity (society, culture) not just *explainable* but *understandable* (Cardano, 2020) — indeed, some of the most powerful sociological concepts are metaphorical, like the Weberian ideal type. As Black puts it nicely:

> A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other […] in a new way. (Black, 1962, p. 236)

Moreover, metaphors *do things to us*, connecting different realms (perception and interpretation, different disciplines), as if they were a basic ingredient that could be rearranged into a banquet of unexpected dishes. Lastly, metaphors are often synecdoches of culture and society, i.e. they are limited concepts that evoke bigger structures or forces, in other words metaphors are "theories in miniature, […] opening small, ephemeral, but at times valuable discursive spaces in which we can think and sense the world anew" (Daughtry, 2017, p. 48).

The metaphors I refer to (such as *harmony*, or *composition*) are used throughout this work to fulfil the three goals above: to make the complexity of sound knowledge more understandable; to bridge the gap between senses and disciplines; to evoke lived experiences. I borrow the idea of using music lexicon as metaphors in social research from Novak and Aras-Eriksson; the latter urges researcher to coin new sound-metaphors to complement the abundance of visual-spatial metaphors (Eriksson-Aras, 2017, p. 32), and to interpret inter semiotic translation creatively, as a channelling of sound knowledge into "text, images, sheet music, diagrams and graphs. […] (into) auditory, tactile, visual as well as olfactory (metaphors)" (*id.*, my translation).

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The great blue heron is vast and multifaceted; as we have seen, metaphors help untangle the complex conversations of the sound-world. But how should written paper and echoing sounds interact? A syncretic way of translating a soundscape onto a piece of paper is *heterophony*, i.e. multiple uses of the same medium to state the same thing (Henderson, 1996, p. 145). Behind the idea of heterophony is the interconnection between image and sound, in the sense that 1) what I write may evoke sound and image, and 2) written sound exposes properties that "sounding" sound conceals. In Henderson's words: "We might say that in print we can evoke sound and image in ways that sound and image themselves are incapable of doing. [...] we create a presence by first establishing an *absence*" (*ibid.*, p. 146, my emphasis). This last point is key to the endeavour of writing sound, because it hints at the potential *advantages* of this practice: 1) writing sound sets a distance between the reader and the evoked sounds, thus making explicit the ethnographic distance between the "coloured" written contents (the words) and the real sounds; 2) writing sound elicits a disembodied analytical listening that could enrich the everyday sensory approach to being-in-the-world. Paradoxically, then, if audio media have the power to grab our senses — arresting them by overloading them —, text *opens up* the senses because the "sterilised" page allows our (imagined) senses to contaminate it (much like when, as we read a novel, we appreciate the succinct and hermetic descriptions, for they unleash our imagination). Practically speaking, my decision to include audio excerpts, sound diaries and sound walks, should be read as an attempt to establish a dialogue between the page and the voice, to make the intelligible and the sensible mingle (Stoller, 2010, p. xv), "to make the page vibrate with the acoustic presence of the sounding body" (Henderson, 2017, p. 147).
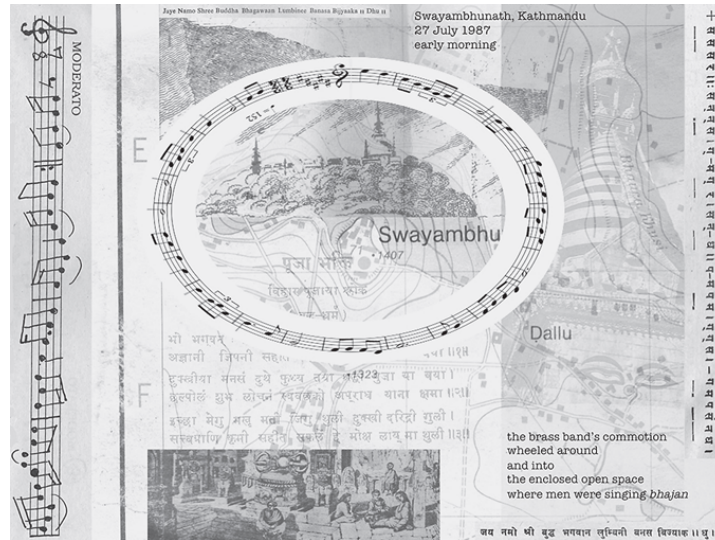
Fig. 1: Henderson's sound map of Kathmandu
Henderson, 2015:154, Inscription No. 2: *Swayambhunath*, 1987.

Henderson's heterophonies of Kathmandu's traffic patterns often look like collages. In particular, the inscription above is the result of a nocturnal sound walk during which he followed a brass band marching towards the Buddhist temple of Swayambhu. This way of writing sound started with Henderson's own perception (sensory experience) quickly recorded on tape (first transcription), then written and analysed as a score (second transcription), and lastly inscribed into this artefact that comprises both didactic (the photos of the temple) and symbolic visual and auditory signs (the round score hinting at the circularity of Buddhist devotional songs, the overlapping between the notes and the map). Being a microsociologist interested in individual motives and perceptions, what I take from Henderson's inscriptions and heterophony is the *sounding potential* of mixed media, i.e. the ability of an hypertextual audiovisual analysis to 1) enter complexity both from the sensible and the intelligible doors and 2) to turn the page into a performance that *moves* the reader-listener to resonate with the sound of the field.

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What makes sound writing especially apt to elicit *commotion* (co-motion, moving together, being moved) is that it invokes the active role of the audience. As I

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listen to you, I am *giving audience*, recognising your subjectivity and establishing communication; giving audience is an *act of giving* yourself to listening, a gift (Rayner, 1993, p. 265). As opposed to the usual act of *receiving* written information — the media, the Scriptures, the academic articles —, sound writing elicits openness to the Other and to the conversational flow of meanings. Therefore, sound-words should put the reader-listener into a disposition of **affective[9] listening**, i.e. reading-listening with the whole body to the emotional, sensory, felt dimensions of a sound-event (Pais, 2017, pp. 236–237). Sound-words are echoes of lived sounds, and should be able to reverberate in us as particles that *do things to us* — not so much empathy, of which I am sceptical, as commotion. Listening makes us porous to the Other, whose vibrations do not simply carry *texts* to interpret, but also affects.

Practically speaking, Pais suggests that the researcher pay attention to:

- the affective dimension of writing: *in addition to the analytical depth, are the sound-words evoking emotions, moods, bodily states?*
- the poetic dimension of writing: *how am I writing? does the style help echo the affects attached to lived sounds? am I using onomatopoeia, sensory vocabulary, metaphors, and bodily references[10]?*
- the audience as intensifier: *is the writing actively engaging the audience in active/affective listening, rather than passive reception?*

To sum up, both sounds and affects are "whole-body vibrotactile experiences" that propagate in corporeal, material and sociocultural mediums (Henriques, 2010, p. 79). In the *political economy of the senses* (Banes & Lepecki, 2007, p. 3), history, society and culture plot with our individuality to draw a line between the perceptible

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[9] "Affects are concrete felt things that belong to our experience, such as feeling uncomfortable or suffocated when one enters a room. […] affect [can be] either [a] capacity of attachment to things, people, ideas, activities, or institutions free of constraints (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003, p. 19) or as a flux, an intensity ungraspable by consciousness. [Affects] are sensitive charges or felt intensities that circulate in social spaces" (Pais, 2017, p. 238). I think that the notion of affect relates intimately with that of atmosphere, which I will introduce later. Also, the idea of "sensitive charges" reminds me of the concept of physical work. Since sometimes it is less useful to define what a force is that what it does (especially if we do not see or even imagine it, like magnetism or gravity, although we feel their effects); therefore, the concept of work was developed to measure the effect of a force. Affect, then, might be imagined as the sensitive work of a felt force.

[10] As Pais points out, onomatopoeia break through limited word semantics and highlight affective experience and whole-body feelings (*ibid.*, p.:247); metaphors lie between the intelligible and the sensible and therefore are useful to connect the analytical interpretation with the sensible intuition.

and the imperceptible, the *heard* and the *unheard.* Therefore, writing sound-words and listening to the Other are powerful choices to turn up the social knob of volume, to connect, and to allow the reader-listener to feel and think along.

Thinking sound writing:
affective listening, performativity, palimpsest

Sometimes, however, the act of *giving audience* is conflictual. All in all, sound knowledge inhabits a space between subjects — that is, both micro and macro levels — and the aggregate effects may juxtapose contrasting music, performances, demonstrations, and political voices. To this point, Cusick (2017) tells the story of her student Trevor, who was rehearsing an a cappella arrangement of Led Zeppelin's *Rumble On* when, unexpectedly, police in riot-gear came to roust them. According to Cusick, their voices were "tun(ing) bodies to places and times through their sounding potential […], embodied competencies that situate actors and their agency in particular historical worlds" (Feld, in Bull & Back, 2015, p. 230). And the particular historical world in which Trevor was singing was not a quiet one: Occupy Wall (OW) streets protests were in the air, and it occupied the New York soundscape with drum circles and "human microphones"[11]; thus, the police connected the circle of Trevor's fellow singers with the geometry of protest. Moreover, the a cappella choir was performing under a tourist hotspot (Washington's Arch) at nighttime, when no tourists were around, thus defiling the institutional *framing* of the place, and mimicking Led Zeppelin's cyborg sounds in a post-cyborg (human) fashion. All these elements, Cusick argues, contributed to braiding together a heavily politicised historical world with an intimate rehearsal. The circle, the arch, and the song reflect three analytical dimensions: the context, the performance, and the network of the sound event. Cusick's three-dimensional analysis may be synthesised as follows:

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[11] An anti-capitalistic practice whose goal was to forward a message from a central speaker to the far end of the audience, without relying on PA-systems. It worked by having the audience loudly repeating the message in concentric steps. The idea was developed during the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, to avoid technologies produced by the very same system the protesters criticised.

- Context (critic musicology, sociology - Occupy Wall Street was in the air): *what is the context in which the sound event takes place? how does it affect it? viceversa, how does the sound event situate the actors in a particular time-space?*
- Action-effect (performance studies, sociology - the a cappella singers embodied OW's critique): *is the sound doing something? is it perceived as agentive? what is the sound doing (to the performers, to the place, to bystanders)?*
- Musical-non musical network (sound studies, sociology - a cappella performance as a transduction away from cyborg sounds into post cyborg, human-made sounds): *how does the sound event relate with related non-sound events, like concepts, ideas, technologies, devices, trends?*

As a micro-sociologist, I want to add one last dimension to the sound methodology I am developing, that is *perception*: how the sound event is perceived by the performers and how such sound perception informs their reality, motives and opportunities regarding home-making. In a Weberian fashion, I believe that *soloing*[12] individual perceptions may contribute to gaining a more detailed account of macro movements and structures within society that rise as aggregate effects.

As a result, I synthesise sound writing into a four-dimensional typology of sound analysis:

PERCEPTION *Listen to yourself*	**CONTEXT** *Expand your hearing*
What is heard? How is it heard?	What is the particular socio-historical world in which the sound-event is situated?
How does perception affect the person (identity, *Weltanschauung*, motivations, beliefs) and their way of being-in-the-world (behaviours, attitudes, habitus)?	Who is listening to the sound-event?
Is perception partly intersubjective (shared by a group)?	

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[12] Focusing on

EFFECT	NETWORK
Listen for change	*Listen for connections*
What is the sound doing (to the context, the performers, the bystanders)?	How does the sound-event relate with other actants involved (e.g. technologies, devices, ideas)?
Is the sound intended/perceived as a performance? (do not assume that sound is *always* performative)	What are the properties of the sound/non-sound network (is the sound occupying a central/peripheral position; is it influencing/influenced by other entities; is it spreading)?
Is the sound agentive (i.e. enabling performers to achieve something specific)?	Are the performers aware of the network they are in?

Tab. 1: Four analytical dimensions of a sound event

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As Trevor's *Rumble On* pointed out, the sounding world is — as all things human — layered. Vibrations overlap, meanings mutually contaminate, history and perceptions juxtapose. A useful textual metaphor to think acoustic complexity is the *palimpsest*, a stacking of acoustic layers. Originally, it was a technical term coined by archeologists studying inscriptions carved in animal skin that, if carefully examined, would reveal even older writing beneath the superficial layer, carefully erased to save precious *vellum*[13]. Recently, sound scholar Martin Daughtry tailored this archaeological image to sound and suggested the term *acoustic palimpsest* to describe "the multiple acts of erasure, effacement, occupation, displacement, collaboration, and reinscription that are embedded in music composition, performance, and recording; acts that can be recovered—partially, imperfectly, but valuably—by critical listening, research, and occasional leaps of the imagination" (Daughtry, 2017, p. 53). His idea is that every sound-event (be it a sound-object, like a CD, or a performance, or else) carries the

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[13] Palimpsest comes from the ancient Greek palìn-psestòs "scraped again".

socio-historically situated stories and soundscapes of the actants (human or non-human actors) involved in creating it. Therefore, a *palimpsestuous* listening lends an ear not just to the actual sound, as it is *here and now*, but further, to its past, its embeddedness in history and society, and its entanglement with networks of other sounds and actors. Shortly, 1) how the sound *got here* through iterations of erasure and overwriting, and 2) how the sound *fits* within the larger soundscape[14]. Acoustic palimpsests are ways of "allow[ing] the cacophony of the world to rush into the study of music, and plac[ing] the politics of navigating through this complex and noisy world at the centre of discussions of listening" (Daughtry, 2017, p. 56).

The process of erasure and layering may happen on multiple levels (*ibid.*, p. 73), for which the researcher should be listening:

TEXTUAL	**AUDITORY**
Rewriting of a written text with other words/notes.	Simultaneous occurring of sounds from multiple sources.
INTERMEDIAL	**TECHNOLOGICAL**
Translation of a medium into another medium.	Permanence of traces of a former work onto a recording medium.

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[14] I want to point out that we experience acoustic palimpsests every day. In January 2022 I was in my room in Torino, Italy, listening to Dave Matthews Band's 1995 Live at Red Rocks (1995) . It is one of the first live albums I have ever listened to, and I recall my former drum teacher recommending it to me as an example of creative yet technical drumming. Years later, in my room, I wonder why DMB decided to publish a live album, considering all the unofficial footage already overflowing online; then, I read that it was the result of frontman Dave Matthews' initiative to publicly fight music bootlegging and piracy. It was more than a live album, it was a crusade! Major labels were involved, recording studios, other bands and professionals, not to mention all the other layers involved that powered the initiative: previous works (songs, poems, movies) that inspired the lyrics, the studio engineers, the competing technologies of CD printing and CD ripping, different audiences and so on.Going back to the four dimensions of sound writing, we might appreciate how each layer pertains to one dimension: the context of that music; the network it was trying to dismantle; its effect on the consumption society; the perception it elicited in listeners on both sides of the war. Other examples regard our contributions to urban soundscapes through our headphones' bleeding music; soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan recording environmental noises and overlapping them to their music performances; Soviet Russian bootleggers inscribing censored Western music onto X-Ray sheets; contemporary trap quotational culture.

AUTHORIAL	**SYMBOLIC (meta-palimpsest)**
Substitution of the original author/performer with another one.	Explicit description of the act of erasure and reinscription within a work.
IDEOLOGICAL	**CORPOREAL**
Erasure and reinscription as a political act.	Inscription of history (genetics or experience) into the body.
MEMORIAL	
Absorption and layering of experience into memory.	

Tab. 2: Different levels of a sonic palimpsest a researcher should listen for

In fact, the acoustic palimpsest is a political and dynamic concept that explicitly unearths active processes of removal and overwriting of sounds. Indeed, the acoustic palimpsest directs our discernment both to "the things that a recording encourages us to remember and the things it urges us to forget, the things that are insistently audible and the things that have long been silenced" (*ibid.*, p. 69). This is why I think it is particularly apt to describe the sound experience of immigrants struggling with making themselves at home in a foreign country where silence rules, for their homemaking actions resonate in a politically dense soundscape that clearly stated its set of values; therefore, in it, every instance of overwriting (adding the sound of my home to a preexisting environ) and underwriting (unearthing silenced actions of homemaking) is deeply political, historical, and agentive.

Listening for subjects, writing intersubjectivity

To compensate for the overtly-textual nature of the palimpsest metaphor, I want to emphasise that sound writing is both *inscriptive* and *descriptive*, i.e. it is both an etic account of an external sound experience, and an emic self-reflection of how the researcher's auditory system affects his perception and therefore his sound writing (Waterman, 2017, p. 117). We might imagine our listening as composing (*id.*), rather than a passive reception of a prewritten work made by others. Every time we listen to someone, we enable communication, define its tone and frame its boundaries, thus we actively orchestrate social interaction.

More importantly from a sociological perspective, listening is always *listening for a subject*. To elucidate this, Waterman (*ibid.,* pp. 120-22) mentions Alvin Lucier's composition "I Am Sitting in a Room", where the composer records a message, and plays it back and re-records it multiple times until, after some 16 minutes, only the natural resonances of the room are left. What happens, though, is not a disappearance of the subjectivity (I cannot recognise Lucier's voice anymore), but a transfer of subjectivity. As I was listening to it, I got deeply moved by the idea that I was, in a way, listening to the sound of the room itself — I transferred the subjectivity from the composer to the room, from a performer to another. This is key to why I chose sound as a topic of sociological inquiry, especially since my research question regards social inequality: since listening is always listening *for a subject*, I argue that both 1) focussing on the lived sound experiences of immigrants in a silenced environment, and 2) introducing sensory (sound) ethnography into the inquiry are political acts that emphasise the participants' agency, because 1) they push readers/listeners to recognise them primarily as subjects, and not research objects, and 2) they push me and the readers/listeners to reflect on themselves as listening subjects, with all the hermeneutical implications of such awareness.

This is the descriptive side of sound writing: listening to how we listen, to account for an action that is deeply agentive, political, and intimate. As Waterman puts it, "a subject [is] something (itself) that identifies itself by resonating from self to self, in itself for itself, hence outside of itself[15], at once the same as and other than itself[16],

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[15] These words powerfully evoke the debate about identity, recognition and reputation (Donatiello, 2015)

[16] I cannot but think of Pirandello's "One, No One and One Hundred Thousand".

one in the echo of the other; and this echo is like the very sound of its sense" (*ibid.*, p. 121). As I will show later, the focus on subjectivity of sound writing fits perfectly within the theoretical frame of phenomenology, the philosophy of subjectivity. For now, suffice it to say that I would be already satisfied if my writing somehow managed to *move* you: from where you are sitting, closer to the people whose stories I recorded, deeper into your listening life.

<div align="center">***</div>

It has been said that "written words can also sing" (Jackson, 2017, p. 294). The written word can be "haunted" by the sounds it conjures up. As intuitive as this may be — we all experienced a degree of synaesthesia while reading a fantasy book, or a friend's letter —, Jackson goes a step further and keenly argues that the written sound-word might add some information that even sound itself retains. More precisely, sound writing could make the most of the visual-analytical gaze of writing and describe, categorise, and deconstruct sound, whereas a more narrative and "vibrotactile" style may transmit the sensory charges of affect. Jackson calls such interweaving of story and essay, "writing intersubjectivity" (*ibid.*, p. 298), a "writing that resonates with and remains in touch with the events, persons, and things being written about. […] a poetic and paratactic style that […] strikes a balance between the voice of the author and the voices of his or her interlocutors" (*id*.). Practically, in writing intersubjectivity, moments of detached analysis alternate with moments of poetic narrative, "in the same way that literary dialogue can sound real without resembling actual conversation" (*id*.).

A sensuous scholarship

Jackson's writing intersubjectivity has been put into practice and systematised in Stoller's *sensuous scholarship*, one of the major influences on my style — a way of researching and writing that combines embodied sensibility *and* disembodied logic, reconciling sense and sensibility. (Stoller, 2010, p. xv). As a sorcerer apprentice, he became familiar with the Songhay "way of the body" (*ibid,* p. 3), a sensory epistemology according to which knowledge is gained mainly through the body, to the

point that local griots[17] say that they *eat* history and are *eaten* by it (*ibid,* p. 34), power objects *drink* the blood of sacrificial animals (*ibid,* p. 15), and only sorcerers who are *full* (of food, that is knowledge) resist evil magic (*id.*). A very similar sensitivity brought Bourdieu to introduce the body as a site of analysis, or "the most indisputable materialization of class taste" (Bourdieu, 1979/2000, p. 210).

To tackle the body as a site of analysis, ethnography entails opening oneself to others and "absorb[ing] their world" (*ibid,* p. 23) — the very definition of listening. Affective listening, sound writing, and resonating sound-words all require the researcher to be aware of their senses and let the world in. To this point, Stoller specifies that the characteristics of a sensuous scholarship resemble those of the griot narratives, which I may summarise as follows:

- Acknowledge the senses: scholarly inquiry tends to adopt a disembodied stance in the effort to dissect, categorise and analyse social phenomena; however, the senses are a first-hand, first-person source of information about how we experience the world (*ibid.*, p. xi);

- *Be personal*: stress the experience of the researcher-body on the field, and the interrelationship between it (me) and the bodies of the participants (*ibid.*, p. 22);

- *Adopt reflexivity and positionality*: the first step towards analysing the interrelationship between oneself and the others is to make explicit from what point of view/hearing such interrelationship is lived (*ibid.*, p. 31).

- *Mix voices*: a mixed authoriality that lets the participants *speak* with the researcher; diversifying the heard voices to provide a thicker conversation (*ibid.*, p. 34, 117-8);

- *Choose a context-sensitive narrative style*: this is an innovative point — Stoller suggests that the poetic aspect of writing should "follow the field", so that a chaotic, complex and contended topic such as Songhay sorcery may benefit from the juxtaposition of multiple styles, whereas a more intimate, private and secret topic such as Songhay herbalism may require the sobriety of a diary (*ibid.*, p. 38-9).

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[17] West African troubadours-historians.

- *Avoid textualism and pure disembodiment*: the embodied experience is perceived as a whole that integrates sensitivity and intelligibility; a body-mind (Zarrilli, 2004, 2019).
- *Implicate yourself*: as an actor in the social field, the social researcher is implicated in all things human, and should act accordingly, to describe, evoke, and provoke (*ibid.*, p. 35). Pure dissection and classification is dehumanising, therefore let's be the medium of historical and social voices.

To exemplify how sensuous scholarship looks like, I bring together two excerpts from Seremetakis' vivid essay on *reflexive commensality* (Seremetakis, 1996).

sensible	*intelligible*
"The grandma dressed in black, sitting at home or at the edge of the fields, feeds the baby. The baby in the cradle or on her lap is wrapped tightly in strips of cloth. She takes a piece of crustless bread, the inside of the bread known as *psíha*, crumbles it with her fingers and puts a few crumbs in her toothless mouth. The tongue, rotating, moistens the bread with saliva till it becomes a paste, 'clay'. She molds the bread till its texture signals that it is ready for the child. She takes the bread from her mouth and places it in its toothless mouth. The baby swallows it as she swallows her saliva flavored by the bread". (*ibid.*, p. 26)	"Between grandma and grandchild sensory acculturation and the materialization of historical consciousness occurred through the sharing of food, saliva and body parts. [...] Commensality can be defined as the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling". (*ibid.*, p. 37)

To conclude, it is worth noting that many of the "tools" to think and write sound that I mentioned in this chapter are interrelated: the sensuous scholarship, writing intersubjectivity, metaphors and heterophonies, affective listening, the palimpsest, sound writing and sound knowledge — they all refer to the strive to push academic inquiry beyond description and interpretation, towards the co-motion of the reader-listener. These words, in turn, recall more widespread theoretical concepts: Geertz' thick description, Barthes' notion of dead author, and Merleau-Ponty's flesh, to

mention but a few. This is to say two things: 1) that a sensory inquiry of homemaking through sound should follow the groove of sensuous scholarship; and 2) that such an endeavour is backed by a substantial number of authors that cross multiple disciplines, offering a wealth of tools to think the senses, to sense our thinking, and to write it.

Unlike the chef who jealously hides the ingredients and the recipe, I am now going to present the structure of my reasoning in this research. First, before I can even do anything with sounds, I need to be able to "think" about sound. Conceptualisation stems from scientific literature that provides me primarily with a lexicon to describe and interpret sound, and how it shapes the social practice of homemaking. Secondly, if I can think about sound, I may "explore" sound, i.e. assess the most adequate tools to research it. Lastly, I can "do things" with sound, i.e. apply the conceptual tools, and methodology to the case studies. Like every recipe, I shall start with the raw ingredients. We are commencing a journey into the why and how sound matters to us human beings, struggling to feel at home somewhere in the world.

Acknowledgements

For me, a Master's thesis is like a living room: a place where lots of people come together. This work was borne out of countless conversations, walks, and late night reveries. It took shape in spruce forests, jazz venues, dusty music rooms, *fika* breaks, universities, virtual meetings and road trips. Although I was not part of a research team, I feel the voices of friends, colleagues and participants in every paragraph. The richness of this inquiry is directly proportional to the living marvels that these people are, and the generosity with which they shared their stories.

The first heartfelt "thank you" goes to my Swedish family: Roy and Annica, Hannes and Carina, Till and Nicole, Olga, Abdullah, Kumail and Ali, Emilio, Christian, Sia, My, Mellie, Alex, Daniel. Everytime I felt home 2'000 kilometres away from home, I was with you.

Thanks to my Italian family. You taught me what home is in the first place, and, most importantly, you gave me the tools to make my own. I learned that conflict is part of homemaking, yet it does not take away the certainty that I can come back to the first place I have ever called home.

Thanks to Marta, who mastered the art of listening, also known as love.

Thanks to Giovanni Semi and Meike Wagner, my analytical guides. Giovanni, for your attentive ear, for deconstructing the weakest parts of my reasoning and lighting up the strongest; Meike, for introducing me to phenomenology, and opening the doors of a brand new world wide open. You have been rigorous and gentle teachers.

Thanks to Simone, whose brilliant mind sheds light onto my every doubt. To Elena, my piano teacher and wonderful friend, for tirelessly blowing on my dream-wings. To Maddi, for feeding me with curry and smiles. To Matteo, Nick and Luca, my friends-in-music, who listen to my every folly (and usually follow through with them).

Literature

The experience of sound

There is word in the wind (Ihde, 2012, p. 4).

AUDIO DIARY
COMPOSITION: MY HOME

This is a fragment of my audio diary,
where I reflect on some of the sounds
that make up the diverse soundscape of my homes.
I suggest that you try to do the same.
What are the sounds of your home(s)?

Ask anyone to recall their daily commute, and to detail what they see. After some brief memory-digging, they usually come up with a rich list of objects and places that punctuate the journey. However, ask them to summon any sound; they will struggle visibly, and probably mention the rumble of car engines, or the radio or some music on the headphones. Clearly, the problem is not that urban soundscapes lack stimuli: as Simmel ([1903] 2010) points out, the metropolis is a sound palimpsest that tremendously intensifies nervous activity; moreover, human beings are differentiating

and categorising creatures, therefore they are alert to stimuli by default; lastly, since human hearing's capacity far exceeds that of sight, it is not a problem of physiological unresponsiveness, either[18]. A plausible answer to why people cannot recall a thorough list of daily sounds comes, again, from Simmel: urban soundscapes are so oversaturated with auditory stimuli that people become *blasé*, incapable of reacting to new stimulations with the required energy, "in order to adjust [...] to the shifts and contradictions in events [of the metropolis]" (Simmel [1903] 2010:3,9). As I will point out later, hearing is first and foremost omnidirectional, so that it is much more difficult to stem the tide of sounds than it is to ignore the surroundings and focus on the object in front of us. This is why we put great effort in shielding our consciousness from sounds, especially in the metropolis.

The apparent simplicity of the commuter's account hides the wealth of sensory information that is encapsulated within sound. In the following sections, I will rely on phenomenology and psychology to explore sound perception from the point of audition of the individual: how sound is embedded in time and space, and its spatiotemporal properties; how we perceive silence, which is everything but the absence of sound; how our cognition affects sound experience, and how it articulates meaning-making through sound.

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[18] A normally sighted person can perceive light wavelengths between approximately 400 and 800 nm; in comparison, a normally hearing person can perceive sound wavelengths between 17 mm and 17 m. The difference is huge (the same order of magnitude for sight capacity versus three orders of magnitude for hearing capacity).

Phenomenology: what is heard and how it sounds

To see is always to see from somewhere (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2013:69).

Phenomenology[19] is the quintessential philosophy of subjectivity, i.e. of the structures of consciousness experienced from a *first-person* perspective. It posits that all human experience is inextricably rooted in the individual who perceives the world through their *senses* ("it is *I* who hear, touch, smell, taste, see"; rather than "the *World* sounds, feels, smells, tastes, looks like"). Aptly, phenomenologists call it "life-world" (Beyer 2020; Husserl and Moran [1900] 2001), a lived entity rather than an objective one. It follows that all human perception is *embodied* and inalienable from the body which, in opposition to idealism, partners with the mind to construct knowledge. Since embodiment entails a visceral involvement with all things worldly, phenomenology assumes that knowledge is always *intentional*, i.e. directed toward objects equipped with *meaning*[20] (Smith 2018). As Merleau-Ponty said, since we are embodied beings, we are tied to the world and "condemned to meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 2013, in Sobchack 1992). Intentionality acts within "enabling conditions" such as the sociocultural *milieu*, personal background, historical frame; this is precisely the suture between phenomenology and sociology, the individual and the social; it especially resonates with Bourdieu's sensitivity to both the body and the historical context, for he posits that all sociological discourses "assume their full significance only if you refer to the circumstances in which they were pronounced and the audience to which they were addressed" (Bourdieu 1990a:ix). I find phenomenology very humbling, for it is disinterested in what we cannot bodily perceive and rejects everything that is not grounded in embodied perception (e.g. abstract ideas), thus actively working against the dehumanisation brought forth by sterile, disembodied concepts[21].

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[19] Although already theorised earlier, phenomenology stepped into the spotlight in the 20th century with the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

[20] Counter-intuitively, it does not mean "voluntary".

[21] I am not arguing against disembodied concepts *per se*, for they are valuable in certain aspects of social research, for example when subsuming local variations into an ideal type, or when dealing with social theory and meta-analyses, or when operationalising properties into variables. Every single one of these theory-laden practices, though, should be grounded in the fundamental root of human perception: the body (or, more correctly, the bodymind).

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To summarise, phenomenology is the study of meaningful phenomena as they are perceived from a first-person embodied perspective; therefore, it is both a philosophical discipline and an attitude towards the world, one that radically questions how we perceive it. The ultimate goal of phenomenology depends on each author's take on it, but generally, questioning and dissecting individual perception aims to minimise the perceiver's own biases, reach self-awareness through critical thinking, and abstract from local perception, either to infer intersubjective conclusions that surpass the individual, or to gain access to the object's essence ("the thing itself")[22]. As a sociologist, I am interested in getting to the meanings of sounds, and connecting them to larger social intersubjectivities that make homemaking a sound practice (pun intended). What is a phenomenology of sound, then?

The phenomenological toolkit:
noema/noesis, reduction, sound consciousness, intentionality

From a phenomenological perspective, sound is an intrinsically relational vessel to the world; through the ears the world enters us, and through sound and language we project ourselves in it. Sound makes us porous to the world, and vulnerable, unshielded by the safe distance offered by sight. Phenomenologically, hearing works like eating, because listening as a choice (or an infliction) is a technique of the self that disciplines how and how much of the world is allowed in (Foucault et al. 1988); in the act of eating the world, we let the world eat us; symmetrically, in the act of hearing, we let the world

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[22] As a sociologist, I am more interested in intersubjective (aggregate/inferable/eloquent) conclusions, than in the "essence" of things, whatever that is.

sound us — we take the world in (cfr Lupton 1996 about eating as a symbolic practice). Listening is therefore deeply tied with the construction of the self, even more so in the contemporary sound-world, augmented and heightened by the perceptual technologies of the electronic communications revolution (Ihde 2012:4): today the oceans come alive with whale songs, and the stars radioactively murmur in our speakers, seeming closer than ever before; the shouting of demonstrations and revolutions crosses the air through broadcasting media. In such a vibrant world, phenomenology re-centres the inquiry on the individual, and takes us back to sound itself, therefore providing us with the tools to analyse it, before we connect it to the social world.

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To explore sound in first-person, as a phenomenologist would, some tools are needed for the journey. First — aptly for an inquiry on sound —, I conceptualise the world as a dialogue between phenomena and my perception, where phenomena (*noema*, the ideal essence of objects) are always correlated with the very local modes of experience (*noesis*, the interactive perception of objects). Then, I may try my best to "filter out" the idiosyncrasies of my perception to develop a critical awareness of the thing itself (a soundscape, a sound-event), and how it becomes meaningful for me. This self-analytical process is called *reduction*.

In Husserl's terms ([1900] 2001), reduction is a process in which my bodily perception (the "natural attitude" i.e. the intrinsically intuitive, unattentive, uncritical, sensory everyday living) is meticulously reflected upon ("bracketed") in such a way that my own direct experience becomes the foundation of more general (e.g. scientific) knowledge. In other words, I suspend the judgement about the external world (Camp 2015:33), analyse my perception of it as if I were alien to myself, transcend my subjectivity and gain knowledge about the relationship between the world and my body, and other bodies[23], according to an extremely personal and metaphorical epistemology

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[23] Zarrilli (2019:290) explains with the utmost clarity why phenomenology, which might seem so limited by and to the individual experience (micro-level), actually looks for intersubjective (i.e. shared, meso-level) commonalities: "A description of what it is like should not be limited to my individual/subjective first-person perspective. What is important is not that my attempt to describe what this experience was like was 'my' personal experience, but rather that the description makes available for discussion, analysis, and understanding the structure and 'what it is like' quality and nature of this type of sensory/perceptual experience. As a result, phenomenological research focuses on what is inter-subjectively accessible, i.e., what is available not just in my personal experience, but for others as well from their own first-person experience".

of the body (Foster 1995:9; States 2006:26). To perform a reduction, I start by describing in first-person my intimate embodied perception (*noesis*) of the object (*noema*) — be it "real" or not. What matters is my perception of it (this first step is called *phenomenological reduction*).   Then, I try to identify and extract from my experience the mechanisms that tie it to the external world (i.e. what it is in the object that I am experiencing, that makes me feel how I feel). This is for Husserl the key to getting "to the things themselves" (Husserl and Moran [1900] 2001:168), i.e. to grasp their essence, which is exquisitely subjective (second step: *eidetic reduction*)[24]. Lastly, I *try* to expand such knowledge, *trying* to find commonalities between my intimate bodily sensations and other people's experiences — in a word, intersubjectivity (third step: *transcendental reduction*). To get to the meat of reduction, imagine a horror movie. I try to reduce my experience of it:

1. it makes me feel uncomfortable, scared, and tense;
2. what makes me feel uncomfortable, scared, and tense are the uncanny, unpredictable, claustrophobic frames, the inhuman camera movements, and the dissonant and quasi-tactile soundtrack;
3. I recognise that there is an intersubjective matrix that connects every viewer in the cinema, a set of values that makes us all agree on the fact that the filmed world can *do* things to us, move us, and that we share the (Western) cinematic language of fear.

Try, trying — the wealth of caution accounts for the limits of Husserlian reduction: as Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued, "a complete reduction is not possible" (Merleau-Ponty 1968:178) for we are inevitably bound to our bodies as the tools through which we make sense of the world (and ourselves), therefore preventing a complete transcendence. I sneak between the German and the French philosophers, and argue that, although we cannot part from our bodies, indeed we can transcend our

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[24] If I think about wax, some cosy, warm, familiar, sensual, intimate and somewhat spiritual vibrations crawl under my skin. This is the first step (phenomenological reduction). Then I detach from them and wonder what it is, of wax, that makes me feel *wax-y*. Is it its shape? Certainly not, since I can melt the wax and it still retains its *waxy-ness*. Therefore, the shape is not a part of "wax itself", of the essence of *waxy-ness*. This, repeated, is eidetic reduction (this example was inspired by Mark Linsenmayer, podcaster at the Partially Examined Life: Partially Examined Life Episode 32: Martin Heidegger | The Partially Examined Life Philosophy Podcast | A Philosophy Podcast and Blog, consulted on 12/05/2022).

subjectivity and describe a shared matrix of feelings that binds different experiences. Ultimately, this is the basic assumption of sociology, as Weber ([1905] 2002) and Simmel ([1903] 2010) posit: through interaction, individual actions gain new, greater meanings, tie us together and give birth to symbols and institutions, i.e. shared ways to make sense of the world. Through these, we can connect and grow, communicate, and realise and express ourselves. If, as I shall discuss later, we pick particularly eloquent case studies (Cardano 2020), we can abstract from individual perception to intersubjective conclusions.

As a specific form of reduction, *sound consciousness* — as I call reduction applied to auditory phenomena — implies the incremental awareness of three components of the auditory experience: 1) the *physical object* (the raw materiality of what I am hearing, a disconnected patchwork of sounds, sources, environments etc.), 2) the *image object* (the coherent unity that my mind turns those disconnected elements into — e.g. a song, or a car noise), and 3) the *image subject* (the meaningful entity that is *mediated* through the experience — the song that reminds me of home). This time ballet will be my explanatory guinea pig, namely Alexander Ekman's *Eskapist*[25], partly available on the website of Stockholm Kungliga Operan:

1. I see an assemblage of flesh-coloured tissue, chalk, makeup, skin, hair, bones, and dancing shoes, lit up by soft spotlights, bending and unfolding according to gracefully strenuous muscular mastery;
2. I discern a man, a dancer, the Principal Dancer Oscar Salomonsson, as a coherent unity;
3. I transcend the man and see the main character of the story, a dusty middle-aged employee who suddenly trips into a surreal world of phantasies and pure irrationality, deliciously discovered through his moving body. I relate to him. I could be him.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

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[25] Eskapist – Taking Time Out from Reality | Kungliga Operan

Shortly, phenomenology deploys a three-step awareness process called reduction, that elicits detailed analysis on perception from a first-person embodied perspective. Applied to the auditory experience, reduction fosters sound consciousness, i.e. a critical account on one's hearing that connects the local perception with personal meanings and shared intersubjectivity through interpretation. This is the theoretical framework that grounds both the soundwalks and the qualitative interviews I gathered, through which I tried to foster sound consciousness both in the participants and in myself.

In the following three paragraphs, I will introduce the three main dimensions of sound consciousness, or what we should pay attention to when we think about meaningful sounds: temporality, spatiality, and horizonal events.

AUDIO DIARY
EMBODIED LISTENING

It takes two to sound the world.
Sound knowledge is always about transmission, back and forth between two subjects-objects.

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7th April 2022, 21:30. Stockholm, Katarina östra kyrkogårdsgränd.
A light drizzle pours from the icy sky. It's late winter here; Italy is already spring-coloured.
A thick fog envelops the cemetery of Katarina östra; carved tombstones rise from the mossy ground — graciously bent, naturally, like trees. They remind me of the monumental French graveyards, where death is left free to do its workings, and decay welcomes the living to the still time of ended things.
Emma and I enter a small hut on the edge of the cemetery. Here, Skaiv — an association of experimental electronic music — presents a late-night concert.

The hut is full, and the warmth of the bodies restores the entropy lost in the cold. Stained glass windows paint sudden bursts of light. Outside, the rain thickens.
The lights go out, the music starts.
In the dark, a feeble synthetic pitch rises, like a freezing dagger that cuts right through the collective body and prods my inner ear. It is hypnotic.
I listen with my eyes closed.
I hear an indistinct white noise coming from above.
I hear the rain pouring on the stone roof.
I hear a rhythmic pulse.
I hear a conversation: an otherworldly voice and a crackling rhythm.
I listen more carefully. There is something else in the air, something I feel tickling my ears, a vibration. The high-pitched frequencies of the synth are interacting with the morphology of the bare room and producing harmonics. The result is a bodily presence of sound, one I feel vividly close. I listen through my whole body now.
I touch Emma's hands, or she touches mine, or maybe our hands start yet another conversation. In our contact lies the twoness of listening: our bodies are attuned to the layered exchanges that are shaping space: the synth voice and the rain; my hands and hers; the audience and the room.
Suddenly, lightning through the window. I see an old woman, sitting some rows ahead, listening with eyes closed and hugging herself gently. She is having a conversation with space, both outer and inner.
As we are all. We are listeners.

The temporality of sound: *duration, rhythm, temporal focus*

It is thus in the nature of sound to be often associated with something lost — with something that fails at the same time that it is captured, and yet is always there (Chion 2015:3).

Kierkegaard claims that language and music — two exquisitely auditory media — are the only media that take place in time instead of space (Kierkegaard 1959:56). Although Spallanzani's studies on bats in the late XIX century already proved the claim to be somewhat wrong, demonstrating the preciseness of echolocation, it is true that music is the art of bending time according to the rules of emotions and meaning, and that language (e.g. syntax) has got a special intimacy with time. The temporality of sound can be exemplified by the case of Gagliano, a small village in Abruzzo (Southern Italy), where I did an ethnographic research about the meaning of silence. Here, the property of acquiring meaning through duration is exemplified by how sound reconnects the town to its history. While the long-gone bell-forging tradition of Gagliano links its past to the melodies of the bell clappers echoing in the Subequana Valley; the present drilling of the construction sites represents the future of the community, trying to recover and rebuild from 2009's earthquake. Past and future merge in present sound — *present* both temporally (now) and symbolically (it is meaningful), because the bell-drill dyad relates to the sound identity of Gagliano's imagined community: a Southern Italian village, swarming with life and vibrant voices.

Therefore, sound can be described as *timeful*; because of its intrinsic resonant nature, it acquires meaning through its duration in time. If I recall any instance of my noisy daily life, in the urban jungle I mentioned in the introduction, I can tell the *shape* of a sound source by listening to how it resonates in the courtyard, through the windows, and into my ears. I would not be able to differentiate an instantaneous sound, a tick, although I could easily *locate* it[26]. The need of duration — as brief it may be — for a sound to become meaningful means that, while it lasts in time, it permeates space, it lingers in it, it spreads and colours it. The fact that sound imparts spatio-affective properties to places that last in time is one of the main reasons why sound is a powerful medium for place-making.

Further, whereas visual objects easily lend themselves to differentiation, sound happens all at once, *simultaneously* and *continuously*, as a mixture of things that move in a constant "coming and going" (Chion 2015:7). Hence, sound calls for a dynamic analysis, because it is essentially movement, duration in time. In this movement we commonly experience a foreground-background relationship that organises our

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[26] Short, high pitched sounds are easier to locate, because higher frequencies are highly directional, and short sounds are less affected by environmental resonances.

experience of a soundscape. For example, if I wonder about what inhabits the auditory background of my life, it would be the rhythm of the city, a varied repetition of sounds that fulfils the same functions as visual stillness: giving stability to everyday existence (Ihde 2012:87). The relationship between foreground and background is not neutral, for it is a field of interests, power and inequality: what is pushed back through an expensive insulated glass in the wealthy Östermalm[27], contaminates the foreground in the noisy neighbourhoods of Kista and Rinkeby.

Despite the simultaneity and continuity of the auditory experience, I can always direct my attention towards individual sounds that I single out from the background rhythm; this is *temporal focus* (Ihde 2012:92). It is a moment in the flow of auditory experience that I isolate and bring into the foreground. The narrower my temporal focus, the greater the portion of sound experience that falls into the background (if I focus on a word my friend just said, I might likely lose their train of thoughts). Conversely, I can adopt a "panoramic" listening, like when I relax in the woods, without paying attention to individual stimuli (this is much the same as what happens visually when I lazily let my eyes wander towards the horizon).

As sight has a ratio between the focus area in the centre and the "fringe" that gradually fades into the horizon, so hearing perception has a ratio between the extremes of the temporal span of a sounding thing. I may focus on the outset of the sound or its reverberations; in the first case I am stretching my perception towards the future, since all my senses are waiting for the sound to make its appearance (my expectations towards the event); in the second case I am holding my attention on the slow modulation of sound after its appearance, so that I can grasp further information about it and the context (the trailing off of the sound in my mind). Lastly, the horizon is silence, what is not audible, or unsaid.

<center>***</center>

Sound is timeful and acquires symbolic meaning through duration, which makes it a powerful place-making medium. Two specific properties of sound temporality are simultaneity and continuity, for a soundscape is a non-stop palimpsest of multiple

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[27] A rich neighbourhood on the East side of Stockholm that counts most Stockholm embassies and a wealth of Crown-owned buildings, and sports some of the highest housing prices in Sweden.

sources that sound at once. However, it is possible to divide sound perception into a foreground-background ratio, a relationship that should be interrogated for power dynamics that explain the fractures of perceived soundscapes along social cleavages. Within the auditory ratio, a temporal focus allows to single out a sound from the background rhythm, a process that might point to meaningful sounds. Further, by paying attention either to the outset or to the reverberations of a sound, a temporal focus evokes, respectively, the future or the past. Thus, temporal foci indicate the dynamic temporality of sound, which constantly ties past reverberations and future expectations to present perception. Lastly, the limit of the audible defines horizonal phenomena, such as silence. Depending on the focus, hearing conveys different existential possibilities, i.e. information, to the listener. If I temporally focus on the leading edge of the sound, I can maximise hearing's capability at directionality, i.e. discerning where the sound comes from, pinpointing the source-object; on the other hand, if I temporally focus on the reverberations, I can maximise hearing's information about surfaces and, even more so, interiors (think of the trailing off of my nail hitting a bell — it is the ringing, not the clicking, that gives away the metal surface and the hollow cavity; in a word, the "bell-ness" of the bell). This brings us to the spatiality of sound.

The spatiality of sound: *surroundability, directionality, double dimensionality, penetrability, continuity, liveliness*

> When a couple having a conversation [...] imposes itself on us, we cannot help but feel that it concerns us (Chion 2015:12).

"To observe" comes from the Latin *ob-servare*, "to keep (something) in front (of oneself)". Indeed, observing is always looking *at* something, it implies a directionality in which my gaze is inevitably directed to the front, forward. Seeing paints a world that has a privileged magnetic pole to which our perceptual compasses are calibrated; if I look at something, it is in front of me — it might not be physically facing my body, but it is dominating the field of view, central in my perception. Conversely, the spatiality of

sound is more attuned to *surroundability* (or omnidirectionality) than "forwardness" (a sphere versus a line). Sound is a "slow" stimulus that lets us discern the space and spatiality of an object as it fills the environment with reverberations; much like touch needs time to cover a whole surface and then discern the shape in its entirety. In the durational presentation of experience, sound gains spatial information that sight cannot (think about a lightning-fast arrow, whose shape and identity can only be grasped by hearing). In this sense, sound spatiality is a consequence of its timefulness, for time is needed for informative resonances to form in space (Ihde 2012:66). Therefore, sound spatiality is *embedded* and *relational*: being omnidirectional, sound carries diffused information about the context; being durational, it acquires meaning by interacting with the environment.

Objects are *given voice* by other objects (imagine the rattle of a die in a box), and more generally by the very place they sound in — there are no solo voices in the world, always at least "duets" between a voice and its ambient resonance. We hear surfaces and textures (think about the blind person who experiences the world at the end of their walking cane). The difference between heard and seen surfaces is that sight allows one to easily grasp extension, whereas hearing is normally restricted to a small portion of a surface. Interestingly though, the uniqueness of hearing is that we hear *interiors* (Ihde 2012:71). This allows us to *hear the invisible*: "What remained hidden from my eyes is revealed to my ears. The watermelon reveals its ripeness; the ice its thinness; the cup its half-full contents; the water reservoir, though enclosed, reveals exactly the level of the water inside in the sounding of interiors" (*id.*).

Compare two very different perceptions that nonetheless focus on the spatiality of sound, specifically of sound as a *trace* of space. The first are Emerson's thoughts about memory as a rearrangement of the surroundings, that vividly depict a world that sounds only insofar as objects interact:

> The planet, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain; the river its channel in the soil; the animal its bones in the stratum; the fern and leaf their modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or the stone. Not a foot steps into the snow or along the ground, but prints, in characters more or less lasting, a map of its march. Every act of the

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man inscribes itself in the memories of his fellows and in his own manners and face. *The air is full of sounds*; the sky, of tokens; the round is all memoranda and signatures, and every object covered over with hints which speak to the intelligent. (Emerson [1850] 1907:191, my emphasis)

Like wordless voices, animal cries, machinery hums and environmental cues convey information (meaning) about their sources (objects), the direction they are following, the surroundings. In a word, they act as *per-sonas*, as ancient Greek masks, which simultaneously amplified the voice of the actor and manifested their theatrical identity (Ihde 2012:14).

The second is Daughtry's phenomenological analysis (it is, in effect, a reduction) of Kirsanov recordings. In 1981, Kirsanov was a twenty-nine-year-old officer in a KGB regiment in Afghanistan; he was also a guitarist and somewhat tech-savvy, and sampled hours of war and everyday-life Afghani soundscapes, overdubbed with his own songs in complex palimpsests of cries, shootings, bombs, tangos and political polemic. As Daughtry listens to them, he becomes aware of how sound spatiality conveys meaning.

On successive listenings, I find myself focusing less on the words, the melody, or even the gunfire — less on the phenomenal surface, if you will — and more on the stark contrast between the wide-open acoustic space of the ambient recordings and the claustrophobic, tin-can-like space of the steam bath in which Kirsanov's voice and guitar were recorded. The different sets of *echo and decay* that characterize the two recording venues bespeak two different arrangements of wartime bodies: one, nestled within the relative protection of a military base; another, exposed to the vertiginous chaos of the battlefield. This audible difference, *this sonic residue of resonant spaces*, constitutes another layer that one can tease out of this palimpsestic recording. (Daughtry 2017:63, my emphasis)

In addition to omnidirectionality, while I am immersed in the auditory field, I can always alter the foreground-background ratio and bring a sound forward (two people say my name while the metro storms the station) as a directional focus. Together,

surroundability and directionality give rise to sound's main spatial feature: *double dimensionality* (*ibid.,* p. 77). Surroundability and directionality are always co-present in our hearing experience and define its richness, making us both suffer and own our hearing (sometimes sounds invade us, sometimes we are able to push them away or filter them)[28]. Sound is pervasive in that it *penetrates* our world experience and invades awareness as a command (obey comes from *ob-audire*, "listen from below"). This is all the more evident when we realise that we are always surrounded by sound, even if we close our ears or wear earplugs. The auditory field is *continuous*; sound is always on, and silence is not its absence, rather a relative quietness.

Lastly, we associate sound to motion and life (*ibid.*, p. 83), and its absence to death or the uncanny. I can think of a multitude of movies that use sound this way, where abstract animations gain meaning and "come alive" thanks to the soundtrack and sound effects; or, conversely, where a shooting abruptly gets silent, rendering everything more dramatic and detached. "The intimate relation between animation, motion, and sound lies at the threshold of the inner secret of auditory experience, the timefulness of sound. The auditory field is not a static field" (*id.*).

In sum, by establishing resonances in space, sound inhabits it and diffuses properties and meanings. It lasts, it is durable and penetrating; therefore, it is a potentially powerful place-making tool — for example, if I think of Whitman's *I hear America*, I hear a lively imagined community lingering in the air:

> I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
> Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
> The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
> The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
> The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
> The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
> The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,

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[28] Double dimensionality is especially present in human speech: I can focus on you, and at the same time your voice surrounds me, exceeding your visual outline. Voice makes the Other fully present as an auditory aura. Technology exploits fully sound's double dimensionality, in that it bolsters both surroundability (Dolby Atmos) and directionality (microsonars for medical purposes).

The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl
sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust,
friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

(Whitman and Sabuda 1991)

However, in that it reveals the invisible, sound may be perceived as dangerous, for it is a continuous pervasive "contamination" of the environment, one that transcends visual barriers such as insulated windows and walls. An auditory inquiry should ask questions like: "Who has the means to diffuse sound, and therefore meaning?" "Is auditory contamination perceived as a threat? Is someone inflicting it?" "What are the accepted ways of sound diffusion?" "What does the sound that spills outside tell us about the inside?", and so on.

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The auditory field has unique spatial characteristics that we need to be aware of if we are to research sound experiences. First, sound surrounds us and acquires meaning through its duration in space, thus establishing a lasting connection with it. Therefore, spatiality is embedded and relational: being omnidirectional, sound carries diffused contextual information; being durational, it acquires meaning in that it interacts with the environment. We can hear surfaces and textures, and even interiors, in that sound makes the invisible audible. Hearing can be directional, too, for within the foreground-background ratio we can select a source to listen to. The continuous co-presence of surroundability and directionality is defined as a double dimensionality that makes sound penetrating and pervasive, thus calling for an analysis that considers the listener as both subject *of* and subject *to* their own hearing. Lastly, the auditory field is dynamic, for the timefulness of sound associates it with motion and liveliness, whereas silence (relative quietness) is often associated with stillness and eeriness.

Horizonal phenomena: silence and quietness

What is present is always found "inside" or within horizons; what is "not-given" locates what is given (Ihde 2012:108–9).

Sound makes the invisible audible, supporting the social scientist who investigates invisible attitudes, values, and meanings (Cardano 2020). However, what is the status of the inaudible? Is it informative and meaningful, or is it an empty reference point? How does it relate with social inequality? As I will argue later, the inaudible and the social connect to gentrification in Stockholm and to the Swedish "secular religion" of nature; before that, I will unravel the different dimensions that form "silence" as a complex concept.

If we call "horizon" the border of our auditory experience, it is clear that we can never directly experience it. It constantly recedes from perception; however, it fulfils a substantial function: it situates the auditory field. What and how we hear is always put into perspective by what we cannot hear. Auditorily speaking, the horizon is silence.

A widespread conception of silence is based on the *thesis of negativity*, which states that 1) there is nothing being sensed in silence (silence is absence), and 2) there is no sensation associated with it (silence is a non-experience, therefore incommunicable[29]) (Meadows 2020; Sorensen 2011); at best, silence would be a state of pure (objectless) awareness of a temporal or spatio-temporal region (Phillips 2013). Despite acknowledging that it enables the subject to listen, the thesis of negativity implies that silence, simply, *is not*. This conceptualisation of silence as an exercise of a metaphysical yoga rests on an ideal type of silence that does not exist in reality, one devoid of blood pumping in our veins and floors cracking in a hall where Cage's 4'33" is performed. I find this perspective sociologically sterile, for everyday life and case studies show that silence can be — like all things human — meaningful. I may be silent while I listen incredulously to my friend's news, but my disbelief is betrayed precisely

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[29] About this see Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (2011) who theorised that not communicating is impossible for the human being.

by how silence voices my non-talking. In this *horizonal* experience[30], what I am *not* saying colours the interaction with shades of scepticism, suspicion, or ill-concealed embarrassment. In silence other languages emerge: that of gesture, and that of touch; both of which convey emotions and an intense though silent communication (Ihde 2012:148). Even when I talk to myself, the tone of my inner voice (an uncanny whisper or a motivational roar) shapes the meaning of the words. Furthermore, directing our attention to the horizon of hearing informs about the beginning of perception, for the horizon is where we can grasp the giving of the given (*id.*). For instance, as I turn on the radio in the car, I can experience the instant in which the horizon changes from "outside the car" to "outside the song"; my auditory experience is put in a totally different perspective: from one of relative cuddling and detachment given by the dampening of outside noise, to one of immersion into a musical "mood"[31].

Silence limits the auditory experience, frames it, and ultimately signifies it in relation to itself. In sociological terms, if people interact according to their own definition of the situation (Egloff 2015; Thomas, Znaniecki, and Zaretsky 1996), then silence *frames* the situation, allowing actors to organise actions, sense, and evaluations according to a limited perception (Ferrero Camoletto and Genova 2019; Genova 2011; Goffman 1986). Defining requires borders (what a frame does to a painting) and silence is the border of the auditory perception, indicating up to where the situation falls within our definition, and where it ceases to be acceptable. As I confide in my friend and trust her with my frailest thoughts, the irreplaceable value of her words is delimited by the silence of secrecy; the definition of the situation — a confession — holds only insofar as silence frames it. It is the "back" of sound, and as such it gives it depth and a "rounder" meaning; it situates sound.

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[30] Meaning that it pertains to silence as the horizon of auditory perception.

[31] The car is a peculiar auditory centaur, in the sense that it both acts as a reassuring cocoon (Dawson 2017; Hall 2001) that provides a shield from urban mayhem, and it reproduces social inequalities by providing silence as a luxury commodity and status symbol (apart from the obvious visual and performance differences, what immediately sets apart a cheap car from an expensive one is sound insulation; SUVs are the epitome of this, providing a socio-proof bubble of individuality and silence to those who can afford them).

Therefore, silence is crucial to the social world and to the sociologist, for it is a trace of the practices that lead to it, exploit it, or are hidden, muted, or erased by it (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417).

> A trace can be an indication, a sign, a clue, a remnant, a ghost, a trail; or footprints associated with inclination, desires, and/or compulsions to unearth, find out, or perhaps rescue from oblivion (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:420).

As the non-narrative lubricant of social affairs, silence assumes a wealth of meanings and fosters the most varied practices, evocatively summarised by Dragojlovic:

> Silence [...] can be almost tangibly present, or go entirely unnoticed. It can harbour a range of affects, meanings and unspoken stories, and can touch those for whom it matters in wildly different ways. Silence can signal a form of oppression, produced by the forces that exclude certain ideas, people and words from being spoken, visible, attended to, or even thought about. Similarly, silence can be a haunting or lingering ghost from the past that is uncannily present in the narratives and modes of life that constitute people's imaginative possibilities and horizons of expectation. In contrast, silence can be strategic. It can be gentle; a form of protection against painful thoughts; a form of respect; a quiet empathy; letting the other be; caring; silently being together. It can create a world in a non-narrative form (id.).

Analogously, French sociologist Le Breton singles out five fields of social life where silence plays specific roles (Le Breton 2018):

- *silence in communication*: it allows conversation to take place by establishing turns; it signals the beginning and the end of a social encounter, it fosters introspection and reflection (thus better understanding) during pauses; it outlines the cultural border between the taciturn and the big mouth, each tied to gender,

age and status roles[32]; it reflects the etiquette prescribed within a group to govern noise (e.g. phones ringing in a theatre, or crowd noise in a cinema) and the discourse (etiquette commonly requires the host to avoid downtime); mutism may signal a deep discomfort, subordination or censorship; it can act as a personal shield or, on the contrary, as a sword to break the agreement on the social situation of an équipe (Goffman 1986);

- *silence in politics*: "every hierarchical system implies a channelling of the word, a manipulation of silence which offers itself as a strategic area of retreat and, at the same time, for those who suffer it, as a dangerous reserve of threats" (Le Breton 2018:131, my translation); in politics, those who *own* silence usually have the power, since while speech exposes, silence gives time to assess and act with caution; silence is a tool to control interactions and emotions, myself (my privacy) and the Other; in other cases, as we will hear later, silence as denial is a powerful weapon of resistance: "Silence before a question is like the ricochet of a weapon off a shield or armour" (Canetti 1994:346); silence can also be the manifestation of acquiescence, or the unspeakable, as happens in a minute's silence after a loss;

- *silence as discipline*: silence makes secrecy possible, and secrecy is ultimately self-control, setting boundaries to words to make them strategically valuable by negating them (poker players use it this way); initiatory secrets are present in every society (e.g. youth slang); silence as discipline separates the private from the public, the I from the Other; we constantly omit things to others, for a certain indeterminacy is required for interactions to work smoothly — this is also the root of trust and faith;

- *silence in spirituality*: although most monotheistic religions revolve around a God of words and speech, silence is often associated with mysticism, self-discipline, and meditation; especially in the Christian religion, where human

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[32] Elena Gianini Belotti, about her mother, recalls: "She did not know how to claim her rights, she floundered haphazardly like many other women of her age and condition, to get out of a condition of helplessness, of women-specific suffering that her mother had bequeathed to her, that she had lived confusedly, with a sense of the wrongs and the injustices suffered but without being able to find explanations that cross the personal condition; and that now she was bequeathing to me [...]. But that I finally refused, *rejecting silence*" (Gianini Belotti 1998:60, my translation, my emphasis). Here silence evokes transgenerational trauma, symbolic violence through education, and different communicative functions associated with silence through different generations.

speech is flawed by bodily impulses, silence is the herald of introspection, therefore a privileged vessel to the music of God, chosen by monks and hermits; silence confronts a person with solitude, potentially freeing up space for the metaphysical and the spiritual;

- *silence and death*: death, especially in Western societies, is the quintessential unspeakable; secret police, ninjas and assassins are her quiet agents; pain often annihilates word in its wake, causing a fracture that makes "I", other; the shared lucid degeneration of a chronic disease makes it difficult to find words that overcome the inevitable. However, death and suffering produce a silence that is ripe with affect: in her vibrant autoethnography about attachment and chronic illness, Ellis says: "I realised that I could not talk about loss without showing attachment" (Ellis 1995:9) — the silence of death has the potential to be both nullifying and very human;

- *silence as aspiration*: silence may be a strive for a peaceful soundscape that favours personal recollection and self-abandonment to reconnect with the world (Le Breton 2018:372–73); according to this aspiration, silence is a moral reservoir that allows me to suspend time and rebalance, centre on myself (as I will argue later, silence is a force of spatialisation centred on the person). "When regained, silence causes a strong feeling of existing" (*id.*).

Tracing silence back to its social workings is necessary to complement a sound inquiry with the presence of the inaudible — the equivalent of what a political sociologist would do with the absence of censored fragments from the institutionalised discourse. Anthropologically, silence may be a trace of intergenerational violence, as it manifests itself as "ghosts", or "hauntings" (Gordon 2008), a past that hurts the present, an archaeology of trauma (Beneduce 2019). The burden of a diasporic past often reifies itself as silence that is imbued with racism, imperialism and other forms of oppression (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021). Furthermore, the socially healthy rhythm of silence and telling may be disrupted by the voice of power, as in violent urban requalification or resettlement projects. However, resistant voices might emerge from violent silencing, in the attempt to reclaim homely soundscapes, and the rhythm of home. There is no rhythm without silence — for it enables conversations by establishing turns —, and

there is no ritual without rhythm — for it creates a shared temporality we can somewhat foresee (*ibid*., p. 483). Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that silence is not just a trace of trauma, or a ghost; it can also be a form of care and respect: some Cambodians choose to resort to spirit possession cults instead of storytelling to address intergenerational trauma from the Pol Pot years; Kuranko people in Sierra Leone observe the silence while being together in a room, as a way to let silence tactfully restore the social world (Jackson 2004).

The equation *silence = non-agency* does not hold true to the test of reality, although it is a very diffused prejudice: the very word *parliament*[33] suggests that politics (the quintessential world-building practice) requires voice, *logos* and rationality; similarly, Freudian psychoanalysis popularised the idea that we *need* to speak out and talk through traumas; the heroic stereotype of the dissident depicts a person who shouts in the streets and loudly challenges power. However, silence does political work (Brito Vieira 2021:291) in that the breaking of expected silence plays a role in subversion; silence as an embodied form of resistance is sometimes more powerful than loud protesting, for instance because it can be more relatable; silence is more complex and ambiguous than rationalised speech, therefore it could protect minorities who willingly withdraw from the public arena (*ibid.,* p. 292). From a sociological stance, silence is often a tacit indicator of social conflict emerging from the disruption of the conversational rhythm between social groups (one that demands turns to speak and to be heard). Three case studies triangulate this phenomenon in China, Italy, and Sweden.

> Rituals are heartbeats on a grand social scale, and like all rhythms they require a phase change to mark time: ritual time and ordinary time, tick and tock, the active phase of the heartbeat and the resting phase. Silence, that is, is built into the idea of rhythm and thus of our social lives together. (Weller 2021:483)

In the early 2000s, the rural townships of Chefang and Xietang, West of Shanghai, were completely levelled by bulldozers as the result of an agreement between China and Singapore to attract the rising Chinese middle class with project of urban

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[33] From the barbaric Latin *parabulare*, "to talk".

redevelopment, gentrification and touristification (Weller 2021:488). Everything was destroyed, and tens (or hundreds, since nobody kept count) of temples dedicated to local deities were razed to the ground, and the worshipped statues buried in a mass grave. People from the townships and villages were forced to resettle in huge apartments, together with the newcomers. In fact, mini-ghettos (*id.*). A couple of temples were built in the new Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP, the product of overnight urbanisation) to accommodate newly carved statues, according to the dominant Daoist taste for rationalisation. Now, the local population constituted a minority of the overall SIP population; deities had been detached from the villages as social units; the rhythm of spirituality and socialisation was disrupted. In response, what spirit mediums (commonly referred to as "incense heads") did, was to repurpose their new garages into private altars. These replaced both part of the village's religious life, and of its social life: as a silent and cool place in the scorching heat of Southeast China, they soon became a place of aggregation. After that, ghosts began to appear to incense heads, manifestations of the buried ones, denouncing their suffering: an indirect way of keeping a balance between the pain of the past and the necessity to build a future, while trying to speak the unspeakable. Silences enable rhythm, which hints at a shared future, an open, anxious, yet hopeful one (*id.*). Two silences linger in Suzhou: that of loss, and that of ritual. The first is that of the old deities, whom gentrification tossed away in a mass grave; that of the weekend visits to relatives and friends in the villages; and that of the old countryside crossed by canals. On the other hand, the private altars in the garages show "the process of creating social worlds anew by pulling the silence of loss into the rhythms of a ritual life" (Weller:490). Deities started to speak again to their worshippers through incense heads; the loss was acknowledged in silence by retaining the local customs and quietly resisting to Daoist rationalisation. This case vividly highlights silence as an agentive force, one that makes new ritual life possible *while* embracing yearning and loss; one that resignifies space.

Some 9'000 kilometres West of Suzhou, almost at the same latitude, lies Gagliano Aterno, a small village in the Subequana Valley, close to L'Aquila[34]. Because of a fast depopulation — tied both to urbanism and the aftermath of the 2009 earthquake —, now only some 250 people and a big silence dwell in Gagliano, although the count

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[34] The following arguments derive from my fieldwork in Gagliano Aterno in January 2021, hosted by MIM's (Montagne In Movimento) co-founder Raffaele Spadano.

fluctuates a lot between winter, when the village is mostly deserted and silent, and summer, when younger people come back and county fairs spice up the neighbourhood. The Italian government subsumed Gagliano into the so-called "internal areas", defined by an indicator of civil deprivation, i.e. the distance in minutes from some essential services like schools, hospitals, and railway stations (De Rossi 2020:55). Gagliano Aterno is so distant from the nearest hospital (Sulmona, forty minutes away by car, with no snow and no traffic), that "during the first lockdown it was scary to hear the ambulance in the village, it was a noise we weren't used to" (Luca Santilli, mayor of Gagliano Aterno). Silence, especially during lockdown, was heavy. It was the auditory proof of isolation. There was the silence of death and disease, the silence of institutions and media, who focussed on the narrative of covid-19's "national emergency" and abandoned internal areas (which were mostly covered for tourism and gentrification purposes anyway); the silence of socialising in the deserted café, as the owner Nadia recalls: "I tried to go out, but I found nobody. No one to chat with"; the silence of spirituality, chosen by local monks, who were not as traumatised by the sudden quietness. However, there is a positive, agentive side to these absences: the unbearable silence pushed the community into a process of self-renovation and action-research, supported by different universities and investors; the sound of the drills rebuilding Gagliano "is hope. At least, Gagliano will be reborn, some people will come back, those who were forced to go away [after the earthquake], because they did not have a house anymore. I hope" (Nadia, personal interview). As in the case of Suzhou, silence establishes a rhythm with sound: in Gagliano every pause in the drilling offers fertile ground for hope, and for community identity to grow — it is in these silences that Gaglianese people often mention the history of the village as home to some of the best bell-smelters of Italy. In the silence of memory lies the "campanone" (big bell), a cultural landmark destroyed by the earthquake. However, its quietness enhances its identitarian charge, pushing mayor Santilli to include it in the narrative of reconstruction, as a gem of territorial capital. In a sense, the historical voice of Gagliano speaks even if it is silent. Applied to Gagliano Aterno, a sociological analysis of silence shows that it acts as an indicator of both deprivation, and potential territorial capital (Campagna, Nocentini, and Porcellana 2022; De Rubertis, Mastromarco, and Labianca 2019). Silence reveals the historical-cultural value of the territory and, broken by the

noise of reconstruction, highlights the social processes taking place in the internal areas on a relational level. Here, it works as an indicator of hidden meanings to be unearthed in order to enhance the territory in harmony with local sensitivities — an all the more "gentle" harmonisation (Chueng-Nainby, Lin, and Hu 2015) the more attentive it is to sensoriality, i.e. to the most intimate and immediate experience of the place. Silence, understood both as acting from below, independent or in open contrast to institutions, and as an autonomous claim of an atmospheric history, can be read as the "revenge of places that count for nothing" (Rodríguez-Pose 2018).

Far North in Sweden, there was a time when a "place that counts for nothing" was Södermalm (commonly referred to as simply "Söder"), now a fancy hipster/artsy neighbourhood just south of Stockholm centre (Franzén 2005; Stahre 2007; Tatrai 2015). This urbanistic revolution is even more surprising if we contrast it with what Stockholm looked like approximately a century earlier, in 1860:

> The country road reached far into the city, as if to slowly get the stranger used to all that was new. First the gravel of the road gradually changed over to the cobblestones of the streets, then fields and hills disappeared and were replaced by the green foliage of gardens and by low houses behind red fences. The boy twisted around to try to take everything in. He almost fell off the cart when it suddenly jolted over one of the many drainage ditches in the road. And the houses grew together into stone walls, where yawning gates led to backyard stables and sheds. Outside the inns stood wagons harnessed and waiting for the travellers who lingered over food and aquavit; in the farmers' quarter, farmers transporting goods and produce mixed with horse swindlers and drifters. Here was the life of the city. (Fogelström 2004:15)

Then, gentrification happened. In 1960, one house out of two was lacking a bath or shower, compared to virtually none today; in 1997 only 23% of Södermalm's population was still working class; in 2002 almost 20% of all flats were owned by the municipality, the leading modernisation force (Franzén 2005:59). As for the rest of the city centre, it has become white territory (*id.*). Gentrification can be traced back to the 60s, when politically leftists, students and artists moved in, taking advantage of the low rents provided by the crumbling industrial buildings, and identifying with the popular

culture of Södermalm: tenacious, autonomous and grassroots. This, counterintuitively, suggested that the industrial ruins of Söder could actually be profitable for the municipality; there was a value-gap that now could potentially be closed: the new-middle class was looking for a hip neighbourhood to identify with, one less aristocratic than Östermalm (where all the embassies lie), but close enough to Gamla Stan's history (the mediaeval nucleus). Then, in the 70s the Town Hall lifted the Fair Rent System (*ibid.,* p. 65), and with deregulation came demolitions, renovation and conflicts. The former newcomers (activists, students, and artists) converged into the Södermalm's Tenants Association (HFS) and demanded that the low rents were maintained; they even occupied some houses (a very rare event in Stockholm), an excess that was soon cut by the police. Furthermore, the Swedish strictly bureaucratic and corporative political system left no room for local autonomous forms of place-making and appropriation; policymakers only dialogued with already institutionalised stakeholders (organisations, investors, tenants associations). With no room for informal initiatives, the modernisation of Södermalm advanced quickly. The town municipality forced owners to either renovate their properties, or sell them; meanwhile, the ageing working class was dying out, and families were moving to cheaper modern apartments in the suburbs. Today, walking the streets of Södermalm, no trace is left of the occupation of the Järnet buildings (the only "Järnet" to be found is yet another hipster bar) or the struggle around the Tanto area (now dotted with cosy chiringuitos). As I said before, there is potential for agency in silence; however, for people to *use* silence, and not to be *used* by it, silence must be a communicative choice (Jung 2021). The case of Södermalm is less a case of agentive silence than of gentrification silencing people. From this case, we start to grasp the very different value that silence has in Sweden, where it is entangled with the national narrative of nature, control and purity. A research conducted in 2015 on the local emotional response to the urban redevelopment of Södermalm (Tatrai 2015:46–47) shows two complementing remarks: Söder dwellers seem to be aware and proud of a shared *Södermalmsandan* ("Södermalm's soul"), an atmosphere of uniqueness (of the place), likeness (of people), conviviality, and natural beauty; on the other hand, the "newcomers" reportedly ignore their responsibilities towards the neighbourhood: "They believe they can pay five millions, and then they do not have to do anything else" (*id.*, interview with Matt). This

reflects precisely Franzén's analysis of Söder's gentrification: the main gentrifier was the heightened emphasis on the post-industrial sexyness of the neighbourhood posed by the very same students and activists; the increased appeal led to a steady replacement of old symbolic stakeholders (new social movements and old dwellers, those who cared about Söder as *their home*) with new symbolic stakeholders (middle-class and upper-professionals, heralds of a new life-world[35] who embraced Söder's "hip" as a booster of their private status, instead of growing it as a community). The difficulty of appropriating Söder's space silenced the actions of social movements, and institutionalised them either in the tenant's associations or in small semi-autonomous *Kulturhus* ("culture houses") (Franzén 2005:68).

<center>***</center>

<center>Silence is questioning meaning. (Le Breton 2018:217, my translation)</center>

From the aforementioned cases, it seems evident that silence is, like sound, deeply embedded in space and place. However, the thesis of negativity implicates the a-spatiality of silence. Think about a newly deaf person: they presumably do not experience any spatial quality in their auditory experience. Therefore, the thesis argues, since the silence of the newly deaf person and that of a hearing person would be indistinguishable, the experience of silence is a-spatial. I am not interested in the difference or similarity of the experiences of a deaf and a hearing person; I do believe, however, that silence *is* spatial; better said, it is a spatialising force of our experience. When I walk through the coniferous forest in Tyresta Park, just South of Stockholm, the relative silence that surrounds me exerts a sensory affect that tightly frames my perception around me, my body, my inner workings (both biomechanic and cognitive), and my subjectivity. When I am in a noisy environment, the spatial embeddedness of sound makes me lend an ear to *what is there*; on the contrary, silence makes me listen to *me-here*. In a different fashion, as we will hear later, silence in Sweden is symbolically related to nature, and therefore establishes a less individualistic and more panic

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[35] Similar to *Weltanschauung*, *frame*, and more plainly *social background*, Habermas' concept of *life-world* refers to the pool of preconceptions, competences and attitudes that we use to approach the world (Baxter 1987).

perception. In this sense, I argue that the experience of silence is spatial, too, although in a very different way than the experience of sound. Albeit more ambiguous and open than sound[36], silence too is a strong place-making force in our everyday life and in homemaking practices.

As a social scientist, it is vital that I acknowledge silence as a poetic force — it *does* things to people and to society —, and that I attend to it without filling it in (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:423). Moreover, it is always important to ask a difficult question: how many silence*s* inhabit our field? (Meadows 2020:15) While there might certainly be a somewhat "objective" silence we can all agree on (e.g. that of a calm lake), we should always acknowledge the "local" silences, those that ring a bell to people — awaking memories, affects, awareness. Silence, from a sociological standpoint, is less a reality than a relationship with the world, the trace of a place, its atmosphere; it is inherently relational (Le Breton 2018:372). These silences are much more socially relevant than "objective" quietness measured in dB(A) because, when they aggregate, they may form narratives, establish practices, settle into institutions, and at times (re)build identities, as happened with the silent memory of Suzhou's "incense heads", with the polysemic silence of Gagliano; or as did not happen in Södermalm, where gentrification came at the cost of the old dweller's silence.

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[36] As Weller puts it, "In its present-absence, silence is not a blank slate while meaning is the province only of speech. Quite the opposite, in a sense: silence is filled with multitudes of potential meanings, but refuses to resolve, simplify, and unify those meanings". (Weller 2021:485)

AUDIO DIARY
GAGLIANO: SILENCE

In this audio diary you are listening to the sound of silence of a depopulating town in Central Italy: Gagliano Aterno, close to L'Aquila. First, I reason about the significance of sound, specifically how even few people can signify a place with their voices, footsteps and daily actions. I wonder if there is a threshold above which sound blurs into noise, and more people in the same space would just add quantitative information, instead of qualitative meanings. To this aim, I isolate very simple soundscapes that make up for the multi-layered soundscape of Gagliano. First, the quiet murmuring of chill wind through a frozen reed bed; then the dripping of the century-old well in the town's centre; lastly, the voice of Silvana, a historical dweller of Gagliano, always greeting passers-by through her window or at the doorstep.

Summary: phenomenology

When we listen to the world, we let the world sound us. Listening is deeply tied with the construction of the self in that it establishes a relationship between the self and the world, within and without. Thus, hearing is inherently relational. Phenomenology describes this with the pair noema-noesis: the object itself and its interactive perception are indissoluble because, as embodied beings, we are always immersed into the world and make sense of it through our bodies and senses.

While absorbed in perception, we may exercise reduction: by describing in first-person my intimate embodied perception (*noesis*) of the object (*noema*) — be it "real" or not —, I may try to identify and extract from my experience the mechanisms

that tie it to the external world, and if commonalities exists between my perception and others'. According to phenomenology, individual perception may say something about intersubjective constructs. When applied to sounds, reduction gives way to sound consciousness, the reduction of auditory phenomena. It highlights three core qualities of sounds: temporality, spatiality, and horizonality.

Sound acquires meaning in time; as it lingers in mid air, it lets us locate sources and gather information about the surroundings; it happens simultaneously and continuously, being a constant presence in our lives. However, on special occasions we may exert a temporal focus and individuate sounds; soundwalks are an example of such foci. As it unravels through time, sound gets spatial and informs us about the space it spreads throughout.

Several spatial properties characterise sound: surroundability, directionality, double dimensionality, penetrability, continuity, and liveliness. Unlike sight, which is always directed ahead, hearing is mostly omnidirectional, thus reinforcing its relational charge; on the other hand, when it resonates with an object, it gives it voice, and grants hearing a direction; the inherent co-presence of surroundability and directionality in sound is referred to as double dimensionality. Moreover, sound is pervasive and invades our experience, all the more as it is continuous and all-encompassing. Generally, sound is associated with motion and life, whereas its absence to death and the uncanny.

Lastly, horizonality implies that there are meanings to be found in silence, at the borders of sound. First, silence frames social situations and allows actors to act within a limited field (e.g. a secret); moreover, silence allows turns in communication; acts as both a tool of power and of resistance in politics, signals discipline; fosters introspection and spirituality; signifies the unspeakable, such as death and severe pain; and may help establish a positive rhythm between loss and rituality, allowing for identities to be re-found and re-built, and for the past to be remembered in an intimate way.

The sound of home

February 2nd, 2023. My friend Matteo and I are waiting for someone to let us into the venue where Rancore just started his gig. Whatever the reason — pity, admiration or greed —, we go in. At some point, while theatrically describing himself as a chrono-surfer who delivers letters across universes and timelines, Rancore mentions that his art — music — is made possible by the very same element that allows for life to exist: air. Indeed, sound is vibration, and without air there is no vibration[37]. In his fictional world, his "letters" (songs) are delivered through air (music). On the same page, the German philosopher Sloterdijk's reflected on the connection between air, vibration, and life; he argues that "atmo-terrorists"[38] exploit the inescapable connection between air and life to render existence impossible (Sloterdijk, Patton, and Corcoran 2009). Air and sound share many of the traits phenomenology highlighted: they are virtually ubiquitous, continuous, penetrant and pervasive, and act as carriers of meaning and spatial information. Moreover, yet another detail links air vibrations to life, for biology reminds us that the ears are the first sensory organs formed in the foetus.

The double metaphor of air as medium of both life and sound puts the latter in a biocultural relationship with the former; a metaphor whose keystone is the concept of "home". Through air, sound and life share family traits that relate to a place where the air feels safe, where sound travels at a slower tempo, allowing us to understand it, own it, be cocooned by it. Like air, sound slips into "the crevices or secret spaces of everyday life" (Muller 2017:166), thus allowing us to domesticate space at the slowest yet most effective rate. For years our voice and the voices of our beloved fill the place we inhabit; its air, in return, starts to smell like home. Very differently, sound can also fill the air with horror and fear, leveraging its pervasiveness on behalf of the tyranny of home (Douglas 1991).

In the following paragraphs, I will explore home as a complex analytical concept derived from common sense; I will focus on its sociocultural formation (home as social

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[37] Of course, sound can also travel through solids and liquids, although it is an accessory component of our hearing experience.
[38] On April 22, 1915, in Ypres (West Flanders), the German army used a chlorine gas meant to exterminate indiscriminately. According to Sloterdijk, this set the beginning of the Twentieth century, with a new aesthetic consciousness that was vital for key technological development, especially in chemistry (pesticides) and in warfare (chemical weapons).

construction and production); the conflicts that revolve around homemaking (the politics of home); and the strategies implemented by people who move or lose home, focussing on their musical instances. I will then direct the journey towards atmospheres and how homely sounds can be profitably described as such. Gradually, home will start to sound less like a naturally desirable place, and more like an historically situated institution that acts as the crucible of society, balancing out micro and macro forces (Mallett 2004:68).

House/home: the socio-emotional construction of the place where I belong

A volte, casa è una persona.
("sometimes, home is a person", Marta, personal conversation)

"Home" is many things. The place where one lives, a built house, a caravan, a nation, family, a group of people, one person, a language, the birthplace or homeland, a habitat, the country where an invention was patented, places of institutional care, a familiar topic. Usually, sociology defines the home as a sociospatial unit of interaction, and the household as the socioeconomic unit of production (Mallett 2004; Saunders and Williams 1988). A related concept is that of "belonging"; whereas "home" usually refers to an individual feeling, "belonging" is more often described as an affiliation with a larger group, a context (Kusenbach and Paulsen 2019:7). Shortly, homemaking happens at the three levels of the household (micro), the community (meso), and the nation (macro) (Duyvendak 2011:111).

If a space is defined by a geographic location, a material form, and investment with meaning and value (Gieryn 2000), it is clear that none of the first two exhaust the definition: the location of home is variable through a person's life — in today's fluid society, even more so (Bauman 2000; Sennett 1999) — and for migrants and other moving people it is all but fixed; moreover, there is no evidence supporting the claim that home requires a *house* (i.e. a built environment), a concept that is less universal and

more tied to the individualistic ideals of the Anglo-European bourgeoisie (Mallett 2004; Rybczynski 1987). However, both location and materiality are tightly related to the meaningfulness of the home: the persistence of our surroundings foster acquaintance, and furniture may become a symbolic prosthesis of a person (Birindelli 2003).

The meanings attached to home cover three dimensions: familiarity, haven, and heaven (Duyvendak 2011; Kusenbach and Paulsen 2019). *Familiarity* indicates an in-depth knowledge of a place that is built with time, a form of embodied territorial capital (De Rossi 2020); the most evident consequence of familiarity is the taken-for-grantedness of most of the home's workings, purposes, and norms. It is both habitat and habitus, a place that objectively offers the socioeconomic resources to survive and reproduce, and a set of performed norms, values, and practices that establishes our routines. *Haven* refers to the comfort of being home, the sense of safety that makes us accepted, welcome, "normal" — the (ideal) home is the refuge where no questions are asked about our existence[39]; home is the place where identity is free to unravel and develop. *Heaven* is the feeling of a symbolic connection with others who share (part of) our history or cultural practices. Home as heaven is rooted more in membership than in materiality, and thus escapes the limitation of four walls, and opens the doors to more indefinite and ample spaces, such as regions, multi-situated homes, and more.

Individual desires, emotions and attachment work with the goal of making the "actual" home the best approximation of the "ideal" home. The latter is the culturally coded reification of societal norms, values and aspirations; ultimately, in its material version (house), the home is the most glaring showcase of social status — second only to clothes and body modifications, which are portable homes, scenery (Goffman 1990). In this sense, home is where a person connects private emotions with social expectations and norms (Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020). The ideal home is a place that needs no justification, a space of normality; and "normal" is the individual perception of the "normed". Structural forces that affect homes regard gender, intergenerational and personal relationships, and dichotomies such as public-private, and secular-sacred. Thus, the concept of home provides an empirical venue to untangle micro-macro

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[39] As we will see later — and, I guess, as many children with overprotective parents may have experienced —, the comfort of one member of the household may come at the expense of another's piece of home, in the so-called tyranny of home (Douglas 1991).

intersections between identities, emotions, cultures and social structures (*ibid.*, p. 6); home works as a "keystone" that makes the broader social system work. Furthermore, this implies that home is an inherently multiscalar concept, which can refer either to a house or to the country of origin. People develop nested senses of home on different scales: migrants and refugees may feel at home in their neighbourhoods but not in their apartments, and even less in the overall nations and larger groups (Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2017). Analogously, in the early stages of the migrant trajectory, people may recognise only one exclusive home, the community of origin (Boccagni 2017). Hardships and deprivation may even turn home into a virtual space of mediated interactions (e.g. Skype calls or periodic meetings) (Horst and Miller 2012).

Is home a purely desirable goal? The pressure and stigmatisation that society exerts on homeless people, refugees and groups labelled as "nomadic" says otherwise. Culture is very prescriptive when it comes to what a home should and should *not* be, and society provides systems of opportunities that allow very few to build whatever they want and call it home, like Jung's tower in Switzerland. Furthermore, I argued that, as a haven, it is the place where identity is nurtured and developed through trial and error. Indeed, essential to home is gaining a sense of control, agency, and personal expression (Douglas 1991); however, home is also the arena where society struggles to reproduce itself. As a consequence, rules, roles, and expectations are issued, and members of a household must respect them, lest home be shattered. Home is an moral institution with multiple purposes and undefined goals (*id.*), based on delayed reciprocity (the parents hope that, when they grow old, their children will assist them), massive redundancies (e.g. regarding the different generational and gender roles), coordination (e.g. meal times), and control over time, space, people ("this house is not a hotel!"), and taste (no one gets their favourite dish, everyone gets what they are indifferent to, to avoid food hates). As Douglas has it, home is at the same time "inexorable and absurd" (Douglas 1991:287). Not all is lost, though, for home is also where exceptions are made, to accommodate the new for the sake of home itself. If, on the one hand, home is a venue of social reproduction subject to structural forces, it is also the ground of *homemaking*, a deeply agentive performative practice that starts when we "play home" as toddlers, and grows to be an arena where we may question or

confirm gender stereotypes (Park, Thomson, and Curtice 2008). homemaking is ultimately "a dynamic set of practices, informed by culture, that facilitates a range of emotional experiences and allows individuals to express personal and collective identities" (Kusenbach and Paulsen 2019:7).

> The home is the realization of ideas (Douglas 1991:290).

Although the strive for homemaking (not necessarily house-making) is one of the basic drivers of human life, how is it that such a major anthropological practice is effective yet non taught, structured yet unreflexive? The main reason is that home is, as I said, an open-ended institution "whose uses cannot be defined except as a presentation of a general plan for meeting future needs" (Douglas 1991:295). This reminds me of Suzhou's new altars down in the shaded garages, patchy homes that provided space for rituality, safety and a shared future. To conclude, a good working definition of home could be: a place of deep emotional attachment where a person, or a group, has agency, means of personal expression, and power to control space and time to a certain degree. It is the crucible of society, less because it is the building block of economics, and more because it is where micro and macro meet, where systems of opportunity translate social values and norms (the "ideal" home) into practices and places (the "actual" home). As a place of both freedom and control, development and correction, home may be both empowering and tyrannical. Whatever the case, it is always a relational concept, much like sound, one that dialogues constantly with both me and the society I inhabit. This succinct review of the concept of home leaves interesting questions open: how does home feel in the body (especially, in gendered bodies)? how do home (as individual self-expression, agency, and creativity) and belonging (the relationship with the structural context) connect?

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Home is an emplaced relationship, i.e. an inherently relational place-making practice that is complex and whose understanding must comprehend both belonging, absence, and the tyranny of home. homemaking regards both the relational origin of

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home (the relationships with people, animals and things); sociocultural norms that regulate what home is (not) and how (not) to make it; and the interaction between individual emotions and motives, and structural forces that result in an unequal distribution of the resources to make oneself at home in a certain context. Shortly: relationships, cultures, and structures. The dialogue between the ideal and the actual home highlights the constant negotiations between individuals and structural forces, which affect how differently homes are conceptualised in terms of location, materiality, and meanings — in particular, familiarity, haven, and heaven.

In contemporary societies, social inequalities in the distribution of resources, and massive flows of people raise issues of displacement and homemaking on a global level; therefore, questioning the political dimension of home is essential to better understand much of the ongoing social conflict.

The politics of home: homemaking and social conflict

> The very ability to feel at home and to make oneself at home is an unevenly distributed resource, reflective of deeper patterns of inequality (Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020:7)

Every public ceremony that puts at stake the prestige of the city is generally preceded by the removal of the homeless. It was the case for the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin, when the entire city centre was "cleaned up" for the sake of decor, pushing marginalised people towards the northern green area subsequently nicknamed "Tossic [*sic*] Park" (Pagliassotti 2018). Police function as agents of moral aesthetics, enforcing human-architecture symmetry for beauty/security-seeking tourists and residents. The idea of homogeneity being a prerequisite for home is long-lived: dating back to the birth of nation-states, it is now flourishing again in the rhetorics of populist parties throughout the Western world and beyond (the Chinese repression against the Uyghur and Tibetan minorities; the endless civil wars in Afghanistan between different

ethnic groups; the numerous genocides throughout Africa, to name but a few). Usually, this kind of imagined homogeneity is found in a mythical past where only "locals" populated the nation, before the Barbarians came and threatened unity; slowly, nation-states are turning into nostalgic nations (Duyvendak 2011). Homogeneity (however defined, even as loosely as "like-minded people") is, together with familiarity, a requisite of home, on top of which haven and heaven may be embroidered; however, contemporary nations are generally all but homogeneous. The interaction between homogeneity and heterogeneity, and the private and public domains creates four spheres where home is negotiated:

Table 6.2   Conceptions of 'home' in the four spheres

	Individual/Private	**Collective/Public**
Homogeneous	Household *Private Sphere* Haven/Particular place	Community *Associational Sphere* Heaven/Particular place
Heterogeneous	Workplace *Economic Sphere* Haven/Generic place	Nation-State *Politico-Cultural Sphere* Hybrid/Symbolic place

Fig. 2: Home typology

(Duyvendak 2011:122)

Whether it is at the household, community, workplace or nation-state level, home is an intrinsically political concept, and a political arena, because as an owned place where time and space are appropriated, it requires both a person who claims ownership and control, and another who endorses them. Home is as much a matter of control and attachment, as it is of identity and recognition (Birindelli 2003; Donatiello 2015). In the populist "logic of identities" (Duyvendak 2011:5), my ability to feel at home comes at the expense of someone else's — the principle of communicating vessels is applied to people. As an existential claim to be in the world, homemaking entails conflict. Fine examples are urban re-framings, as when young people use public monuments as skate ramps, or students occupy and repaint an abandoned school's façade (De Martini Ugolotti and Genova 2023), contrasting claims of memory and historical identity with alternative lifestyles. Furthermore, in the US the traditional idea of the nuclear home as a haven in a turbulent world has long been at odds with women

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exiting it to enter the workforce, and with clashing ideals of rootlessness (the rhetorics of the Far West, digital nomadism, route 66), and a secure homeland (especially after 9/11 and with Trump's rethorics) (Duyvendak 2011). On the other side of the Atlantic, most European countries question the idea of home as a haven to be protected from "illegal immigrants", setting the doorstep on the coasts of Turkey and Libya (Germani 2003); the Netherlands, for example, are especially vocal against Muslim "guests", who do not assimilate fully (Duyvendak 2011:109). Almost everywhere, the pandemic exposes households as places of violence, and conflict about gender roles and expectations (Kourti et al. 2023); for people with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities, and LGBTQI+ people, home often resembles hell and its tyranny.

Looking down from the sociological balloon[40], conflict in homemaking takes on a wider structural dimension: in the wake of globalisation and fluidification of society, flow and different forms of generalised homelessness became pivotal traits of modernity (Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1974; Braidotti 2011; Castells 2002; Said 1979), to the point that "homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world" (Heidegger and Krell [1947] 2008:219). Sometimes fluidity liberates possibilities and empowers claims of dynamic identities (e.g. Braidotti's nomadic subjects, who explore different shades of the self); some other times, it takes the displacing guises of exile, emigration, banishment, labor migrancy, tourism and urbanism (Rapport 1998:23). Duyvendak's (2011) mobility typology helps to understand how modern mobility is theorised and, possibly, how people suffer/use it to make themselves at home:

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[40] I was torn between the two metaphors of the "sociological hot air balloon", and of the "telescope". What made me opt for the first over the second, is that a telescope 1) evokes a fixed position of 2) detached observation, somewhere on a hill, away from society, 3) looking at things far away from the observer, 4) with no limitation of reach, technology permitting. On the contrary, a balloon 1) moves, 2) is subject to wind currents, the expertise of the pilot, the flux of fuel, the weight of ballasts, 3) can both look at things from a bird's eye, or from high in the sky, varying its reach 4) within strict limitations. The sociologist adopts a "methodological commuting" between micro and macro, emotions and structures, motives and opportunities; is herself a person, biassed and influenced, looking at things both very close and very far, within the restrictions of a science of the invisible and the human.

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	Mobility seen negatively	Mobility seen positively
Universalists	1. no attachment to particular places possible; *people lost in space*	2. no attachment to particular places necessary; *the chronically mobile*
Particularists	3. strong attachment to particular places necessary; *defensive localists*	4. strong attachment to particular places possible; *elective belongers*

Fig. 3: Mobility typology

(Duyvendak 2011:12)

Notably, except for the chronically mobile, all the other ideal types recognise the (sometimes unobtainable) need of a particular place to feel at home; all of them agree on the importance of feeling at home in some way. The protagonists adopt different strategies to appease the cognitive dissonance of seeking home in homeless times: the chronically mobile choose for the "hotel chain strategy", finding familiarity and safety in generic movable goods (hotels, AirBnBs, short-term rentals); the elective belongers adopt the "mobile home strategy" and try to familiarise new places by personalising them, bringing in as much as possible of one's own home (or the self); defensive localists pick the "my house is my home strategy", nostalgically grabbing onto a built haven; people lost in space do not see any change to feel at home in the modern world (*id.*, p. 15).

Typologies are static tools-to-think, and they should not distract us from acknowledging that, in their interstices, room for agency is left. Conflict is not negative *per se*, as it is the fundamental driver of social change. In fact, people may transition between the cells in the mobility table, as soon as the system of opportunities opens up, or new resources allow for alternatives to be considered. Examples regard people with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities, and LGBTQI+ people in the US (Duyvendak 2011:62). In the last decades, social movements advocated for a shift in the former's conditions of people "lost in space" (actually, erased from it); the dismantling of the asylum network allowed people into *havens* of community care — although they still do not have the chance to integrate *heavenly* with the rest of society, and many ended up on the streets, yet again lost. Differently, LGBTQI+ people found metropolitan conditions

(anonymity, variety, size) to favour the gathering of like-minded people in *heavenly* communities — although the risk of self-segregation is tangible, and turns familiarity into exclusivity (*id.*). In a different situation, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries adopted structural policies to reduce the care load on women, hoping to make society more equal and to alleviate the feeling of (especially male) parents of being more appreciated at work than at home. However, this did not work out as well as policy-makers thought, for the shifting gender division of labour did not come with a shift in attitudes towards work and home: the entrance of women into the labour market happened on "male" terms (productivity), and men did not grow to re-appreciate home on "female" terms (caring) (Hochschild 2003). This highlights "home" as a conflictual field both on the micro and the micro level; as I said before, it is a (political) crucible where people claim, control, challenge, reproduce, experiment, express — in accordance with or resisting social pressures.

Table 3.2 Time spent on paid work and housekeeping/childcare, hours per week (2003)

	Women		Men	
	Paid work	Housekeeping and childcare	Paid work	Housekeeping and childcare
Denmark	36.5	22.4	40.8	13.3
Sweden	37.0	18.9	40.4	13.6
Netherlands	27.4	23.8	39.8	11.6
France	35.9	18.2	40.0	10.4

Source: SCP (2006).

Fig. 4: Gender inequality in time spent on working and caring

(Duyvendak 2011:54)

Home and belonging are existential needs for everyone, chronically mobile and defensive localists alike. They are inherently political practices that discriminate between where, when and with whom we feel at home, and where, when and with whom we do not; in other words, feeling at home is a differentiating emotion (*id.*, p. 106). Differentiation does not intrinsically imply exclusion. What keeps the balance between them is 1) the distribution of resources and opportunities to feel at home somewhere in modern societies; 2) the strategies deployed at community-level to create havens/heavens, and the conflicts that arise thereby; 3) the individual emotional experience of home as an existential struggle. The different combinations of these macro, meso and micro aspects coagulate into contemporary Western politics of

nostalgia. However, while *restorative* nostalgia desperately hangs on to an idealised and exclusive past, *reflective* nostalgia re-assesses the past for present purposes (Boym 2001), in a potentially inclusive way. The interplay of mobility experiences and strategies, structural forces, and nostalgic feelings is especially pivotal in the case of migrants. Throughout their trajectory, they find themselves at several crossroads: be elective belongers and squeeze home into the luggage; be chronically mobile and find home in generic or virtual spaces; or not find any place to call home at all? This is the fulcrum of the next paragraphs, whose protagonists are migrant people, and their existential struggle of rebuilding home far away from home.

The migrating home: homemaking strategies on the go

LISTEN TO
THE WHO: GOING MOBILE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToxymSLzJeM

This song reminds me of the many nights I spent in one of my best friends' room, in Campus Lappis, Stockholm.

Abdullah is Afghani. He immigrated to Sweden when he was a child, and now he is a university student. He often confesses how palpable the distance between native Swedes and migrants is, especially Muslims. His stories about his hometown, the radical difference in temperature, landscape, smells and tastes, the colourful fruits and the different language, the glorious Persian poets like Khayyam and Ferdowsi…his stories came to life each night he baked *bōlani* wraps. He used to heat small chunks of coal and place them right on top of his sky-coloured *shisha*, then we would walk the corridor together, spreading scents of apple and flowers, and talking about his past and present, which are times of constant migration — the actual (to Sweden, to Borås, where his family now lives), and the imagined ones (back to Afghanistan, one day, when he, his "ethnic group", will feel safe.

One night, his stories of migration condensed in one song.
So powerful its timbre, I shivered.
So heavy its burden, I can barely imagine the story behind it.
It is called *Istadeh Mordan* "Dying Standing Up" by Persian exile singer-songwriter Shahin Najafi. A cry of longing for home, written in beautiful verses that Abdullah and our friends Kumail and Ali translated for me, pausing YouTube each time a new line was sung, making a song last like a tale.

Research on home can be particularly productive and revealing when it involves 'social margins' – that is, wherever an ordinary or taken-for-granted sense of home is missing or weakened. This may be the case for many social groups, ranging from the homeless to travellers, from migrants to refugees. [...] Social transitions may be very telling about both their life careers, the transitional mechanism and the structural forces involved. (Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020:7)

In the social sciences, the always-on-the-go tendency of modernity is framed within the *new mobilities paradigm* (Urry 2000), that describes cities as social formations of both structures and flows. There, locals (who identify with the city), tourists (who see the world as attractive) and vagabonds (for whom the world is inhospitable) interweave the urban fabric (Bauman 1998). The latter are people who are compelled to move, to leave things behind, deconstruct home and re-construct belonging far away. However, only few have the (social, cultural, and economic) capital to be elective belongers, people who choose a neighbourhood for the aesthetic and symbolic potential it has to reflect their achievements. For them, the neighbourhood is "a vital marker in the games of social distinction that mark out urban and suburban landscapes as patterns of inequality [in] increasingly spatial forms" (Watt and Smets 2014:12). The distinctive taste and buying power of elective belongers fragments the city into "capsular" neighbourhoods (de Cauter 2005), materially or culturally gated communities that spatially entrench social inequality; architectures of anxiety and paranoia that appear open while being surveilled and privately policed (Graham 2011). In this way, exclusion and inequality "are being *planned* into twenty-first century neoliberal sub/urban landscapes" (Kim and Smets 2020:14, my emphasis). For elective belongers, space is porous and open.

For the others, who cannot positively choose their neighbourhood, home and belongings are not necessarily secluded, if we understand them as a socially constructed, spatially embedded process of reflexive judgement about the sustainability of a site as appropriate to one's life trajectory goals, desires, beliefs, and needs (Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2005:53); homely attachment may be built *on top* of a non-elected neighbourhood. In fact, diasporas are not just the dispersion of a group across socio-cultural borders: they also involve a shared memory of the country of origin; an active effort of keeping it alive, through material and symbolic culture; the topic of "going back"; and the emergence of hybrid identities (Brinkerhoff 2008). This is what home is all about: a discourse about borders, shared memories, the effort to safeguard haven in a turbulent world, nostalgia. Diasporas (*diá-speírō*, "to sow through") are first and foremost existential events of exhumed roots, moved bodies and hybrid homes. The binding force that potentially keeps them together nowadays is media (Bonini 2010).

> And when we cannot go home? And when we are on the move, displaced by wars, politics or the desire for a better life? We can, with our media, take something of home with us: the newspaper, the video, the satellite dish, the Internet. In this sense, and it has become a familiar trope of much recent theorizing on the new information age, home has become, and can be sustained as, something virtual, as without location. [...] These are the shaping experiences: of home as a mediated space, and of media as a domesticated space. Secure in them we can dream (Silverstone 1999:93).

Media play a fundamental role in setting apart past and present diasporas: the constant dialectic between memory and desire, staying and leaving, is now mediated by the TV, streaming platforms, podcasts, movies and music. Before the departure, media provide imagination with material about the destination; while travelling and when the time for homemaking comes, they allow for diasporic public spheres to emerge (Appadurai 1996): a South Korean student watches K-dramas on Viki; a British couple "visits" their children via Skype; a Syrian bus driver listens to familiar music. Moving groups using media as cultural tupperwares can be conceptualised as travelling cultures

(Clifford 1997) that mix physical mobility and symbolic communication. Like endless mycelia of social mushrooms (Tsing 2021), we remotely connect, even in absence, obliquely, through waves and vibrations. Media act as *games* in Huizinga's sense, as spatiotemporal parentheses in the world, experiments of experience like those we had as kids who, while building sand castles, were also defending them as make-believe knights do — and suddenly the playground was thrown back into the Middle Ages. Media as games, games as rituals: all three share the ability to put us in an "as if" condition: everytime we put the headphones on, watch the TV or listen to the radio, we get through an invisible door and enter an alternate dimension, leaving the world behind (Bonini 2010:69). Like frames, they isolate a region of the world where we can "play home". All good games come to an end, though: as doorway-places, media are always on the edge between the liminal and the ordinary, meaning that 1) media are open to external influences and violence; and 2) they are, like communication itself, osmotic places where contamination may kickstart conversation. This recalls precisely the defining traits of sound: porous yet pervasive, and inherently relational.

Bonini (2010) recognises three "portable" homemaking strategies:

- TOOLS OF MOBILE PRIVATISATION: the strategy of bringing home along through dematerialised nomadic media that re-spatialise the private experience of home outside (*ibid.*, pp. 71-72). Ipods, smartphones, radios, bluetooth speakers and SUVs function as *shell media* (Williams 1989) that inflate a homely bubble around us. In the city, the mp3 flâneur walks the public space from within the private sphere, at the same time displaying their strangeness and their belonging to an imagined community whose symbols are headphones, eurythmic pace and subwoofers. Never taking off the headphones means never leaving home. Similarly, as a monad that realises the bourgeois dream of autonomy (Stallabrass 1996), the SUV colonises the public space and cannibalises the Other from a raised interior. As we saw before, home is where we have some control over space and time; indeed, in addition to regulating space, media (music, especially) affect time, so that listening to the same song on repeat creates a temporal suspension that mimics hypnosis or meditation.

Bauman (1993:158) says that we live in a semiotically empty ocean, where archipelagos of meaningful islands lie; media make the journey meaningful, or at least listed as "free time" (still better than commuting non-time). By affirming a private soundscape onto the public, the smartphone tames space — however temporarily. Moreover, it functions as both home, office, and Ariadne's thread for the network of friends and relatives scattered around the world. Not without reason, smartphone subscriptions in Africa skyrocketed from 30 to 450 million in less than ten years (Ericsson 2022), and smartphones are a life-saving tool for migrants crossing the Mediterranean sea (Finotto 2018). A Jamaican husband who works nine months per year in the US holds onto it as a safe haven where his wife may reach him "at every hour. At night, in the afternoon, and especially before leaving for work" (Horst 2006:150).

- TOOLS OF RETURN: domesticating public spacetime is just as important as *returning home*. Going back is a vital aspect of making a new home: it means activating reflexive nostalgia, and putting to use memories and identities in search for locations, materialities, and meanings, creating networks that connect who/where I am with who/where I was, allowing the I-who-will-be to exist somewhere familiar. As Bonini (2010:91) says, "sight (photos, the TV, furniture, objects), smell and taste (the kitchen), touch (the fabric of clothes), hearing (the sound of the radio and the TV) contribute all together to make us feel '*as if* nothing had changed'" (my translation and emphasis). The *dailiness* (Scannell 1996) of media ritualises everyday life, creating that rhythmic interplay of silence and noise, focus and *blasé* inattention that we already found in Suzhou's silence. So, the Greek-Cypriot community of London gathers around the satellite TV; when it broadcasts the radio, it happens that an old man stands up and starts dancing under the black screen (Georgiou 2001). In the local Turkish community, "TV [...] makes us feel as if we were living in Turkey" (Aksoy and Robins 2002:94). Everyday in my hometown, huge widescreens play Arabic music in the kebap/kebab shops — shazaming the soundscapes of these places often tells more about their stories than a quick look at the standardised tiled

interiors. Moreover, between 2007 and 2008, 20% of RAI's[41] individual consumers were listening from abroad (Rainet 2009) — the radio let them "back in" (inside home, the community, the nation-state), even from outside.

- TOOLS OF HYBRIDISATION: beyond the private colonisation of the new space, and the virtual escape/return to the homeland, media offer the tools to gain flexibility, and experiment hybrid identities in the new country, exceeding single belongings. Music and sound are especially apt for the task, for they provide both a continuous background for everyday life — thus supplying familiarity and rituality —, and a plurality of voices — thus fostering an opening that is necessary for home to be not only safe but welcoming. Desi Radio's mission is to raise Punjabi Londoners' awareness of their culture not as restorative nostalgia, but as a totem of identity and a resource for the new home. In a similar vein, Beur FM provides a virtual venue for the children and grandchildren of North African immigrants in France to show their art, express political claims and social considerations, and discuss tabu issues; all the while mixing Anglo-American pop culture and popular Algerian *raï*. "Music is one way of testing their new competences of cultural flexibility and radio gives voice to the articulation of those competences" for individuals who "are more willing than their parents to engage with the Other", says Echchaibi in his research, eloquently titled *We are French too, but different* (Echchaibi 2001:307–8). This echoes what emerged from my interview with Maria Malmström about the Senegalese festival in Sweden, where football matches and music gather Scandinavian Senegalese second and third generations, people that claim a hybrid identity as both here and there, with the cultural soundscapes of language, songs and supporters glueing *home* (the Scandinavian country where they grew up, live and dream) and *heimat* (Senegal, the shared source of identitarian symbols).

Music and soundscapes, as diasporic public spheres, are powerful forms of symbolic communication that operate within travelling cultures and act as connecting

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[41] RAdiotelevisione Italiana, the national public broadcasting company of Italy, owned by the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

media; a song on Spotify is a codified cultural ghost, a presence of home; the familiar buzzing of neon lights and of recorded muslim prayers inflates a spatiotemporal socio-bubble. "Music, in particular, more than information, is capable of broadcasting belonging, allowing one to recognise oneself in it; in one word, once again, 'to feel at home'" (Bonini 2010:94); now more than ever, since small media (cassettes, CDs, portable radios) (Sreberny and Mohammadi 1994) are now miniaturised (smartphones) or ethereal (streaming platforms). As a medium itself, sound forms a membrane, however thin, fragile and exposed to the elements, yet that is never fully deflated and restores some warmth of home, much like the atmosphere that makes Earth breathable (Bonini 2010:117). On each occasion, music and soundscapes may function as tools of mobile privatisation, return, or hybridisation. In the following paragraphs, I will focus on sound and sound technologies as resources for homemaking on the go, and for the production of atmospheres.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Which dimensions of home — location, materiality, and meaning — are activated by sound experiences? How are feelings of familiarity, haven and heaven fostered or inhibited by sounds? How are sound-homemaking resources distributed? Does my haven clash with yours?

What is the role of nostalgia — the longing for a different time, for a lost place with a meaningful *history* — in homemaking through sound? Is hearing especially attuned to nostalgia? If so, how? How do acoustical spatial strategies relate with Duyvendak's typology of mobility?

Sound as an urban Sherpa: auditory sensemaking

What gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact
that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and

weaving together at a particular locus. [...] Instead then of thinking about places as areas with boundaries around them, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings. [...] And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrate in a positive way the global and the local. (Massey, 2007, pp. 154–5)

Sonic rhythms are integral to a sensuous production of place, one that may point to bodies and place in terms of repetition, the mundane and reciprocity. (Duffy and Waitt 2013:478)

Analysing the use of mobile sound communication technologies in automobiles and elsewhere permits me to point to a transformation that has taken place within urban culture over the past 40 years. This transformation lies in urban citizens' increasing ability and desire to make the 'public' spaces of the city conform to a notion of a 'domestic' or 'intimate' private space. (Bull 2004:255)

Carol Muller, describing the rise of South African vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin, mentions a sound tactic that she developed to carve out pockets of meditation and introspection in the noisy atmosphere of her New York house: she let water run into the kitchen sink and mentally dived into the liquid texture to find a space of solitude: "She remade domestic space into a place for reflection, remembering, and imagining new possibilities" (Muller 2017:164). This is a very simple yet powerful example of a sound technology deployed for homemaking purposes: a tool (the sink) is used intentionally (the water is made flow) to domesticate space (the noisy urban flat) into a meaningful place (a refuge for solitude and reflection).

Now that I have explored the social construction of home, the conflicts in homemaking and how home may move across the world, I approach the field of my sociological inquiry: the city. Much like Sathima Bea did in her apartment in New York, urban dwellers develop sound tactics to domesticate the increasingly busy soundscape of the city. The following case studies show four ideal-typical approaches to homemaking through sound in the contemporary city: the privatisation of public space driven by iPod users; the territorial loyalty of amenity migrants; the ambivalent spatial

looseness fostered by buskers; lastly, the structured familiarity constructed by professional musicians-refugees.

Michael Bull's thorough analysis of spatial behaviour of iPod users provides a revealing example. As the car in the Fordist era was the social evolution of the Gothic cathedral in symbolising the supreme creation of an era (Barthes 2002:341), similarly the car evolved into the iPod[42] in the first decade of the XXI century. The aluminium and stainless steel portable jukebox and its iconic white earphones became a symbol of the increasing mobility and privatisation of the contemporary city person (Bull 2007:12). Miniaturised technology acquires the magical power to mobilise home and externalise privacy in the public space. The iPod provides enveloping acoustics, a zone of immunity and security, where one can choose the soundtrack of their individual life — in line with the bourgeois desperate need for (an illusion of) control, autonomy and power. This, however, comes at the expense of the erasure of the public space's liveliness, so that in a mediatised urban isolation (Augé 2008), "we are all alone together" (Bull 2007:15). To this point, some of Bull's interviewees state that:

> [The iPod] removes an external layer. I see people and things as inanimate or not fully connected. It seems that I have an external connection they lack. It's quite odd, actually… [...] When I look at the people around me they appear to be two-dimensional and without significance (Jonathan, quoted in Bull 2007:72).

> I view people more like choices when I'm wearing my iPod. Instead of being forced to interact with them, I get to decide. It's almost liberating (Jonathan, quoted in Bull 2007:73).

Managing the volume knob becomes managing the Other, literally turning them on or off, and micro-managing individual experience (*id.*, p. 74). If you are not worthy of my undivided attention, I might as well keep the headphones on, for the magical aura of sound technology exempts from moral backlash. I myself, especially when I am lost

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[42] Bull's analysis could easily be extended to the present use of the smartphone, although with the *caveat* (that Bull himself pointed at), that the smartphone as both a streaming and a communication device collapses both a continuous and a discontinuous experience of space and time: as an mp3 player, it isolates and cocoons; as a phone, it disrupts the continuity of experience by connecting us to absent others.

in my own thoughts, feel annoyed by people playing back loud audio messages: in fact, they are auditorily intruding on a public space that I am currently perceiving as private, intimate, sacred. The danger of cannibalising public space for the sake of one's private soundtrack is that, increasingly, silence equates with exclusion (Bauman 2003). Whilst the world within the headphones gets warmer and more familiar, the urban environment gets chiller. The iPod as a device for the production of isolation (Debord 2010) symbolises a way of being-in-the-world that claims a private home wherever I go, possibly regardless of others (Bull 2007:19). A perpetual sound matrix — both in the sense of a homogeneous network and a motherly figure of home. The pleasurable sound bubble of the iPod[43] meets the bourgeois claim for individualism and entitlement, so that the auditory space becomes a private one, at the expense of the relationality of the public space, which gets increasingly bi-dimensional, if not empty. This is not to say that the privatisation of the auditory space contrasts with my argument of sound being a medium of homemaking; quite the opposite, iPods give middle-class flâneurs the socio-acoustic technology to privatise public space, manage emotions and social interactions, and construct safe human exchanges within homogeneous networks of fellow iPod users. Epigones of a mediatised culture, they feel at home in a delocalised yet familiar sonic haven/heaven.

With lesser violence, amenity-led migrants pick their preferred residence as elective belongers and develop a strong identitarian attachment to its environment, especially to its sonic qualities. In general, melodies, rhythms, timbres, harmonies and colours create *sonic affordances* (DeNora 2000), i.e structures of resources, opportunities and events that empower certain behaviours, symbols, communications, actions, and encounters. Like a door handle "begs" to be pushed or pulled, a soundscape emanates stimuli that push people to think and do. In particular, sound is a medium through which space and time can be rearranged; the affordances of sound foster a *visceral* connection of the self with the surroundings, between the human and the non-human, establishing an embodied (and often unreflexive) foundation for the home (Duffy and Waitt 2013:467). Sounds are "an aid that mediates the spatial and temporal practices of homemaking by heightening affective intensities between human and non-human bodies which are then expressed in terms of belonging or non-belonging"

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[43] The automobile (especially the SUV) works pretty much the same magic; about the SUV culture see (Bull 2004).

(*id.*). By affecting our bodies directly, by letting the world in much like eating does, sound subterraneously builds attachment to a place we somehow resonate with, where we are "in the groove[44] together" (Keil and Feld 1997:167). This is the feeling of some middle-class newcomers in Bermagui, Australia (Duffy and Waitt 2011, 2013).

> I realised what a water person I am. And I think it's the rhythm of that, you know. Because I probably listen to music less now at home and let that sound [the rhythm of the waves] being the background. 'Cos its' got its own pull about it. And its own sort of life force. (Stella, in Duffy and Waitt 2011:474)

> Because Barragga Bay is not connected to a town water supply, we rely on the rain for our household water. The sound of the rain—whether gentle or torrential—falling on our tin roof and running through the downpipes gives me a sense of comfort and peace. [...] it's another wonderful way to fall asleep. (Penelope, in Duffy and Waitt 2011:476)

"Sounds that resonate with our own sense of self have the capacity to re-assemble the serendipity of things called home" (*id.*). Here, natural sounds make newcomers feel at home by resonating with the shared social ideology of the rural idyll (sound and home both emerge as social crucibles that tie together micro and micro). The "pull" Stella mentions reflects the ability of sound to affect the body, and, in turn, the propensity of the body to absorb sounds and weave rhythm into the fabric of home; the rhythmic pulse of the surf regulates time and connects the migrants with the locals who are just as exposed to the maritime soundscape. Even more deeply, in Penelope's words, the feeling of home becomes entangled with the feeling of the environment; through sound, home gets emotional and embodied, sound-o-pathic. As Edensor points out, non-human rhythms instinctively link us to the polyrhythms of space that envelop us (Edensor 2016:7). Compared to the iPod users, amenity-led migrants from Bermagui hold together the search for a private (almost spiritual) soundtrack that resonates with the self, and the opening to the community through a soundscape of elective affinity. The sounds of the sea form an assemblage of affects (nostalgia, self-reflection,

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[44] *Groove* meaning both "rhythm" and "trench".

environmental sensitivity, relaxation) that create visceral connections and disconnections with the environment: sound enlarges the home to encompass both human and non-human guests, as long as they fit into the private soundtrack of the elective belongers. Loud waves crashing the rural idyll are not welcome. Like symbiotes, they cherish and protect the sound that gives them nourishment for the self.

This kind of opening to the environment is even clearer with another type of city dweller: the busker. Often very much idealised as a transgressive practitioner of a counterculture ethos, at times even as a spiritual figure or at worst an intruder in city life who demands money, the busker is at once the victim of the iPod culture's indifference[45], and a spatial facilitator.

> Smaller denomination coins followed, and shortly after came a long spell of nothing. This was an unsettling feeling, which made me question whether I might in fact be a nuisance. (Amundsen 2019:4)

The most common presence in the busker's life is invisibility, connected to the misalignment between two different temporalities: the frantic schedule of the busy street walkers, and the slower tempo of the music, that requires to stop by. However, the two temporalities unfurl in the same space — the street —, where the busker interrupts and adds onto the urban soundscape. The intermingling of din and music creates *sonic commons*, spaces where people share an acoustic environment and can hear to each other's activities, intentionally or not (Odland and Auinger 2009); here, space is perceived through the senses, and music provides atmospheric experiences (Amundsen 2018)[46]. However unfocused and peripheral, the music of buskers colours the perceived space with affective qualities that may impact people beyond consciousness, through mimetic waves of sentiment (Thrift 2004). "Mimetic", here, means that music blurs the boundaries between subject and object, creating an in-between space (the sonic commons) where affects run free and possibilities rise. In the shared ground of atmospheres a person may smile at the busker, sit on the sidewalk and get lost (or

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[45] And, more generally, of the general indifference of the city person, who relies on civil inattention (Goffman [1971] 2010) to mitigate the sensory mayhem of the city (Simmel [1903] 2010).
[46] More on atmospheres in the following paragraph.

found?) in sound, or even get closer and start dancing or singing together. The peripheral music of buskers enables affects to colours the busy urban soundscape; in turn, affects foster visceral embodied responses to the urban space that precede any representational translation; these may eventually turn into emotions and cognition. Ambient music composer Brian Eno uses a visual metaphor to picture this process:

> I was amazed by the difference the lights made, whether you had violet lights on the floor, or orange lights on the ceiling [...] but nobody looks at the bloody bulb. And that is what has been happening in music. We've been looking at the bulb. (Eno, quoted in Aspden 2018)

> A young man who had offered a donation asked to accompany me. He began rapping in Estonian to my music, and asked me to speed up the tempo, which I did. Suddenly we were a "spectacle". (Amundsen 2019:6)

The spontaneous improvisation and interaction legitimised by street performances is unique in the public space, and sound performances are particularly powerful in that, as we have heard before, they are omnidirectional, continuous and pervasive[47]. However, because of these very traits, street performance lends itself to be instrumentalised for urban marketing and gentrification purposes. This is the case of Berlin, a city that from the early 2000s has been idealised in terms of youthfulness, creativity, and authenticity (Seldin 2020) — a cool city for the creative class[48]. The presence of street performers, here, constructs a landscape of experimentation, exchange and cultural networks that helps create (the image of) a (sellable) subcultural ambiance. Busking, then, becomes a planning tool:

> Buskers (a.k.a. "street performers") are a viable tool for rejuvenating public spaces. If done well, busking is a high-impact, low-cost option. No infrastructure is needed, no barriers, no ticket sales, no marketing, no strategy sessions; just an artist, who doesn't need a salary, performing for tips. And they can start tomorrow. Buskers

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[47] See my interview with Staffan Mossenmark in Chapter 4 (Case studies).
[48] Artists, IT personnel, entrepreneurs and scientists.

> prompt social interaction on the street level, create intimacy and allow people to feel comfortable and safe. They also provide one of the few forms of live entertainment that low-income citizens can access and enjoy. (Glaser, Doumpa, and Broad 2012:113)

To summarise, as Amundesn points out, "a guitar can be a surprisingly apt tool for understanding the meanings and potentials of urban space" (*id.*, p. 8), in that music can seep through the interstices of urban inattention and generate spaces of serendipity, affect, and democratic exchange. Street performers loosen up space (Franck and Stevens 2006) by making new possibilities audible and providing room for creativity, i.e. innovative ways to re-use the city. This may benefit may or only a few, depending on whether space looseness is let free as a flexible quality of space, or is harnessed by policymakers to market the city as "poor but sexy"[49], i.e. young and creative. The very same openness that buskers impart to space exposes them to be both catalysts of sociability, or pawns on the chessboard of urban rebranding. In both cases, however, busking emerges as a strong spatial force that produces atmospheres — be they participatory or monetised — by loosening up space, that is, opening it to possibilities. As opposed to the iPod user, the busker intervenes in the spatiotemporal organisation of the city and has the potential to disrupt (if only momentarily) the fabric of its routine, thus changing the flow of people, and bringing together consumer and producer at the corners of the streets.

Lastly, I want to focus on professionals. In 2015, violist and teacher Katja Thomson started an experimental project called World In Motion Ensemble. Welcoming tens of refugees entering Finland as part of a massive wave in the early 2010s, World In Motion explored the idea of a collaboration between the local University of Arts, refugees reception centres and migrants. An accidental encounter sparks the concept of rebuilding home in a professional musical space:

> As I happened to walk across the park carrying a musical instrument, a man speaking a little English spotted me, a fellow musician, and asked if I knew somewhere he

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[49] Former Berlin mayor Wowereit used these words to describe the near-bankrupt capital during a 2004 TV programme.

could play drums and meet other musicians. He was a resident at the abovementioned reception centre and did not have access to any instrument. (Thomson 2021:131)

Much like buskers, two professional musicians established a connection through sonic technologies — here, musical instruments. They met again, with the growing orchestra, in a space aptly called "The Living Room". Here, the well-known workflow of composition joined forces with the serendipity of freeflow improvisation to provide 1) a kind of synchronicity that allowed for familiarity to grow, despite the absence of a shared language, musical knowledge, and personal history, and 2) "an important community for escaping the worries of life" (*id*). The flexible workflow of the Ensemble:

1. Starting point
2. Collectively generating material
3. Consolidating the material
4. Rehearsing the finished piece

acted as a haven where one can safely dream in a future that ritual (musical) rhythm makes somewhat foreseeable. This safe "living room", is a collective ground where shared values, beliefs, and stories may slowly construct a heavenly (i.e. meaningful) place. Mastering sound in a migrant situation turns into a powerful homemaking tool in a musical space that " provided a setting for the imagined, symbolic space that was conceived by us musicians who gathered there to create music. Together we formed new interpretations of life and possibilities through our artistic interaction and produced a third, lived space carrying an alternative, collective musical identity". Haven starts to blend into heaven when familiarity fosters the sharing of affect, and personal stories:

A participant has written a poem about longing. His wife in Syria composes a melody to it and sends it to back to him. Another participant composes a song based on the lyrics and the wife's melody. We learn the song together. One participant

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> criticises the song and the creators of the song would like us from the music university to tell what we think of it. (Thomson, researcher journal, *id.*, p. 135)

Robbing semiology of its concepts, I suggest to think of music as *langue*, i.e. the conventional normative structure of language that glues together acts of *parole* , i.e. individual occasions of self-reflection and self-affirmation; in this way "finding the me in the music" (DeNora 2000:68) means attuning to social structures in a way that is utterly personal; in music the public and the private, the shared and the intimate meet. Thomson's experience challenged multiple ideas of home, that, like music, connect the micro (the individual stories of the musicians) with the macro (the migration trends and the structural deprivation suffered in the home countries). Firstly, she challenged her own representation of the professional home — or workplace — by questioning the limits of her discretionary power, and the fine balance between listening, leading, and imposing. The "recorded and notated musical pieces [...] served as a great resource for accessing my aspirations, worries" (*id.*, p. 133), thus acting like blueprints of a new home. Secondly, the demands from the other musicians for more decisiveness touch the topics of safety and familiarity; I wonder if those requests were less echoing settled professional hierarchies, and more cravings for a safe haven in turbulent times. We need foundations, walls and a roof before we may start experimenting with interior decorations; metaphors aside, I find it interesting to wonder if the goal-oriented thinking of professional musicians, in the case of the World In Motion refugees, was actually a way of giving a rhythm to uncertainty, restoring a musical ritual, and creating a third, lived musical space. Thirdly, the openness and the improvisational nature of the music implied that the quality of the outcome depended on the level of trust between the professionals. Again, as we have heard with buskers, radical openness has the potential to transform the environment (*id.*, p. 138).

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I shall summarise the aforementioned fours approaches to homemaking through sound in the typology that follows, where the four protagonists we met are ordered in a continuum that describes the private-public nature of their sound experience, and

according to what it does to the "speaker" and to the "listener", thus resulting in four ideal-typical strategies of homemaking through sound.

	← PRIVATE PUBLIC →			
	I-POD USERS	AMENITY MIGRANTS	BUSKERS / STREET ARTISTS	PROFESSIONALS
POINT OF HEARING: SPEAKER	Enrichment of the personal soundscape through a personal soundtrack	Self-fulfilment Safety Status symbol Symbiosis (nostalgia, self reflection)	Isolation Self reflection Exposure Opening to interaction and spectacularisation	Rhythmic rituality Spontaneity and structure Non-linguistic communication Finding the self through a shared codified medium
POINT OF HEARING: LISTENER	Isolation Non communication Privatisation of the public space	Sense of community ("being in the groove together") Environmentalism	Enrichment of the public soundscape Creation of commotions Potential situations of interaction	Transmission of affect Sharing of a third lived space Political act of recognising other forms of belonging
IDEAL-TYPE	**SOUND CONSUMERS**	**SOUND SYMBIOTES**	**SOUND LOOSENERS**	**SOUND MASTERS**

Tab. 3: Homemaking approaches typology

Now that I have explored how sound supports catalyses the inhabiting and co-constructing of home, I shall present the two main theoretical tools that will structure my argument: atmospheres and capital.

Air of home: atmospheres

This "feeling well or not" in a certain environment clearly is an indicator of the aesthetic qualities of it. This is the point where aesthetics come into ecology. The elements of the environment are not only causal factors which affect human beings as organisms but they produce an impression on their feeling (Befindlichkeit). And what mediates objective factors of the environment with aesthetic feelings of a human being is what we call atmosphere. The atmosphere of a certain environment is

responsible for the way we feel about ourselves in that environment. [...] Atmosphere is what makes you feel at home. (Böhme 2018:21)

[An oak tree] is, for instance, a potential few cords of wood for the forester, a threatening daemon for the little girl, to whom the knobby bark resembles the deformed face of a man […]. The same object, in a strictly physicalist sense, therefore presents different tones in different species-typical Umwelten. (Griffero 2016:32)

The properties that I discussed thus far support the homemaking potential[50] of sound: duration and continuity foster familiarity; temporal foci and directionality collaborate on locating the material home somewhere in everyday geography; double dimensionality (being at the same time surrounding and directional) makes sound inherently relational and functioning like home, where delayed reciprocity requires one to speak, to listen, and to follow the rules of solidarity and the political economy of common goods; furthermore, the liveliness we attribute to sound makes it ripe for meanings and dreams of heaven; its pervasiveness reminds us of the importance of a safe haven that can filter what comes from outside and regulate the interaction with others — although, when pervasiveness is abused, sound becomes a weapon of the tyrannical home; additionally, with ears being the very first sensory organ to form in the foetus, sound often appeals to nostalgic feelings — a voice, the coffee pot, birds, the urban rhythm — and to the existential need of a place to belong, for the lost in space, the chronically mobile, the defensive localists, and the elective belongers. Each seeks home in a more or less material or symbolic form; through the media and the environment, sound provides a portable yet diffused, accessible and pervasive humus for home to take root. This fertile ground between people and space — relational, emotional, meaningful and agentive, one that at once is shaped by subjects and affects them — it is, in a word, an *atmosphere*.

Atmospheres are spatio-emotional entities that *tune* space, i.e. modify my mood in it (Böhme 2018; Böhme and Böhme 2017; Böhme and Griffero 2010). They link the

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[50] I did not choose this word carelessly. Like everything human, sound can also be meaningless or harmful; indeed, I am not arguing that sound is a homemaking tool per se, rather that it has this specific potential, especially if we compare it with sight, very apt in shaping and locating objects but less able to provide a relational, visceral, and pervasive experience of the world.

natural and the cultural realms, and blur the boundaries between subject and object. How? The aesthetic industry mass-produces atmospheric experiences in form of sceneries, architectures, commodity aesthetics, advertising, and art which are supposed to suggest us in certain moods; however, an excerpt from an 18th century book on the theory of garden art speaks volumes for what an atmosphere is, and how it may be spatio-emotionally constructed:

> The gently melancholy locality is formed by blocking off all vistas; through depths and depressions; through thick bushes and thickets, often already through mere groups of (closely planted) thickly leaved trees, whose tops are swayed by a hollow sound; through still or dully murmuring waters, whose view is hidden; through foliage of a dark or blackish green; through low hanging leaves and widespread shadow; through the absence of everything which could announce life and activity. In such a locality light only penetrates in order to protect the influence of darkness from a mournful or frightful aspect. Stillness and Isolation have their home here. A bird which flutters around in cheerless fashion, a wood pigeon which coos in the hollow top of a leafless oak, and a lost nightingale which laments its solitary sorrows – are sufficient to complete the scene. (Hirschfeld and Parshall [1775] 2001:211)

Atmospheres bridge the environment and the person through mediating emotions. They are "motor invitations" (Griffero, in Böhme 2010:18): emotional thrusts to move (or be moved). The relationship of atmospheres with our affective situation is never static, since they, somewhat like the affordances of ecological psychology (Gibson 2014), are active impressions, states and moods that contact me. These feelings — indefinitely effused in space and felt by the percipient as quasi-objects that seize them — are the first "object" of our perception, especially if involuntary (Griffero in Böhme & Griffero, 2010, p. 18). This is what I meant when I said that atmospheres "blur the boundaries between subject and object": as subjects, they affect me, colouring my perception with melancholy, happiness, or rumination; as objects, they are perceived, shaped and acted upon by my own doing and feeling. The atmosphere is an emotional tonality that spreads in the space between an object and the subject who perceives it, an excitement that comes out of things (an ecstasy, from *ex-stasis*, "to

stay/put out") and which colours my perception with a state of mind. Atmospheres "are not something relational but the relationship itself" (Böhme & Griffero, 2010, p. 92) — like sound, they are inherently relational. In the physicist's jargon, entering an atmosphere is like entering an electromagnetic field: once inside, subject and object cease to be distinct, they become a dipole, two charges that attract or repel each other, a relationship. The ecstasies, i.e. the emotional tones with which the world enters into a relationship with us through exiting itself, "modify the space in its entirety [...] radiating" (*id.*, p. 204) and creating scenes that excite us.

> The spirit is forced to strike a thing, so that the essence of this thing can find a way to manifest itself. Such manifestations are precisely the sound or the aroma. (Böhme and Griffero 2010:105)

Depending on their relationship with us, atmospheres might be *ingressive* or *contrastive* (Böhme and Griffero 2010:18): the first describe the feeling I get when I *enter* a tuned space. The dominant emotional tone resonates with me and locates my state accordingly; when I enter the space, the atmosphere is still something distinct from me — I perceive it as a quasi-object that offers itself to me, an indefinitely extended room I walk into. I am walking solitary, unattended, in the Swedish forest; suddenly, the green gently slopes towards the coastline; the sky swings open ahead; its vastness resonates with my urgency of freedom — I enter an ingressive atmosphere of possibilities. On the other hand, contrastive atmospheres urge me to subvert my mood, setting me in a different emotional location. On a mournful day, I might notice that it is spring, and all around blossom forget-me-nots. Should I be happy, then? How could I? This very tension sharpens my sorrow; the contrast bans me from the comfort of being attuned to space; banished, alien on earth, for a moment I am paralysed. Like a quasi-object, the atmosphere weighs on me. Townscapes and soundscapes in general, much like the twilight and luminosity of a glade, are all atmospheric phenomena that spread through space and tune it; in turn, tuned spaces resonate with us, ingressively or contrastively.

Similarly, sound can be intrusive (when it intrudes in my life forcefully, preventing me from imagining other soundscapes in our heads, from having inner speech) — it enters me —, or orgiastic (when music inhibits my inner speech, my auditory imagination, and makes me feel as-if I was outside my body and into the harmony, the outer sounding space) — it pushes me out. As a generator of atmospheres, sound is a regulator of social interactions, an asset of the aesthetic economy, i.e. the systematic shift from use- and exchange-value to staging-value: the extent to which commodities help individuals or groups stage their own lifestyles (Böhme 2018:78). Hence, Starbucks and the like compose jazzy soundscapes to lure the chronically mobile; the hyper-cosy glampings offer living room-explorers the safety of full-optional silence; the gentrified neighbourhoods surreptitiously employ artists to sound the city for the touristic eye. Emotional marketing strips rural territories of their use and exchange values, and replaces them with staging value for the city dwellers looking for a quiet vacation home. In music it is the *sound* that matters, meaning the atmosphere it concocts; so much so that, starting from the Dada movement, even noises and soundscapes began entering the realm of the melodious — machines, din, daily life, nature. The aesthetic industry does aesthetic work to produce staging value, making appearances the yardstick for both society and the self. Sociologically speaking, if staging something is to arrange things to intensify their (emotional) character, so that it appears as autonomous and independent of their existence as things (Böhme and Griffero 2010:180), then it becomes clear that an atmosphere can act as an emplaced and emotional symbol of a group, as a social spokesperson who marks space with the taste of its inhabitants. And taste is precisely what connects place and body, society and the individual in Bourdieu's reading.

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Atmospheres can be summarised by the sentence "how I feel where I am". It describes both the emotional and the spatial dimensions of the atmospheric; the interplay between subject (the person/the space) and object (the space/the person); the perceptual awareness that atmospheres raise (a kind of naive reduction); and the existential sense of grounding that they release ("where I *am*") — in sensing an

atmosphere, a subject gets recognised as a perceptual entity, as a relatable someone. Much like phenomenology, the philosophy of atmospheres acknowledges both the specific weight of the individual in sensing and making sense of the world, and its embeddedness in an intersubjective space (a tuned space, society, history). Sound ecstasies, in particular, i.e. the "voices" of things, are fundamental in our experience, because they are the only atmospheres that allow us to uniquely identify an individual or a place, to "summarise" them in a total perception: "We cannot 'say' or 'think' someone, but we can 'feel' them" in their voice (*id.*, p. 205). Since the atmosphere is a pure relationship, the perception of sound tells us something about the relationship of people with other people and the territory, and the soundmarks that characterise it. By virtue of their quasi-object-ness, they dampen the uncertainty of investigating the invisible (Cardano, 2021) — silence becomes itself a form of communication — and rebel against a merely negative conception of silence as a "non-word", "non-voice" (Brito Vieira, 2021). Since the "voice" of things gives a concise and immediate idea of the place and stimulates people's familiarity with the noises of the world, it is promising as an auditory stimulus to elicit narratives, in particular to thematize the personal relationship with (un)familiar places. A soundscape "can create a world in non-narrative form" (Dragojlovic & Samuels, 2021, p. 417). Furthermore, conceptualising sound as an atmosphere is useful to understand how sensory practices of spatial appropriation/colonisation work, because ingressive atmospheres not only suggest moods, but also enforce normative values, as I will argue about the Swedish quietscapes. In the last section of this chapter I will conjure social theory to conceptualise soundscapes as fields where power struggles, claims of distinction and identity, and judgements of taste take place. Hopefully, after that, it shall be clearer how the Swedish rhetorics of silence enforce and reinforce practices of gentrification in Stockholm.

Soundscapes of distinction:
power, sound, and taste

> The interplay between personal absorption into music and the sense that it is, nevertheless, something out there, something public, is what makes music so important in the cultural placing of the individual in the social. (Frith [1987] 2017:139)

As Frith points out, music — socially organised sound — is the crossroad of the individual and the social: the first finds a collective voice to belong to (be it a genre, or a festival); the second provides sociable material for the consolidation of the self. This touchpoint drew quite some sociological attention: Adorno and the Frankfurt School criticised pop music and the mass production of cultural commodities that supposedly reproduced the need of industrial capitalism (repetitiveness, alienation, standardisation); they also highlighted that music should not be analysed *per se*, in a vacuum, but in relation with historical modes of production and reception. In the 50s and 60s, ethnomusicology turned the spotlight on popular music; the Birmingham School conceptualised rock music as the main weapon of young subcultures fighting an intergenerational battle. The 70s saw a wide confluence of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies on the topics of face-to-face interactions in the production of music, and gender and embodiment in music. In the 90s, ethnicity, identity and globalisation became the focal points in the debate, and the sociology of music finally detached from Western art music to fully embrace "music" in the broadest sense. The question, then, became how sound and society are correlated: how the first reflects cultural forms, and how the second finds in sound a venue of social reproduction or critique (Shepherd in Shepherd and Devine 2015:4–15).

The theory of capitals:

the role of silence in the judgement of taste

The intensity of this relationship between taste and self-definition seems peculiar to popular music — it is 'possessable' in ways that other cultural forms are not . . . other cultural forms — painting, literature, design—can articulate and show off shared values and pride, but only music can make you feel them. (Frith [1987] 2017:144)

Nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music. (Bourdieu [1979] 2000:18)

Regardless of which phase the sociology of music was going through, it regularly confirmed that sound is a crucible where micro (beliefs, desires, expectations, emotions, visceral responses) and macro (values, norms, institutions) meet; again, confirming the atmospheric properties of sound. The coming together of the two forces of the social world is central in Bourdieu's thinking: throughout his career, he was specifically concerned with reconciling social structures and individual agency, rejecting reductionist dichotomous thinking and questioning how people structure society while it structures them. Among other things, he pointed out that music as symbolic capital can serve exclusionary politics and that, more mildly, musical taste is a proxy of cultural capital and, therefore, a tool of distinction for the upper classes (Bourdieu [1979] 2000). Before I extend the argument to sound in general, I present now four bourdieusian tools-to-think, which will inform both my methodology and my analyses: field, habitus, capital, and symbolic violence. Then, I discuss two ethnographic cases where sound exposes misalignment between field, habitus and capital. The resulting conflicts illustrate how symbolic violence might happen through the manipulation of soundscapes that function as sound-fields where noisier or quieter habitus betray vibrational disputes for capital.

FIELD

> Each social field of practice (including society as a whole) can be understood as a competitive game or "field of struggles" in which social agents strategically improvise in their quest to maximize their positions. (Maton 2012:63)

Social action does not occur in a vacuum, but in a social space of interactions, transactions and events that requires as much attention as things said and done. Bourdieu's concept of field can be deconstructed as the quasi-sum of three metaphors: 1) the football field, 2) the field in science fiction, and 3) the force field in physics (Thomson 2012).

1) Like a football field, the social field is a boundaried place where players with set positions compete according to learned and internalised rules for a prize. Their field position frames what they can and cannot do, and the conditions of the field itself affect their course of action. In real life, social agents devise strategies to improve their position (capitals); the more they play, the better their "sense of the game" (Bourdieu and Nice 2004:59), i.e. the naturalness with which they read social cues and work their way through life. Having richer capitals from the outset advantages players who can be more successful, more easily.

2) Like a force field in a sci-fi narrative, a field is a semi-autonomous social space that operates according to its set of beliefs and behavioural rules, the understanding of which comes "natural" to social agents occupying particular positions in the field. They regard said rules as truths, in Bourdieu's words doxa, tacit knowledge, the logic of practice (Bourdieu 1990b). The misrecognition of doxa as arbitrary norms leads — as I point out below — to symbolic violence. There are homologies among all the different social fields and subfields (e.g. the photography field in the cultural field), the foremost being that they are all homologous to the economical field, responding to the same logic of competing for capital. This makes fields interdependent, and open to exchange and change;

furthermore, every social action is a double play that operates in several fields at once (2005:271).

3) Like a force field in physics, a social field can be conceptualised as a map of opposing forces, the strongest being the economic and the cultural. They work as opposite magnetic poles that attract social agents to different positions on the field according to their relationship with them; the interplay of the economic and the cultural capital advantages or penalises social agents on the broader field of power.

Each field seeks distinction, i.e. qualities that express the amount of cultural or economic capital at stake in a field, the legitimate forms of capital one should accumulate, and the "low-brow" to be shunned.

Although Bourdieu's characterisation of the field may sound almost mechanistic, there is room for agency and change, for dramatic events in adjacent fields may catalyse crises and change; after all, we are "not particles subject to mechanical forces, and acting under the constraint of causes: nor are [we] conscious and knowing subjects acting with full knowledge of the facts. [...] [We are] active and knowing agents endowed with a practical sense that is an acquired system of preferences, of principles, of vision and [...] schemes of action. (Bourdieu and Ferguson 1999)

The field is a structured social space inhabited by the dominant and the dominated, in constant relationships of inequality, always struggling for the transformation or the preservation of the field itself, putting all the capitals they have inherited or acquired at the service of the logics of practice in an economic and symbolic competition that never ends.

CAPITAL

Bourdieu extends the notion of capital from economics to a "a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields" (Moore 2012). He distinguishes two main forms of capital: economic and symbolic (e.g. social, cultural). Economic capital is transparent about the instrumental and self-interested nature of the exchange; symbolic capital, on the contrary, proclaims a disinterested intrinsic worth.

Economic capital is about the ascribed or acquired resources like salary, land, real estate and bargaining power; symbolic capital comprises, among others, social network resources, education, know-how, and taste. The two are tightly related, since symbolic capital is a transubstantiation of economic capital; economic capital in disguise. Like the first, Bourdieu argues, it serves self-interest and establishes hierarchies of discrimination although covered in a veil of meaningfulness; the process of misrecognition of symbolic capital for an agent of social inequality gives rise to symbolic violence. In fact, symbolic capital gives individuals cultural and social advantages/disadvantages and reiterates the structures of economic capital. Bourdieus goes further and claims that, in so doing, the symbolic capital reproduces the structure of social inequality.

Each field has its currency in symbolic capital, which gives the illusion of being autonomous thanks to its intrinsic principle (e.g. altruism for social capital; knowledge for cultural capital). Capitals are both the energy that fuels the development of a field in time, and the enactment of the principle(s) of the field. They emerge in two forms: objectified (books are an objectified form of cultural capital), and embodied (knowing how to suture an aorta is an embodied form of cultural capital). The latter is the incorporation of the principle of the field in the very body of a person, both as a tool to think (principle of consciousness) and a tool-to-act (disposition). Habitus mediates between the two (it is both in the cognitive rigour and eidetic memory of the surgeon, in her skillful suturing, and in her self-care routine).

Incorporation makes economic and symbolic norms look natural, habitual, normal. This is why institutionalised capital (having a healthy bank account, being well-educated) tries to inculcate a habitus that is attuned with the principles of the field; it predisposes people to the rules of the game. In Distinction ([1979] 2000), Bourdieu shows that the social field is not just about struggling for more capital; it is also a matter of adopting logics of selection and rejection that state our position clearly by differentiating us from others. When I go to the record store and pick up a hi-fi recording of a specific piece of classical music, I am distinguishing myself from my fellow customer who just bought the old-fashioned vinyl of an indie artist; that is, 1) my habitus is pushing me towards a choice that aligns with my social position in the field; and 2) I am actively not choose the nostalgic vinyl because that is something "they" do

— differentiation. Habitus provides the principle for both. Distinction, expressed through taste, can be very dramatic, for it is the antechamber of exclusion and the herald of class (group) endogamy. As Bourdieu emphasises:

> Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent. Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes; class endogamy is evidence of this. The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates should be separated. (id.:116)

The logic of selection fosters similarity and belonging (I choose what you choose for we share a taste), but also evoke a logic of difference (I do not choose what she chooses, for I would disown my taste). These relational logics give value to items, not intrinsic features; symbolic violence comes to be through the misrecognition of the arbitrary value of symbolic capital. Distinction works exactly because cultural elites, owners of legitimate culture, cultivate the myth of the disinterestedness of their capital: they do not pursue power or privilege, but truth, beauty, knowledge. This is only "natural", and so symbolic violence is camouflaged. Capital, habitus and field are interrelated in that "There is an internal relation between the items in the basket, the structuring principles of consciousness in the head of the shopper and in social relations – in the principles of social order and difference" (Moore 2012:109).

Much as sound acquires meaning through duration, capital can only be acquired in time, during which it gets inculcated, incorporated, invested and spent in the form of personal choices and collective lifestyles. Long exposure to a field's habitus forms embodied capital ("a scientist is a scientific field made flesh" (Bourdieu 2004:41)); habitus itself is a specialisation of consciousness whereby the self adheres to a set of thinking and operating principles that are congruent with the institutionalised capital of the field, and which later are exported in other fields.

To summarise, symbolic capital exhibits the following features:

- It is objectified or embodied
- It is acquired over time
- It is acquired through a systematic process of inculcation
- It expresses the habitus (and therefore the generative principles) of the field
- It grants advantages to a social agent to the degree of attunement between their capital and their habitus (accomplishment)
- It can be activated in other fields (transposability)

HABITUS

How can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules? (Bourdieu 1990a:65).

Although I sometimes consider myself a free agent, I reckon that my daily decisions are based on assumptions regarding the predictable behaviour of others. Habitus explains how this works by bridging social structure and individuality. Habitus is a property of a social agent, a set of dispositions that generate perceptions, judgments and practices based on one's past and present circumstances (e.g. upbringing, education, acquaintances) — it is society embedded in a person. Bourdieu defines it as a "structured and structuring structure" (id.: 170). However sibylline this phrasing might appear, it can be thus deconstructed: "structured" means that the past and present experiences influence our perception of and reaction to the world, by legitimising particular courses of action against others, and giving us normed tools to pursue them; "structuring" means that habitus supports us in shaping our present and future; it is a "structure" in the sense that it is not random, but normed and ordered according to the field the habitus grew into (Maton 2012). Habitus are durable and transposable, i.e. they last over time, and can be activated in multiple theatres of social action. As was the case with the field, habitus is not an independent force: field, habitus and capital interact according to the following equation:

$$h \cdot c + f = p$$

where h is habitus, c capital, f field, and p the practice resulting from their interaction[51]. Indeed, practices emerge as responses to the world by agents whose habitus indicates the best ways of investing their capitals, within the restraints and opportunities of the field.

Habitus makes the range of options visible to us; the concept captures how we carry society and our history within. In terms of habitus, Bourdieu claims, my experiences are unique in their contents, but shared in their structure with others who participate in my class, gender, age, sexual … condition — I surely have my own way of achieving "me-time", but (Bourdieu would say) my aspiration is social, responding for example to the symbolic middle-class dispositions towards privacy and individualism.

Habitus is the source of the logics of practice people use to navigate society. It is the legitimate response to doxa, the unwritten rules of the social game. This is problematic, Bourdieu claims, when habitus informs practices that reproduce symbolic violence. In the late 20th century France, for example, he argues that working-class students were less excluded from higher education than they were self-relegating themselves out of the system, believing it was "not for them". This is habitus at work, naturalising social expectations and values in such an embodied way that could make a person feel uncomfortable sitting at the schooldesk, stutter during an oral exam, or label as "impossible" what contradicts one's rightful place in the social world. Therefore, importantly, habitus is always embodied: it is "the social embodied" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:128).

This does not make habitus a deterministic concept. First, because Bourdieu believed that demystifying the workings of habitus and doxa could lead to socioanalysis, a political therapy that enables social agents to understand their capital in the field, and possibly do something about their suffering. Second, because in situations of misalignment between habitus and field, e.g. when one changes slower that the other, hysteresis may happen, i.e. "old" dispositions may still show up in a renewed field, resisting external forces; or, conversely, aggregate awareness of one's habitus may push the field to change.

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[51] Notice that all letters are lowercase, for there is no constant in the equation. Bourdieu explicitly states that habitus, field, and capital are dynamic, interdependent and ever changing.

One can thus have situations where the field changes more rapidly than, or in different directions to, the habitus of its members. The practices of social agents can then seem anachronistic, stubbornly resistant or ill informed. This THE "hysteresis effect" (59).

All in all, habitus is a relational concept, one that merges the social with the body, the past with the present and the future. This is important, for habitus does the same work as sound in concentrating micro and macro in everyday practices, so that (hyperbolically) listening to the radio at work may speak volumes of where we are in the social field, and what roads we might see ahead.

SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

Domination is expressed not only through physical force, but also in ways that appear "gentler" and yet cause a great deal of suffering. Symbolic violence is an effective, efficient and unperceived form of control that dominant classes exert by inculcating their taste and norms through socialising institutions (e.g. school), so that dominated classes perceive these systems as legitimate and natural, and see no alternative — a self-fulfilling prophecy. Symbolic violence is the misrecognition as natural of systems of classification, such as taste (Schubert 2012:184). Dominant classes only need to go about their life casually, as they always do, for this naturalness is the foundation of social reproduction of the status quo. Bourdieu's research on the effects of the French colonialism in Algeria shows that symbolic violence — in this case, the naturalisation of the capitalist mode of production and consumption against a "slower" economy based on reciprocity and a symbiotic relationship with the land — caused significant suffering and resulted in states of resigned passivity (Bourdieu 1979).

However, according to Bourdieu, schools are the prime institutions that reproduce social inequality through symbolic violence: they teach students particular subjects, with a particular jargon, and socialise them in particular ways — to be "good" students, citizens, etcetera. The school judges, and through judgement it passes on taste; those who possess an adequate cultural capital acquire it and align with the dominant ways of being in society; those who do not are rejected as lower class, deviants, misfits, mass, pop, vulgar. In a context of symbolic violence, successful people are "prepared to succeed" (Schubert 2012:189) — such preparation consisting of symbolic capital

endowed by the family and previous education. When a kid is judged negatively because of his struggle with equations, and his hardship is labelled as lack of talent, what really happens is that arithmetic skills are being treated as legitimate cultural capital — as taste —, and mathematics functions as a field for the reproduction of social hierarchies — the gifted, and the slow-witted, the dominant and the dominated. A social classification becomes natural and absolute (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993:178).

As I pointed out in the record store example, taste (i.e. legitimate capital) classifies, and classifies the classifier (Bourdieu [1979] 2000:5), so that social agents may distinguish themselves through selection and differentiation. The suffering caused by symbolic violence is silent, subterranean and embodied, what I would name "the fork tragedy" — the situation of anxiety, embarrassment and (self-)exclusion when, at the restaurant, I am faced with a wealth of cutlery I have no clue how to operate. The misuse of a fork, then, reveals and reproduces my position in the social structure and the legitimacy of the latter; indeed, to avoid the discomfort, I recognise that holding the correct fork is a desirable skill I do not possess, and self-relegate myself to the group of the subordinated — "it is not for me".

Recognising symbolic violence is the mission of the sociologist who seeks to expose the doxic-toxic (Thomson 2012:77) effects of naturalisation of arbitrary norms. However, the task is daunting, for symbolic violence is both everywhere and nowhere. It is everywhere, because we all live in symbolic systems that naturalise the rules of the game and limit our chances to see alternatives; it is nowhere, because its very naturalness conceals it. Through socioanalysis, the very constructedness of social hierarchies lends itself to change: other words can construct other worlds.

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How do fields, capitals and habitus come together in the soundscapes of everyday life? Here I provide some examples that will prove useful to understand how silence may exert symbolic violence in Stockholm.

First, I anticipate a criticism that might be moved to my thesis: the notion of an elite that possesses a unique taste as the source of distinction is obsolete, for recent quantitative research (Peterson 2015; Peterson and Kern 1996) has shown that the

elite-to-mass theory does not fit empirical data, and it would be more accurate to distinguish between an *omnivore*[52] elite and a *univore* rest. The elite-to-mass theory draws from Weber and Veblen and states that cultural elites affirm their status by 1) choosing the "right thing" (the legitimate consumption), and 2) by shunning the "wrong thing" (the vulgar consumption); every other social group looks up in awe and strives to imitate the upper classes, despite the lack of the necessary symbolic capital. Thus, symbolic violence reproduces the inequalities of the fields by leveraging the differences in symbolic capital. However, Peterson and colleagues argue that the distinctive trait of elites is less a taste for an exclusive cultural thing than an exclusive taste for everything cultural. Since distinction follows from knowledge, the more cultural forms one knows, the starker their distinction. Shortly, the aesthetics of contemporary elites are based on the appreciation of creativity in general. Now, let me point out something: first, Peterson and colleagues *do* show that musical taste is "a good proxy for taste more generally", since it "correspond[s] well with the available behavioural measures [of high-brow activities]" (Peterson 2015:155–56); second, their omnivore-univore pyramid is tailored to music consumers, who answer to both market and identitarian dynamics. The first observation highlights the heuristic power of music (and, *mutatis mutandis*, of sound) as a proxy of status; the second gives me the opportunity to notice that my thesis and Peterson's analysis are not at odds: in fact, silence in Stockholm is less a consumption good than a sensory needle on a larger moral compass; as we shall see, it derives from a spiritualistic conception of society that works in tandem with restorative nostalgia to strengthen the "us" against "them". Thus, in this case the "obsolete" elite-to-mass theory still does its heuristic job, for at stake is not the flaneur's eagerness to showcase all they know, but the very integrity and purity of the self, private and public. In fact, Peterson's hypothesis prompts an interesting symmetry: omnivores, thanks to higher symbolic capital, have the power to distinguish themselves regarding what they listen to — they can *choose* their soundscape and live in an on-demand soundworld; on the contrary, univores, penalised by lower symbolic capital, are exposed to contaminating soundscapes and cannot choose between silence or sound. Paradoxically, music omnivores might favour univorous soundscapes, whereas music univores might be condemned to omnivorous soundscapes.

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[52] For a more thorough overview of elite distinction practices see Daloz's *The sociology of elite distinction*, 2012, Palgrave MacMillan.
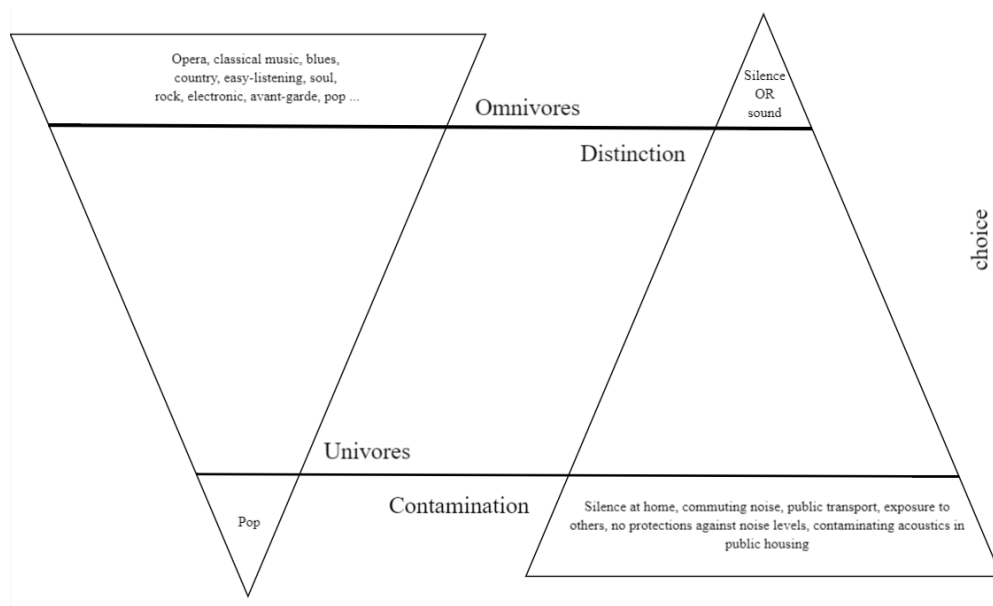
Fig. 5: The music-sound paradox

The music-sound paradox: on the left, an example of Peterson's hypothesis, with omnivorous elites on top of the inverted pyramid, consuming all kinds of music genres, and univorous consumers at the bottom, limited to one or a few preferences; on the right, I propose the pyramid of soundscape consumption, where elites choose specific and parcelled stimuli, and dominated groups cannot help but expose themselves to a contaminating uncontrolled soundscape.

Andersson (2020) confirms the thesis that sound — silence, in this case — can be a vector of symbolic violence in her discourse analysis of two TV series, *The Crown* and *Shameless*. The first romanticises the story of the British royal family, focussing on former Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip; the second tells the vicissitudes of a working-class family in the US. Compare two excerpts:

The Crown: S1/E5	Shameless: S1/E8
1 Elizabeth: I'll support you in the televising. 2 (4 seconds) gap 3 Philip: You won't regret it. 4 Elizabeth: On one condition. 5 (4 seconds) pause 6 That you kneel. 7 (13 seconds) lapse	1 Fiona: Okay, one... 2 Steve: Oh, God, one. One. One. One. 3 Fiona: I'm not finished yet. One... 4 Steve: Ugh. 5 Fiona: ...or two? [Fiona hits Steve with his phone] 6 Steve: Oh, God. One. 7 Fiona: Who the fuck is Candace? 8 Steve: Who?

| 8 Philip: Who told you?
9 Elizabeth: My Prime Minister. He said you intended to refuse. | 9 Fiona: Yeah, that's what I'm asking you.
10 Steve: How do you know?
11 Fiona: So there's something to know? |

What is interesting here is less what (if anything) these dialogues tell us about actual royals or workers than what they say about the social construction of royalness and working-class-ness. As Andersson emphasises, aristocracy adopts silence to manage emotions, think strategically and prevent conflict, whereas conflict communication in the working class is staged as a constant verbal or physical fight without interruptions and often with no respect for turnation. Royals are presented as very considerate of their conversational partners' feelings, showing an interdependent self-construal of the ground for social relationship — if anything, to save face; workers, on the other hand, is presented as emotionally driven — they choose mouthy direct confrontations and often assert their emotional primacy against the other, showing a rather independent self construal of the social relationship (*id.*:16-18). Shortly, sound management betrays their habitus, Furthermore, the stereotypical representations of aristocracy and working class reproduce the very social hierarchies they represent, exerting symbolic violence on the watchers and the watched alike.

Something similar, yet more real, happened when, in 2013, *Holland's Got Talent* jury member Gordon Heuckeroth (a white Dutch singer) commented on Wang Xiao's (a Chinese immigrant) performance: "Which [opera] number are you singing? Number 39 with rice?"[53]. What he did — safely castled in his position of power — was artificially constructing the cliché misalignment between habitus, capital, and field expectations regarding Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands. Wang's cultural capital is that of a highly-trained tenor, and his habitus and self-discipline reflect those of the high-brow elites his genre is stereotypically associated with. However, his ascribed qualities (being Chinese, being an immigrant in the Netherlands, being part of a minority, aesthetically fitting the waiter-stereotype) relegate him to the realm of low-brow taste. Gordon's obsessive remarks about supposed Chinese speech impediments and looks are instances of symbolic violence that leverage the audience's normative laughter to naturalise Wang's "Chinese-ness". Chow (2020) takes inspiration from this event to talk about

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[53] Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wzEPgpSRm4

silence and the politics of being heard, focussing on how the struggle within every social field unfolds in the soundscapes, aptly named "the war of auditory positions" (Hall 2006, quoted in; Chow 2020:185). Diasporic music, she argues, is "always already vocal" (*id.*:186), in that it brings about a complexity and a plurality of habitus that challenge the hostland fields and question "reified thinking on place and identity" (*id.*), in other words, *doxa*. Being extra-territorial and fluid, music travels far and wide, carrying around symbolic capital that may be put to good use for homemaking purposes or end up in the web of symbolic violence. On the one hand, diasporic music enables outsiders to make themselves at home in the hostland (Seidler 2015:403), working as a social glue. On the other, diasporic musicianship is a fragile state, one of tentative homemaking, which can be easily distorted to reassert social inequality. The Heuckeroth-Wang case is an example, and Chow mentions Diana Zhu, a multi million-listeners Dutch-Chinese artist who, after winning an international singing competition, pursued a successful career in Taiwan and Taipei. This, at great cost: Warner told her to go on a diet, to perfect her command of "standard" Chinese, and to change her favourite genre (black music) to mainstream Chinese pop — she was silenced in her body, communication, and identity. After some time, she left Warner and signed a contract with a local independent label in Taipei.

These instances of symbolic violence leave us with two questions that Chow (2020:192-93) raises: 1) what are the motives and consequences of diasporic silence — what happens when a diasporic member of a community is not allowed to speak or listen to their own soundscapes? 2) what do the sonic bubbles of diasporic members do? In part, I have already addressed the first: the silencing of diasporic members fits in the overarching dynamics of social inequality reproduction through symbolic violence. Instead, the second question leads me to propose the hybrid concept of *atmospheric power*. This is the focus of the closing paragraph of this chapter.

A proposal: the atmospheric power

Drawing on what I presented before, I argue that 1A) homemaking is a universal existential need of the human being; 2A) homemaking is a political practice of spatial

appropriation (place-making); 3A) homemaking is a spatio-emotional practice that entails a sensory attachment to a material or virtual (e.g. mediatic) place, from which follow meaningfulness and a sense of belonging; 4A) there is social inequality in the distribution of homemaking resources; 5A) there are hierarchies of taste regarding the definition of the "legitimate" home. Thus, the corollaries of my hypotheses are the following. 1B) Migrants — as people whose home was suspended, left behind or erased, and the image of it is now tested by the standards of the hostland — invest most of the resources to reconstruct home. Therefore, they develop a relative awareness of homemaking practices and of the relationship between Home, the Self, and the host Society. 2B) Homemaking inherently entails conflict, which may be ritualised by legitimising institutions (private property, meritocracy, public housing welfare, cultural hybridization) or addressed with exclusion (gentrification, segregation) or fight (demonstrations, urban violence, war). 3B) The stakes of the homemaking conflict are high, for homemaking is primarily done through the senses (a colourful fabric that reminds us of grandmas, the comforting sound of a coffee pot, the smell of zagara) and thus concerns us in the intimacy of our (private and social) bodies. An "illegitimate" home is felt as a contamination of our space. To assert our right for a place to belong to we use the senses, because, much like home, they mediate the relationship between the individual and society, through a habitus that guides our practice. In particular, the diffused, continuous, relational and pervasive properties of sound make it a powerful tool for homemaking and for the negation thereof. 4B) In fact, not everyone can afford (both financially and symbolically) their dream home. Social norms (enforcement of elite habitus or their hysteresis) allow particular homes, constructed in particular ways, and embodying particular values: the squatted house is cleared by police, whereas the opulent villa is recommended by AirBnB. Migrants, in particular, seen at best as guests and at worst as parasites, struggle to reconcile the diverse and colourful sound of home with the legitimate (normal and normed) soundscapes of the host-land. 5B) An example of this is the dominant taste of silence in central Stockholm, and more generally in the part of Swedish culture that relates with the "lagom" (*just enough*) way of life as a logic of practice to measure everyday life, and the lives of others, relative to a standard of moderation and self-control. Accordingly "loud" and "contaminating" immigrants are segregated outside the urban nucleus, both physically (through paternalistic urban

planning and a housing market that concentrates cheaper apartment in peripheral blocks) and symbolically (through strict noise-abatement policies, policing of socialising sound-venues, and a hyper-institutionalised music scene).

This is where the concept of atmospheric power comes into play. I define it as follows: the *atmospheric power* is a performative use of cultural capital[54] to signify space. It is a system of exchanges of place-making assets, i.e. dispositions, resources, and practices that carry out the function of establishing and maintaining meaningful relationship between the individual, society, and a boundaried place where the former may belong. It is the sum of the material and sensory resources, both ascribed and acquired in time, that can be put to use in the struggle for homemaking. It summarises the history of the meaningful places the subject has inhabited, shapes their homemaking choices, and locates their position in the atmospheric field, where social agents compete to claim a piece of the world as familiar, haven and heaven. Like the capital from which it draws, it is inherently relational in that it is the result of the constant mediations between the agent and the social structures embedded in their habitus. Its accomplishment can be assessed in terms of its ability to provide legitimate tools to signify place (e.g. to reconstruct home for away from home), and its transposability, i.e. the degree to which homemaking strategies are exportable in different contexts (e.g. hostlands). Therefore, it is clear that two sides of atmospheric power should be distinguished: the operative endowment of the agent (how stocked their toolkit is), and the reception of the hostland (how fertile the receiving sociocultural ground is). In musical terms, atmospheric power should be researched in terms of both signal and feedback. In sum, distinctive atmospheric power advantages place-making elites, who get the privilege to "set the tune" of a place, legitimately. For those who possess high atmospheric power , the world is a potential home. For those who lack it, the world is a place of lostness.

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[54] Maton warns that there is a "tendency for habitus to proliferate adjectives, [...] a temptation to decontextualize habitus from the approach that gives the concept meaning and to adopt instead an empiricist lens [that] distinguishes empirical features of practices rather than their underlying generative principles"(2012:63). I find Maton's caution sound, therefore I want to stress that the notion of "atmospheric" capital is a convenient one, for it efficiently evokes the relational and emotional nature of homemaking, but it can be seamlessly subsumed into the more generic concept of cultural capital.

Hello…

It is disastrous to be a wounded deer.

I'm the most wounded, wolves stalk,

And I have my failures, too.

My flesh is caught on the Inevitable Hook!

As a child I saw many things I did not want to be.

Am I the person I did not want to be?

That talks-to-himself person?

That neighbors-make-fun-of person?

Am I he who, on museum steps, sleeps on his side?

Do I wear the cloth of a man who has failed?

Am I the looney man?

In the great serenade of things,

Am I the most cancelled passage?

(Corso 2015:132)

Summary: literature

Perceiving means actually being in the world and being together with the perceived
(Böhme and Griffero 2010:72).

Observing is a transitive verb, speaking is not. Sight is one-directional: ingressive; it only allows information to enter the body. Unlike Kryptonians, I cannot project laser beams from my eyes; interestingly, though, the gaze is in a way a form of egressive sight, in that when I am stared at, I feel the presence of the staring person come out of them and towards/on me. On the other hand, speaking always admits two reciprocal acts: being listened to, and being spoken (back) to. I can perceive this reciprocity in my daily inner speech: I am at once the speaker and the spoken-to — this is especially evident whenever I try to motivate myself to do something. As human beings, we are beings at the border of perception and self-awareness (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2013; Zarrilli 2019). Hearing is inherently reciprocal, whereas sight is inherently directional. Since, as Weber defines it, sociology is exquisitely the science of interactional acts (i.e. acts that "listen to" other acts and consequently "speak"), I would

stress the sociological value of using sounds as indicators of "something else", of social dimensions. Every time I speak, I hear myself. Unlike sight, hearing has the very ability to make me aware of my personal sound-footprint. Furthermore, I cannot see what others see, whereas soundscapes (dialogues, speeches) happen in a shared space (air) where I hear both you and me resonating in my bodily cavities. Sight lets me perceive my outline (my body) as other-than-me; hearing is polyphonic. Hearing evokes what phenomenologists call the *reciprocity* of human experience (Sobchack 1992): I am at once the observed and the observed, the speaker and the spoken-to.

If phenomenology brings us back to the things themselves, bourdieusian sociology brings us back to the people themselves, and the context they inhabit as these words show beautifully:

> The data available are attached to individuals or institutions. Thus, to grasp the subfield of economic power in France, and the social and economic conditions of its reproduction, you have no choice but to interview the top two hundred French CEOs [...]. It is at the cost of such a work of construction, which is not done in one stroke but by trial and error, that one progressively constructs social spaces. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:232)

Methodology

To study homes, much trust is needed between the researcher and the participants; furthermore, home and sound are both elusive concepts, since they are mostly submerged into the taken-for-granted. [...] Understanding home as a specific social practice, rather than a location, has the distinct advantage of moving research on homemaking away from proper home-like settings into other spaces, thereby offering opportunities for a better understanding of transient, multiple and incomplete homes, as well as homemaking in non-domestic and even public spaces – anywhere where people put forth ownership claims, however minimal and temporary, over slivers of space (Kusenbach and Paulsen 2019:7–8).

LISTEN TO
SNARKY PUPPY FEAT. METROPOLE ORKEST:
THE CURTAIN

https://youtu.be/jLRw-Ahq22k

- How does the choice of embedding the audience into the recording create a sonic palimpsest?
- Pay attention to the interplay of genres, the band's fusion jazz and the orchestra's classical arrangements, and reflect on how the ears of the participant and the researcher relate to each other.
- Slowly move your temporal focus on every instrument you can hear: what is it saying, what do the others reply, what is its role in the conversation, what is the overall discourse about?

The sound of home brings the sociologist close to the physician: both seek to grasp the invisible from visible traces. Trust, elusiveness, taken-for-grantedness, diversity and invisibility are defining qualities of homemaking through sound, a multifaceted practice that uniquely blends subjectivities and social forces. Akin to the

family doctor who sits and listens to the patient describing their symptoms, I choose to maximise my personal sensory engagement with the object and subjects of study with a brew of qualitative and creative methods. Qualitative methods are best suited to enter invisible social phenomena (beliefs, values, explicative schemes) through the door (what is *said*) or the window (what is *done*).

From the very beginning, sociology specialised in reconstructing people's definition of the situation (Thomas, Znaniecki, and Zaretsky [1918] 1996), i.e. the cognitive category that guides their individual actions. In fact, except when they face grave danger, people react to their mental representation of the environment. This is where Znaniecki and Weber come together with Bourdieu in my choice of method: the definition of home (as a situation) is the product of individual life courses and their interplay with structural social forces, acting as (somewhat) adjustable embodied compasses, or habitus, in the competitive struggle for belonging. To capture this duality, qualitative methods adopt an "evidential paradigm" (Ginzburg 2013) that is the same for the physician and the detective, and entails *abduction* and *participation*: abduction is the joint effort of deduction and induction, a pendulum that swings between theory and empirical data, that fosters creativity in the production of concepts (Cardano 2020:47). Abductive reasoning stays open to serendipity, seeking answers to seemingly paradoxical questions like: "How is it possible to build home through sound in a place where silence reigns?". And it does so by directly engaging me as a researcher, as a person, as a body. As such, I am forced to account for both theory, field, and reflexivity. Hence, my choice for creative methods, here represented by sound diaries, soundwalks, sampling sessions, and listening suggestions[55]. Qualitative and creative methods unite observation and dialogue, abduction and participation, so that an ethnographic relationship may be established between the researcher and the participants. It is along this relationship that data, emotions and perceptions flow; it is here that a safe — however biassed, theory-laden, incomplete, presumptive — parlour can be co-constructed, through trust-laden cooperation. By providing participants — and myself — with audio samples of their homely soundscapes, the research adopts the sensory language of perception, thus eliciting the visceral accounts of practices; and yet, the sociological gaze is not lost in hyper-particularism. The narratives are expressed

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[55] In the double meaning of "advice" and "charm" .

through language, and actions are guided by habitus, so that the bodily visible hints at the socially invisible. Confronting my-*selves* by recording and listening back to my sound diaries is a different way of achieving the same change of perspective that qualitative and creative methods offer. This methodological strabismus suggests to contrast the "aspirational" home with the "actual" home; not to focus solely on the "told" home — how people describe their aspirational home — but on practices, too — how they *do* it, to go on the field and *record homes*; to contrast the meanings of home (social construction of home) with structural forces (social production of home) (Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020).

Summoning what I said in chapter 1 about Cusick's (2017) three-dimensional analysis (i.e. sound in relation to context, affect, and network) and the Bourdieusian theory of capitals, I operationalise the methods of qualitative (discursive interview, participant listening) and creative research (soundwalks, sound diaries, sampling) through questions, listenings and samplings that aim at braiding together the contextual (sociological meso/macro) and the individual (performance, practice, perception). In sum, my methodology is a palimpsestuous ethnography (Daughtry 2017) that seeks to listen to the first violin without missing the orchestra. In the following paragraphs I briefly introduce acoustemology (acoustic ethnography) as the methodological frame for sensory research, supported by the technical findings of science and technology studies (STS). The said disciplines tackle three key elements of qualitative and creative sound research: the relationship with the body and the senses, the interplay with the environment, and the technical aspect of recording soundscapes. In particular, they theorise and operationalise the techniques I used: elicitation interviews; participant listening; soundwalks and sound diaries.

Sound structure as social structure?
Acoustic ecology and acoustemology

> Senses of place: the terrain covered here includes the relation of sensation to emplacement; the experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over; and the multiple ways places are metonymically and metaphorically tied to identities. [...] Struggles arising from loss and desires for control are always placed (Feld and Basso 1996:11).

Schafer and Feld were among the first to pioneer a brew of qualitative and creative methods; the latter called it acoustemology, short for acoustic epistemology. While he was recording the sound of the rainforest among the Kaluli in Papua New Guinea, Feld developed acoustemology as both a way of knowing and of being in the world. Shortly, it is a sound-driven ethnography directed at understanding sound as a cultural force; an orientation tool; a source of knowledge; and an indicator of presence (both the subject's and the environment's) (Rice 2018). In Feld's words, acoustemology is an effort to counter Western visuality and "to argue the potential of acoustic knowing, of sounding as a condition *of* and *for* knowing, of sonic presence and awareness as potent shaping forces in how people make sense of experiences" (Feld 1990:97). The concept of acoustemology expands and goes beyond that of soundscape, intended as "any acoustic field of study", a kind of audio photography ("sonography") supposed to freeze a place in time (Schafer 1993:7). Thompson widens the definition and states that a soundscape is "simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world" (Thompson 2004:2).

Whereas Schafer explicitly referred to photography as the ideal reference point for soundscape studies, Feld often mentioned cinematography, and focused on ways of making and knowing sounds through movement in space and flux. Furthermore, he borrowed extensively from the arts — music, in particular (he was a musician and a

synthesiser enthusiast) — so that creative methods were embedded in acoustemology from the very beginning. The notes on the back cover of "Rainforest Soundwalks" — produced by Earth Ear, a label that specialised in environmental sound art — use the same language that a sound engineer would use (I highlighted the parts that explicitly refer to creative choices) :

> Track one was recorded on a Sony D7 DAT through an Aerco preamp by Jerry Chamkis, with AKG 4608 + CK1 microphones *in an X-Y stereo pair*. Tracks two, three, and four were recorded on a stereo Nagra 45 with Bryston Dolby SR, also through an Aerco preamp, with AKG 451EB + CK1 microphones in an X-Y stereo pair. *Digital editing and mixing* was done at Ubik Sound, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Feld 2001, the emphases indicate purposeful creative choices)

I approach the founders of sound studies critically: I reject the part of Schafer's approach that is ecology-centred and hearing-exclusive, for I am less interested in the static "tuning of the world", than in how sound is viscerally and multisensory engaged in the conflicts and joys of homemaking; and I am prudent about Feld's connections between sound and social structures (admittedly, he was too). Lastly, the latest applications of their methods lead me to doubting something that is becoming common sense. There is a surprisingly widespread consensus on nature sounds (i.e., quiet sounds) being the sole source of "quality" soundscapes — whatever that means. This sentence exemplifies such positions: "The potential and prescience of soundscape studies can be employed to make the 21st century a *much quieter* century for urban society" (Fong 2016:190, my emphasis). I am highly sceptical of this claims, for they appeal to a form of primitivism that is already bolstering the green gentrification's agenda, and often go hand-in-hand with noise-abatement policies that reiterate the anaesthetising trend of contemporaneity (call it *blasé*, or the i-Pod user); furthermore, when the property value increases because of its quietness (a gated community, insulating treatments, costly materials, surveillance), the connection with gentrification becomes rather evident.

In the following paragraphs, I focus on some specific tools-to-think that I extrapolated from the soundscapes and the acoustemology frameworks.

THE STRUCTURE OF A SOUNDSCAPE

Schafer isolates three components of a soundscape (Schafer 1993:8–9):

- *Keynote sounds*: background sounds that do not require conscious or attentive listening; the sonic backdrop of everyday life, ubiquitous and taken for granted, like the combustion engine, the "fundamental sound of contemporary civilization" (Schafer 1993:82).
- *Signal sounds*: highly identifiable sounds that are consciously and attentively listened to. By shifting their temporal focus, people can turn every keynote into a signal.
- *Soundmarks*: like landmarks, sounds that are unique to a community or a setting. They make the life of the community unique and, therefore, residents feel that they ought to be protected (Schafer 1993:10).

Restrictive it may be, this structure reflects the aforementioned three-dimensional analysis (Cusick 2017) so that listening for keynotes informs about the context; signals build the network of stimuli we weave and react to; and soundmarks reflect both the affect for places, and the sociocultural forces that inform our notions of home. In my analysis, I will use the following correspondences to study the relationship between sound and homemaking.

KEYNOTES	CONTEXT
SIGNALS	NETWORK
SOUNDMARKS	AFFECT

RELATIONALITY

- The soundscape is the relationship of people and sonic environments, so that any analysis of it should comprise physical, cognitive, and sociocultural components (Truax 1974).
- The prehistoric natural soundscape worked to acclimate *Homo* to the surroundings; although it was not always for joyful reasons (earthquakes, predators growling), the human species developed an innate attentiveness to the environment that is the very first instance of relationality in human perception (Dubois, Guastavino, and Raimbault 2006; Guastavino 2006; Payne 2009).
- The idea that, in time, different soundscapes inform human relationships with the self, society and the environment stimulates a historically-grounded research on how social changes affected everyday life through the constant, more or less unconscious, yet pervasive buzzing of sounds.
    - As a corollary, it follows that, in time, different soundmarks would signify different places as *home* (e.g. a well-known stream; a precarious proletariat nest; a soundproof loft).

The concept of soundscape highlights the historicity of sound perception; this supports Bourdieu's claim that sociology should always be historically aware and contextualised. Thus, I use the soundscape framework to acknowledge the relationality of the sonic experience and to account for homemaking as a dynamic historical practice that is subject to change.

THE SOUNDSCAPE TYPOLOGY

Schafer distinguishes between *hi-fi* and *lo-fi* soundscapes. Hi-fi means that discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level; on the contrary, in a lo-fi soundscape a sonic overload washes out individual sounds, so that perspective is lost. Hi-fi soundscapes are quiet and discrete (in the mathematical sense,

i.e. composed by distinguishable sounds); here, even the slightest stimulus can convey information and/or meaning (Schafer 1993:43).

This typology is useful to expose cases of sound imperialism, where a city/institution/social group emanates distinctive soundscapes that affirm and reproduce the social structure and their advantages (Fong 2016:189).

Acoustemology

CHANGE, FLUX, CONFLICT, HOME

Acoustemology focuses on *practices and processes* that render places meaningful (Feld and Basso 1996:7). It acknowledges that the world we inhabit is fractured along class and power cleavages, "a world where history lies inscribed in mined landscapes of trash and is performed daily in hard talk and sad songs" (*id.*: p. 9). This is to say that, in the acoustemological as well as in the soundscapes framework, sound is an historical and historicising entity, and as such it carries inequalities, power struggles, and systems of opportunities and constraints that characterise a certain field. Music, for example, depending on the context, can be a dialogic force (the frequent contaminations within pop music) or an uterus for social inequality (the strict etiquette of opera that excludes the "uneducated").

Therefore, local acoustemologies may differ and clash: patients hear differently and different soundscapes than nurses, who in turn have a different auditory experience from doctors. The first may hear frightening and dehumanising technical hisses, hums and bips; the second draw sound cues from patients and machines to allocate care; the third focus on the patient's body through auscultation and ultrasonography (Rice 2013, 2018). Young students partying in the city centre hinder the sleep of both rich residents living in historical buildings, and of the homeless lying on the ground under the arcades. Acoustemological disjunctures happen all the time, and my analysis acknowledges that sound struggles *always* relate to social struggles.

Furthermore, Feld's acoustemology states that homemaking is a fundamental need and a universal practice of the human being, so that "struggles and uprooted

moments are endlessly countered with actions meant to ensure a sense of home" (*id.* : p. 12).

SOUND STRUCTURE AS SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Acoustemology draws a connection between sound structures and social structures[56], which can be summarised by Feld's theorem:

> For any given society, everything that is socially salient will not necessarily be musically marked. But for all societies, everything that is musically salient will undoubtedly be socially marked, albeit in a great variety of ways, some more superfluous than others (Feld 1984:406).

Feld rejects any deterministic correlation between sound structures and social structures, for one cannot predict the other. However, music structures give people tools to *frame their identities* within society: "This is what we are, where we are, who we are" (*id.*: p. 405). So, the point is that sound is less a reflection of social institutions than a symbol of, and a nutrient for social identity (Erickson 1976:307). I see an example in my own experience as a musician: I have often witnessed the struggles of festival planners in finding "enough" women-led bands to even out the gender ratio. Rather than seeing this as the deterministic consequence of gender inequality (which is not to say that it is not there), acoustemology would start from the female band perspective and ask "what tools for identity-building and self-determination do they have? do they differ from their male counterparts? is this coherent with social structures?". Like phenomenology, from the bottom up.

The social mechanism that connects sound and society is *metaphors*: as I mentioned in the first chapter, metaphors act as local sociocultural models of the world, like any cultural construct (like music). Thus, even though *correlation* cannot be

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[56] In the article, Feld provides an operative guide to inquire six dimensions of music as a total social fact, which I put in the Appendix A.

statistically found between sound structures and social structures, metaphorical reasoning gives rise to *coherences* between the two. For example, in the Kaluli life-world, environmental sounds of the rainforest inter-penetrate with Kaluli sound recognition and expression, so that their sound making is emotionally effective only as far as it is grounded in the metaphor of humans being part of nature (as humans that might eventually transform into a bird). All in all, metaphors are an efficient way of summarising meaning and social structures; sound as a metaphor connects the social and the intimate; music, specifically, is a performed metaphor that gives the person tools to grow their identity.

METHODOLOGY: PHENOMENOLOGY, RECORDING, LAYERING

The methodological choices of acoustemology emphasise the dialogue with phenomenology, the creative use of intermediality to foster collaboration, and the focus on the multisensory (layered) sensory experience; thus, acoustemology is an embodied and relational framework for sound studies, proving fertile for researching homemaking through sound.

- *The dialogue with phenomenology*: in *Senses of Place* (Feld and Basso 1996), Feld and Basso converse with phenomenologist Casey to study how places fuse settings to situations, and localise not just a momentary perception, but entire life-worlds. Phenomenology, starting its inquiry from the first-person-perceiver, tackles the intimate relationship between embodiment and emplacement, and one's own awareness of one's sensuous presence in the world. "To be in place is to know" (*id.*: p. 9). Places naturalise worlds of sense.
- *Intermediality*: in (Feld et al. 2020), Feld argues that intermediality stems from collaboration, and fosters intervocality and intersubjectivity. For example, his ethnography was radically jolted when The Grateful Dead's drummer, Mickey Hart, unexpectedly showed up at Feld's doorstep and proposed to co-produce an album of rainforest soundscapes, one that would later tour throughout the world alongside with the band. Furthermore, Actions, words, feelings and ideas *inter*play between Feld's books, CDs and movies, so that intermediality is

embedded into the multisensory acoustemological approach. This is particularly important for what Feld says ("This sensation that musicians often have [...], that you have a history of listening to the same things, [...] you can use that as the basis for creating a kind of intimacy", *id.*:4) reminds me of Pink's "similar places" (similar for me and the participants): I sense that that intimacy that musicians feel may be partly co-constructed in sharing one's sensory experience.

- *Recording, layering, palimpsest*: intermediality is rooted in recording, which is the primary tool of acoustemology. It is both a scientific tool of measurement, and a creative choice to select soundscapes portions for inquiry. Ethnography sometimes works like improvisation in music, and recording should be granted a degree of serendipity, as well. Furthermore, recording allows for the layering of voices and sonic textures, and lets the researcher enter the sensory relationship between people, environment, and society. Acoustemology, then, is most fruitful when it is conducted with the palimpsest as an ideal goal, one that layers voices, stories, feelings, the academic and the sensory.

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I operationalised the soundscapes and acoustemology frameworks both in my interviews and soundwalks. In particular, interviews were deeply informed by the phenomenological sensitivity of acoustemology, delving deep into the embodied and taken-for-granted sensory experience of the participants; the focus on change and disjunctures led me to use sound as a proxy for social conflict between immigrants and locals in Stockholm, and to aim the overall exploratory research design at diversifying the sonic accounts of my informants. The distinction between hi-fi and lo-fi soundscapes soon became entangled with social cleavages, so that it became apparent that silence — the distinguishing feature of hi-fi soundscapes — is a luxury commodity in Sweden (and, I would argue, wherever individualism, distinction, and decor are encouraged), naturalised through a patriotic-deistic narrative of nature and quietness. In general, interviews were always aware of the relationality of sound, so that the intimate ("What sounds from your home country would you consider most familiar?") always converses with the social ("How can sustainable planning preserve soundscape diversity in a

diverse neighbourhood?") (from the interview guide for Rumi Kubokawa, architect). Feld's operative guide to sound as a total social fact (see Appendix A) was essential to identify the analytical dimensions emerging from the conversations. On the other hand, my soundwalks adopted the perceptual and analytical lenses of Schafer's soundscape structure: keynotes, signals and soundmarks acted like sonic compasses in guiding the research and the subsequent analysis. Additionally, acoustemology's inherent intermediality grounded my creative effort, allowing me to frame recordings, fieldnotes, diaries and the rest in a sound (pun intended) theoretical frame.

Sensory ethnography

Precisely because the home touches so centrally on our personal lives, any attempt to develop a dispassionate social scientific analysis inevitably stimulates emotional and deeply fierce argument and disagreement (Mallett 2004:64).

These sounds emphasize by a sort of mirroring effect, as it were, the individuality of the one listening to them (Chion 2015:11).

By attending to the sensoriality and materiality of other people's ways of being in the world, we cannot directly access or share their personal, individual, biographical, shared or 'collective' memories, experiences or imaginations [...]. However, we can, by attuning our bodies, rhythms, tastes, ways of seeing and more to theirs, begin to become involved in making places that are similar to theirs and thus feel that we are similarly emplaced. [...] A sensory ethnography approach invites us to use our own experiences to seek to imagine how other people 'feel' (Pink 2015:46–47).

Sensory ethnography (SE) is a qualitative method of social research that involves two elements:

A) *Ethnography*: a process of creating and representing knowledge [...] that [is] based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during that process, [...] as loyal as possible to the context, the embodied, sensory and affective experiences, and the negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced (Pink 2021:35).

B) *Sensory*: an explicit, intentional and self-conscious account of, and reflection on the senses throughout the research process, including the restitution, which may take advantage of creative tools to communicate sensitive representations (Pink 2015).

In the table below I summarise the main principles of SE, as they were pioneered by Sarah Pink less than ten years ago.

Principles of sensory ethnography (SE)
elaborated from (Pink 2015)

experience	*embodiment*	*phenomenology*
SE investigates first-hand the embodied experiences of people, both participants *and* researchers, with a reflexive sensibility. Experience entails both human perception and the political and power relations of the field in which it takes place. To account for both, a personal engagement and embodied knowing are required.	SE rejects the body-mind dualism and argues for their integration: the body is itself a knowing tool, instead of a source of experience for the mind to rationalise. It recognises, however, that the mind can *reify* the body (e.g. the sick body). Embodiment is the product of the relationship between the individual and the environment. The researcher's body is their main epistemological tool, and as such SE is gendered, performative, positioned, and reflexive.	SE takes perception as the main gateway to the sensuous encounter with the environment (Rodaway 1994:19), conceptualising it as multisensory (all senses interact as part of the knowing body) and always "intentional" (*sensu* Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2013, meaning "always directed towards an object"). The goal of SE is "to capture that moment of transcendence when perception begins and [...] constitutes and is constituted by culture (Csordas 1990:9), with the *caveat* that the cultural attunement of the senses might locally differ (Howes 2003:49).

place as event, opening, entanglement		*knowing and transmission*
SE ties embodiment to emplacement as the main connection between the body and the environment as a field of power(s). Place is a distinct dimension of neuronal processing that informs the perception of space and time, and ultimately one's way of being-in-the-world. Place is not a static object, but an event, a process with a *gathering power*, i.e the ability to collect experiences, histories, people and things, and with *elastic properties* that dynamically extend its boundaries to accommodate lived bodies (Casey 1996). Place is open and always under construction; it is the concretion of a constellation of processes and trajectories that put together previously unrelated things and people — the *throwntogetherness* of place (Massey 2005:140). Places can be either conceptualised as spatial gatherings with a perduring identity (the house I can go back to), or as momentary openings in power-geometries (this is my haven), or an occurring (rather than existing) unbounded zone of entanglement produced by people moving through it (Ingold 2016). Places are emerging intensities in the moving spatial meshwork (*ibid.*).		SE adopts participatory techniques to investigate the embodied and emplaced transmission of knowledge. It advocates for "knowing in practice", and through the body. In so doing, it seeks to imagine places that are similar to the participants', and that the researcher can occupy and resonate with. Furthermore, SE employs diverse forms of ethnographic writing and techniques from artistic practices to communicate theoretically sensitive representations of sensory embodied experiences.

memory and imagination	

SE fosters co-presence through memory and imagination, i.e. it suggests that the ethnographers find places that are similar to the participants', so that they can get a sense of their embodied perception, and their pasts and futures. To do so, they may leverage their own memories or use imagination (possibly elicited by arts-based techniques). Indeed, the very experience of place is inextricable from memories, for the present perception of a place inevitably evokes past ones that form interpretive categories for future places. Furthermore, SE conceptualises imagination as multisensory rather than purely cognitive, so that the spatialities and temporalities of everyday life may refer to imagined ones.

technical focus

Despite acknowledging the multisensoriality of experience, often SE implements techniques that focus on one sense. This is a constraint, yet it is not a limitation, for exploiting the boundaries of one sensory tool (e.g. photo elicitation) can be used to lessen the overall sensory "noise" of field experience and actually grasp more data (Lyon and Back 2012:2.3), without losing track of the general multisensory conversation.

Tab. 4: The seven principles of sensory ethnography (SE)

To operationalise the principles of SE, I made a list of some questions I asked myself while composing the interview guides. It is by no means exhaustive; rather, I hope it can inspire the reader to explore the epistemological potential of the senses, just as my readings and fieldwork inspired me.

experience	*embodiment*	*phenomenology*
What is the relationship between what happens *and what is* perceived?	*What is the status of the (gendered, aged, skilled…) body in the field?*	*What is being perceived?*
How is the individual related to the context?	*What is the body feeling?*	*How do the senses interrelate in perceiving the object?*
How do I feel on the field?	*How is the body knowing?*	*Is there a specific sense that could be analytically isolated as a prism (proxy)?*
What does it do to me?	*How is the body mediating between structural forces and individual instances?*	*What intersubjective aspects of perception are discernible?*
How do the bodies — mine and the others' — interact?	*Is the body reified? normed? performative?*	*How are the senses locally (e.g. culturally) coded?*

place as *event, opening, entanglement*	*knowing and* *transmission*
What concept best captures the participant's perception of place: a fixed object, a gathering, an open process, or a knot in a meshwork? *How does it relate with the chosen theoretical framework?* *What are the power geometries at play?* *What space-time perceptions does the place inform?* *How does place mediate the relationship between the individual and the environment?*	*How is perception transmitted?* *How is practice experienced as a way of knowing?* *How can the results be transmitted in such a way that evokes resonating places?* *Can the arts and other fields help in communicating sensitive representations?*
memory and imagination *How does the imagined relate with the perceived?* *How does imagining impact how the participants go about living in the world?* *How can I imagine a place that parallels the participant's?* *How does imagination affect my fieldwork?*	

Tab. 5: My operationalisation of SE's principles

An example of sensory ethnography

A thorough example of sensory research is Simon Gottschalk's (Vannini, Waskul, and Gottschalk 2012) auto-ethnographic analysis of what it means to *feel* Israeli, i.e. how the sense of belonging to the Israeli nation comes into being through the senses. First of all, Israel's immigrant origins require people from all around the world to adjust to the new Israeli sensorium. Paraphrasing Feld and Basso (1996:91), through sensory rethorics and daily practices, the State places the senses, and the senses place the State. In fact, proving to be *sabra*, a true Israeli[57], requires to possess the habitus of the *sabra*, that is, to smell, taste, hear, walk, and look like a *sabra*. The true Israeli smellscape is familiar with turmeric, cumin, curry, saffron, and za'atar (a mix of herbs), and one generation ago, it was with *Time* cigarettes, a male status symbol (Vannini,

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[57] [...] a good-hearted, sociable, strong person who was good-looking, with rough edges but a sweet interior like the fruit of the Sabra, a hero who never cries . . . A son of Israel (Bar-On 2008:81).

Waskul, and Gottschalk 2012:108). Odours signal transitions: they are most noticeable at boundaries, they trigger old memories from the associative learning centres in the hippocampus and amygdala (de Bruijn and Bender 2018), and synchronise emotionally and physically the members of a group. Those scents that become culturally meaningful after one leaves their home country, and then comes back and through their absence realises their importance, those are the smells of homeland. Then, a *sabra* knows what Israel *tastes* like. Eating is taking the world in (Lupton 1996), so it reproduces hierarchies, social inequality, and power struggles; furthermore, food nurtures identity, physically, socially and emotionally; finally, at the table indisputable tastes set "us" and "them" apart. Israeli cuisine mixes various Middle Eastern flavours, and demands a digestive adaptation to deep-frying and spiciness — "teaching my lips to embrace the edible fires" (Vannini et al. 2012:111) — and, additionally, requires a specific tactile engagement (eating with hands). Practices of food preparation foster cultural transmission, and practices of food consumption reproduce social relations. Just as Semeretakis (1996, 2008) saw love and commensality transferred from the grandma to the niece through saliva-cooked breadcrumbs, Gottschalk constructs brotherhood through the rotation of the afternoon food snacks preparation in the *kibbutz*. Thirdly, the *sabra* hears properly. To hear means to understand, and hearing properly means, for example, listening carefully to the news on Kol Israel, the State-owned radio station. Discussing the news is not only a cue for socialisation; it is a way of sharing, spreading and reaffirming feelings of solidarity, authority, and belonging. As I pointed out earlier, music is instrumental to identity-building. Unsurprisingly, there was a serious debate about the inclusion of Middle Eastern music into the national Israeli soundscape: would it resonate with Israeliness? This echoes the 1920s dispute between Yiddish and Hebrew for the status of the new national language. Further, many immigrants changed their Diasporic names to Israeli ones — the most radical and intimate sign of identity transformation; street names were changed. Indeed, learning new sounds (here, language) means learning a new way of being-in-the-world (here, of being Israeli): Gottschalk claims that Hebrew "was not only a tool for nation-building and citizenship but invited different thoughts, emotions, and ways of being" (Vannini et al. 2012:115). Also, he recalls two Israelis playing smash ball on the beach: oddly enough for the

Western person, the goal of the game is *not* to score by making the opponent miss the ball; on the contrary, it is to keep the ball afloat as long as possible.

<div align="center">

Pong . . . . Pong

Pong . . . . . . Pong

Pong . . . Pong

PongPongPongPongPong

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<div align="center">

(Vannini et al. 2012:116)

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The accelerating pulse blurs the distinction between the rounds and the player; they have become so *attuned* (Gottschalk uses this exact word) that sound cannot set them apart. This is habitus at play, both for them (who possess the embodied know-how to play smash ball) and for the researcher (who feels at home by *hearing* the synchronised rhythm of the bouncing ball). Rhythm is also entailed by walking. Walking is a form of "circumambulatory knowledge" that speaks of the "presence of the human being in the world" (Ingold 2004:331); thus, walking along Haifa's streets means bodily attuning one's rhythm and pulse to other Israelis; in Pink's words, (2015:193) being "similarly emplaced". The "transformation of the wandering Jew into the marching *sabra*" (Vannini et al. 2012:118) was institutionalised by Israeli educators, who embedded excursions into the national pedagogy; on a more violent terrain, Israeli colonisation of Palestinian lands often starts as a simple act of walking to the top of a hill and, subsequently, claiming it. Finally, the virile *sabra* should *look* like a laid-back soldier, with khaki and blue shirts that recall a uniform (Almog 2000:131); by leveraging youth, militarism, fertility, birth, and death, Zionism reclaimed the body of the new Jew, who would make the desert bloom.

Gottschalk's autoethnography aims at making *sense* of what it means to *feel* Israeli, where "making sense" means literally *understanding through the senses*. His vivid analysis invokes all the points of Pink's guidelines: it is embedded in his embodied experience, it is phenomenologically rooted in his first person perspective, it thematises place as a dynamic coming-into-being of people and affects, where knowledge is transmitted and memories activate when the senses react to the world's effervescence. As Stoller (2010) suggests, it interweaves the theorising and the felt registers, so that I,

<div align="center">

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personally, feel *moved* by it. Since the social body is mediated via the individual bodies, sensory research retraces the path, and questions the social body through interrogating how we smell, taste, hear, touch, and see each other.

I conclude this overview of sensory research with Gottschalk's declaration of intent, which sums up the aim of sensory research:

> The hope has been a modest one: rather than *theorization*, these autoethnographic notes have aimed at *animation*. Animating times and spaces means making them come to life through the folds, fissures, ruptures, and lines of flight of embodied exploration, through the performative power of imagination, through the intimate stickiness of encounter, and through the seductive power of the word and storytelling (Vannini et al. 2012:123).

I shall now describe the three techniques I implemented in my research design: sensory interviews, participant listening, and soundwalks.

Sensory interviews, sensory participation, sound walks and sound diaries

> A story that makes sense is one that stirs the senses from their slumber, one that opens the eyes and the ears to their real surroundings, tuning the tongue to the actual tastes in the air and sending chills of recognition along the surface of the skin. [...] Each place its own psyche. Each sky its own blue. (Abram 1996:265–67)

LISTEN TO AND WATCH
HANIA RANI @ PIANO DAY

https://youtu.be/sp3B97N67Cw?t=547

Pink and MacDougall suggest that audio-video media can convey other sensory information, such as touch. Watch this excerpt of Hania Rani's piano piece *Leaving*, and try to connect sight, hearing, and touch. Look at her right hand hovering from note to note with a very peculiar posture, speed and muscle tone. In your perception, how does the gesture relate with the timbre of the electric piano, the melody, the atmosphere, the room, Rani's body, the audience, you? Then, try to imagine yourself touching the keyboard like that. What do you feel? How does that communicate with the music — is it harmonious or dissonant? relaxing, inaccurate, focused, rigid, lost…? How do you imagine Rani's sensory experience at that moment?

ELICITATION INTERVIEWS

The verbal implementation of sensory research informs the technique of *elicitation interviews*, which involves the researcher stimulating discourses through objects and experiences that explicitly thematise the senses (Pink 2015:88). Photo elicitation is, at the moment, the most well-known example, where the researcher uses photos as visual texts and material objects that communicate something not just rationally, but also emotionally, through materiality (Harper 2012). Sound too can be implemented in elicitation interviews (phono-elicitation). Feld not only tape-recorded everyday (and everynight) sounds from the rainforest, he even put three cassette players in the bush and asked the Kaluli participants to mix three-tracks soundscape compositions with him (Feld et al. 2020) — using sounds to investigate sound. Elicitation interviews ask the interviewees to interpret other people's sensory experiences as well as their own, and to reflect on memories and biographies. Since they establish a mimetic/theatrical setting where feeling and sensations can (partially) be reenacted, they are extremely useful to study practices that are difficult to interrupt (say, a basketball match, a family dinner, a dance), and show an interesting potential for

experimental designs[58]. Moreover, through eliciting objects, participants can sense (see/hear/…) themselves in particular activities, and then, in the interview, verbally explore how they felt while doing them; this is different from purely discursive interviews, where the participants rely solely on their imagination and memory to recall what they did, thought, and felt; in other words, elicitation interviews are inherently reflexive. When Spinney shows professional cyclists (with whom he biked) the video recordings of their races (part of his mobile ethnography design), he elicits accounts of their kinesthetic and embodied approach. In this way, his elicitation interviews develop a "vocabulary for the unspeakable" (Spinney 2009:101–2), "alternative grammars" (Tolia-Kelly 2007:340) that interrogate the sensory experience of the participants on the very same channel through which those sensory experiences flow. Elicitation interviews are ultimately an aesthetic experience, as well as a reflexive and rationalising one. In this respect, sensory interviews in general are always concerned with the *interconnectedness* of the senses, and when the elicitation material focuses on one sense (say, hearing), it should be noted that it communicates something about other senses, too, so that listening to radio excerpts in a focus group (Vokes 2007) may evoke a sense of home that throws back at the smell of grandma's kitchen, or concentrates on the materiality of the radio-object. The interview itself is inherently multisensory (Pink 2015:93), for the simple reason that it involves the interaction between (at least) two emplaced, feeling bodies.

Let me sum up the technique of elicitation interviews:

- The researcher uses sensory objects (photographs, recordings, scents, physical contact, tastes) to elicit discourses;
- The elicited discourses directly thematise sensory perception, experience, memories, and the subjectivities of both the participant and the researcher;

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[58] When Low (2006) pioneers the sociology of odours studying the coherencies between smells management and social structures (e.g. identity, group cohesion, differentiation, discrimination, ethnicity, gender), he implements a quasi-experimental design in which he *wears* different perfumes and elicits the participants' reaction. Subsequently, he asks them to elaborate on their responses. This design allows him to tackle the taken for granted and the unsaid about gendered smells by "fooling" the participants into believing, for example, that he is wearing a man's perfume even though it is a woman's. The responses, then, are very interesting, because they express the tacit intersubjective assumptions about masculinity/femininity and how it should spread through space.

-   The eliciting objects offer a material representation of the interviewee in their embodied activities, thus offering ground for verbal and nonverbal reflexivity;
-   The aesthetic experience of the elicitation interview establishes a protected framework where alternative media and languages contact the sensory experience.

SENSORY PARTICIPATION

Breaking the fourth wall of the interview setting and diving deep into the participants' lives, participant observation is usually the elective technique of the qualitative researcher. Sensuous scholarship and sensory research push it to go beyond "observation", and to explicitly account for the whole sensorium, so that questions might be asked like "Does the repression of a particular sense of sensory expression correspond to the repression of a particular group within society?" (Howes and Classen 1991:259). Sensory participation is a multisensory phenomenological approach that cannot be reduced to visuality and that relies heavily on auto-ethnography. Here, auto-ethnography serves the purpose of developing a critical ethnocentrism (see A. Geisshuesler 2021 about Ernesto De Martino) that frames naturally biassed sensory experience into theory-laden awareness. It is this posture that urged me to introduce myself and my luggage of biases (the ethnographer like Atlas). Murray-Schafer did the same, when he wrote that "once conscious of my own middle-class informed listening into the Govindpuri slums, I was able to raise questions outside of this sensibility — 'Who's listening? [...] What are they [...] refusing to listen to?" (Schafer M., 2003:25, in Chandola 2013). Sensory participation uses the researcher's own experience, in a constant conversation with the participants and theory, to produce academic knowledge. This brings us closer to those "similar places" that Pink mentions talking about the potential of sensory research. By being sensory-aware on the field, we speak the same unspeakable language of the human bodies, that academic training only so far disciplines. I do not go as far as to summon such a contested word as "empathy" (Archambault 2011; Smith and Atkinson 2017; Throop and Zahavi 2020; Watts 2008), but I argue that through sensory participation 1) we can tackle unspeakable and un-rationalisable topics (strong emotions, traumas, embodied experiences, sensory

memory and practices like homemaking), and 2) do it in a way that strengthens the ethnographic relationship, thus providing potentially richer insights, constructive reflections for the participants and the researcher alike, and more meaningful restitution. For example, while Okely was questioning elderly people in the countryside, the atmosphere of rural France resonated with her past experience, so that the two embodied experiences established *correspondences* (Okely 2003). Further, through yoga, Buckingham and Degen achieved a "carnal sorority" (Buckingham and Degen 2012:337) that "let them in" into the intimate territories of how sex workers experience their bodies outside their job. Sensory participation involves a high degree of serendipity in that, often, it comprises unplanned moments whereby the researcher interprets memories and meanings through their own embodied experience (Pink 2015:98); these intuitive realisations — epiphanies (Edvardsson and Street 2007) — should not be discarded as non-academic epistemologies; on the contrary, they are proof of the attuning work of the senses. I can personally relate with DE, a participant from Edvardsson and Street's research, who *feels* that walking with the nurses around the ward, he was compelled to tune to their pace; this epiphany led him to question the meaning of movement through the ward and the practice of walking in a space of care. The same happened in my three-years-long involvement with a project of STEAM education in a paediatric oncohematology ward in Torino[59]. After some months, the soundscape of walking people led me to wonder what place-making traces were being left by sterile crocs, small naked feet, casual shoes, and gurneys.

Shortly, sensory participation:

- Makes explicit use of all the senses to understand the participants' experiences, memories and meanings. Sensory participation means "'being there' in a shared physical environment" (Pink 2015:101);
    - Examples of ethnographic techniques of "sensory being there" are eating together (commensality), which is a material exchange of sensory memories, emotions, and incarnated feelings, raw or cooked (see Law 2001; Pink 2015:107–10; Seremetakis 2008); walking with others, which

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is *per se* a performative way of being with others in a shared space *and* a place-making practice that fosters self-reflexivity; practising sports together, venturing into arts and crafts, sharing practices. All these techniques nurture *closeness* between persons, researchers and participants.

- Frames sensory biases within a critic ethnocentrism framework;
- Seeks to establish correspondences between the researcher's and the participants' embodied and emplaced experience, acknowledging serendipity (epiphanies) as an epistemological moment;
- Uses the researcher's own sensory experience as a point of comparison with those of the participants.

THE SOUNDWALK

Among the aforementioned techniques of sensory research, I mentioned walking, as a way of building ethnographic closeness. The soundwalk, its sonic articulation, is an experiment of experience that was developed by Schafer and colleagues during the *World Soundscape Project* in the late 1960s. Featuring an ecological design, the study was supposed to document and archive the changes in the acoustic environments throughout the world; thus, soundwalks were devised as specialised excursions whose main purpose was listening to the environment before recording it, while providing a frame for acoustic education. Indeed, it was also used to expose listeners to attentive perception of the whole environmental composition (Westerkamp 1974). Urban planners and a conspicuous share of the STS scholarship are already familiar with soundwalks as research techniques, and developed a soundwalk design whereby (Adams et al. 2008:6):

- A set of meaningful places is pinpointed, usually by the researcher, after spatial considerations and/or reconnaissance;
- A set of pre-soundwalk questions is asked of the participants to assess their background and their "image of the city" (Lynch 1960);

- The soundwalk is conducted in silence[60], often stopping at soundmarks/landmarks, so that participants may concentrate on what they hear;
  - The maximum duration of the soundwalk is set at 30 minutes, what is considered to be the "average distance which we can cover on foot in an average European city by keeping a certain [socio-spatial] homogeneity" (Semidor 2006)[61];
  - Soundwalks should be conducted several times a day on several days of the week to appreciate temporal changes in the soundscape (*ibid.*).
- At specific intervals, pauses are made to ask location-specific questions;
- At the end of the soundwalk, a semi-structured interview is used as a follow-up to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experience.

When it is operationalised by STS and urban studies, soundwalks are generally intended as epistemological boosters that enable "a deeper and more meaningful semi-structured interview" (*ibid.*). However, if this instrumental view pairs up with a positivistic obsession to provide "quality soundscapes" and "rehabilitate public spaces" through quietness (Adams et al. 2008; Berglund and Nilsson 2006; Nilsson et al. 2010; Semidor 2006), then the soundwalk risks being nothing more than an acritical ecological census, which is of little sociological use. In Sweden, for example, there is extensive research on "quiet areas" (*lugna områden*) in cities (Axelsson, Nilsson, and Berglund 2012); usually, it focuses on city parks and fountains, and collects a general consensus about the "noise is bad & silence is good" equation. I argue that this is an atrophied soundwalk, confined to providing a participatory façade to a quantitative research design, in addition to succumbing to confirmation bias (the EU stigmatises urban noise and praises quiet areas, so we develop tools to prove that quiet areas are indeed…quiet!)[62]. On the contrary, I argue that the soundwalk 1) is an autonomous epistemological tool (i.e., it provides knowledge that should be analysed regardless of the subsequent research steps), 2) is a moment of *throwntogetherness*, of physical

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[60] This is typical of STS research, although it ought not be mandatory. See Radicchi's (2017) soundwalk guidelines below for alternatives.
[61] Same as above.
[62] I am not, by any means, dismissing the broader goal of this strand of research, which is to raise awareness of noise pollution, to counter the increasing din of the city, and — purposefully or not — to elicit attentive listening: these are fundamental and valuable aims.

copresence where the researcher listens to the participants who listen to the environment, 3) is open to epiphany, 4) is an embodied, emplaced, performative, and reflexive practice that magnifies its knowing potential when paired with other forms of sensory research, such as elicitation interviews, which benefit from recordings produced during soundwalks.

As every experiment, the soundwalk requires preparation, for both researchers and participants. Therefore, I agree with Westerkamp who proposes a "first soundwalk", "an intense introduction into the experience of uncompromised listening" (1974). It need not be a separate experience; the researcher can preliminarily complement a longer soundwalk with an accompaniment into attentive listening. It is not about in-structing, rather e-ducating (ex-ducere, "pull out"): we are epigenetically structured to attune the senses to the environment, not least for our own survival (physical, some thousands years ago; sociocultural, today), so it only takes a shared maieutic effort to get there. Additionally, ear-cleaning exercises (Schafer 1969, see Appendix B) help in resetting the overloaded ear of the urban dweller, like ginger after sushi. Below, I have summarised some fundamental steps and dimensions that inform the soundwalk as an ethnographic technique. I named it "recipe" not because I intend it to be normative, but because, as my grandma would say, "se mischi cose buone, è tutto buono" (mixing good things results in something nice); that is, the following dimensions are epistemological ingredients that help in structuring a rigorous yet embodied and shared soundwalk. Like in a real recipe, they may be rearranged according to the particular alchemy of each research design. A more precise guideline follows, developed by architect Antonella Radicchi (2017).

SOUNDWALK RECIPE based on Westerkamp (1974)	
STEP 0. PREPARATION (the "first" soundwalk)	*what:* - maieutic sensitisation to attentive listening - ear-cleaning exercises (reaching awareness of concepts of noise, silence, tone, timbre, amplitude, melody, texture, rhythm, soundscape) (Schafer 1969), see Appendix B *how:* - intensity (meaningful places) - short duration and distance (e.g. less than 30 minutes, 500 m or

	stationary) - analysis - self-reflection
STEP 1. WALKING	1. Auditory self-awareness. *Listen to yourself, the sound of your body, your thoughts. What is the softest sound you can make? Establish a dialogue with the environment.* 2. Proximity, localisation. *Listen to the sounds nearby. Do you discern rhythms? Nature sounds? Mechanical sounds? Anthropogenic sounds? What/where are the sources? How do you feel? Are you centred? displaced? oppressed?* 3. Context, imagination. *Listen beyond. What do you hear far away? How do your body and proximal sounds participate in the vaster environmental composition? What would the ideal soundscape in this context be?*
STEP 2. ANALYSIS (DIMENSIONS)	- Sound scale. *Is the soundscape scaled on human proportions (balanced / unbalanced)? In other words, can you hear yourself moving through the environment?* - Sound properties. *Is there an echo? reverb? what sound is most present (keynote)? what sounds stick out the most (signals)? what are their sources? what sounds are more meaningful / distinctive / typical and why (soundmarks)?* - Multisensoriality. *Is the environment as (un)pleasant acoustically as it is visually? are the tactile impressions coherent with the acoustic? is the soundscape as welcoming as the smellscape?* - Emplacement, place-making, atmospheres. *How does this place make you feel? Does it have an atmosphere? Produce a variety of sounds by interacting with the environment. How does it react? Use metaphors to describe the surroundings.* - Materiality, pervasiveness. *Put your ears on a surface, listen to the inside. Enter spaces within the environment. How does it feel? Does this inside-sound spill outside? How so? How does the inside relate to the outside?* - Change. *Soundscapes are dynamic. How do sounds change in time, here? Is there a fountain? how does the soundscape change when it is on (off)? Does the atmosphere change in time?* - Distinction, conflict. *Can you find a sound that you would describe as "typical"? How does X[63] sound like? Are there sounds that do not seem to "belong" or "fit" here? Are there hierarchies of sounds?* - Reflexivity: *experiment with your voice and body. How do you*

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[63] Depending on the scope of the research, it may be part of a neighbourhood, or an entire city.

	sound in this environment? Move elsewhere and produce the same sounds. What are the acoustic results? Sit down, relax, and enjoy listening. Then come back. What do you feel?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">SOUNDWALK GUIDELINES
Radicchi (2017)</td></tr>
<tr><td>CRITERIA</td><td>KIND</td></tr>
<tr><td>Location</td><td>- rural soundwalks
- urban soundwalks</td></tr>
<tr><td>Time</td><td>- day soundwalks
- night soundwalks
- soundwalks over time, visiting the same location(s) at different hours, on weekdays and weekends; during different seasons</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duration</td><td>- from 10 to 90 minutes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of participants</td><td>- solo soundwalks
- duo soundwalks (usually a researcher/artist leads a citizen/expert)
- group soundwalks</td></tr>
<tr><td>Kind of participants</td><td>- group soundwalks with experts (e.g. acousticians, architects)
- group soundwalks with citizens/city users</td></tr>
<tr><td>Path</td><td>- stationary soundwalks
- linear soundwalks along a predefined path
- linear, flexible soundwalks along a predefined path
- linear soundwalks along an open path</td></tr>
<tr><td>Position of the soundwalker</td><td>- detached, trying not to have a sonic impact on the soundscape
- interactive, trying to play with the environment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Group discussion</td><td>- silent soundwalks, with group discussions at the end of the soundwalk
- commented soundwalks, in which comments are made by both the leader and the participants at designated stops and at the end of the soundwalk
- commented city walks, with comments made by both the leader and the participants on the way of the walk</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evaluation points</td><td>- silent soundwalks without evaluation points
- silent soundwalks with listening evaluation points, defined before the soundwalk
- silent soundwalks with listening evaluation points, defined during the soundwalk
- soundwalks with complex evaluation points defined before the soundwalk
- soundwalks with complex evaluation points defined during the soundwalk</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visual deprivation</td><td>- blinded soundwalks, the blind leading the blind
- blinded soundwalks, the seeing leading the blind
- classic soundwalks without visual impairments</td></tr>
</table>

Technical equipment	- augmented soundwalk/audiowalks: headphones and audio guides which provide layered sounds over the environment - recorded soundwalks with listening evaluation points: stereo, binaural and ambisonic recorder, photo camera, video camera, mobile applications - recorded soundwalks with complex evaluation points: noise metre, stereo, binaural and ambisonic recorder, photo camera, video camera, mobile applications (e.g. CDC's NIOSH Sound Level Meter App, or Hush City)
PURPOSE	**HOW TO**
Political (civic)	*Silent soundwalks* Define a route, potentially with several listening stops along it. Then, walk in a line at a slow pace and stick to the route, in silence. If listening spots are part of the soundwalk, stop the group at these points and focus on listening for one minute, in silence. Then go on. At the end, a group discussion takes place. Questionnaires and maps can be handed out to facilitate the discussion. Participant data collection is not recommended during the soundwalk.
Educational	*Commented soundwalks with simple evaluation points* Define a route with several evaluation points along it. Then, walk in a line at a slow pace and stick to the route, in silence. Stop the group at the evaluation points, focus on listening for one minute, in silence. Then start the group discussion. Then go on and repeat the procedure at each evaluation point. At the end, a group discussion takes place. Questionnaires and maps can be handed out to facilitate the group discussions during the soundwalks and at the end. Data collection is encouraged during the soundwalk.
Research	*Solo* Walk in silence along an open, imaginary, improvised route. Follow your ears and let them guide you in the sonic exploration of the area. Data collection is highly recommended immediately upon completion, in the form of a sonic diary/sonic notes/sonic mental maps. Recording the solo soundwalk and listening to it when back home is highly recommended to reflect on variations in perception. Binaural recordings are highly recommended. *Soundwalks with complex evaluation points* Define a route with several evaluation points along it. Then, walk in a line at a slow pace and stick to the route, in silence. Stop the group at the evaluation points, focus on listening for one minute, in silence, and start the collection of mixed data. Then go on and repeat the procedure at each evaluation point. At the end, a group discussion takes place. For comparative analyses, the collection of mixed data implies: - Quantitative data: DB(A) measurements, source definition; - Qualitative data: field recordings, psychoacoustics analyses, questionnaires, pictures, videos. Binaural recordings are imperative in order to develop psychoacoustics analyses.

TRIANGULAR SOUNDWALK
Feld (Feld 1984:394) used to record the same sounds from different points of listening: the longhouse, the forest edge, the gardens, the forest depths. This inspired me to experiment with a "triangular soundwalk" that consists of three sequential recordings: the first accounts for the participant's embodied experience of the place; the second requires the participant to wear insulating headphones, thus using perceptual loss to focus on the emotional properties of the soundscape; finally, the last soundwalk is for the researcher alone, leveraging on autoethnography to provide reflexivity, comparison and critical insight.

SOUNDWALK X	MUTEWALK	SOUNDWALK X'
participant (presence)	participant (absence)	researcher

Tab. 6: The "ingredients" of a thorough soundwalk

THE SOUND DIARY

[Sound diaries elicit] retrospective viewpoint [that] offered possibilities to articulate more measured, self-reflexive accounts about sounds and emotive experiences. (Duffy and Waitt 2013:473)

One learns about sound only by making sound. [...] The sounds produced may be crude; they may lack form and grace, but they are *ours*. (Schafer 1969:1)

Sounds and music are moments of embodied knowing. They are seldom conscious, often taken for granted. Sound diaries are ethnographic tools that leverage self-reflection to access the taken-for-grantedness of the sonic experience. They consist of visual (diaries *about* sound), audio (*about* and *in* sound) or audiovisual accounts of auditory events as they are experienced *hic et nunc* by the participants. First, sound diary writing is a non-representational technique in that it has no naturalistic goal; instead, it aims at exposing affective responses, immanent impressions, tentative wonderings, memories, partial connections, imagination. It is a form of participant-sensing (Wood, Duffy, and Smith 2007) that respects the *messiness* of everyday life: its rhythms, pace,

incoherence, back and forths, emotionality (M. Duffy and Waitt 2011:127). Embodiment, spontaneity and contradictions emerge and counterbalance the rationalising frame of the semi-structured interview. Compare these two ethnographic excerpts from the same person, talking about the same music event, first in a semi-structured interview, then commenting it in her sound diary:

INTERVIEW	SOUND DIARY
"The thing is that [in] feedback there's [sic] four reasons people came to Four Winds; and one of them was that it was, they love the sort of social, community feel. And then they like that it is a very nourishing physical environment, and they think the beauty of the place is extraordinary. And then, the third reason was that you didn't have to love all the music — you could be there and read the paper or do the cross words or go and have some oysters if you got a bit frustrated. And then — oh! oh! there is music!"	"[...] in the performance on Friday at the oval and here, getting moved by the music, and then I look around, I think this is my community, you know I look around and I, there is the women in the local corner shop and there is the people I know. And, I just think how lucky are we, how could we... and also this community has drawn this thing [together]."
Rose's responses refer to Barragga Bay's Four Winds Festival, and are collected in (Michelle Duffy and Waitt 2011:127)	

Tab. 7: Different ethnographic data — interview and sound diary

The two narratives offer different kinds of ethnographic evidence: during the interview, Rose describes sound as the sensory background of the place (Barragga Bay); in the sound diary, she shares intimate emotions as she appreciates how the music moves her, and builds a felt sense of community. Even more than elicitation interviews, sound diaries provide the chance to access difficult-to-articulate emotions and dynamic practices without the need to stop them. Writing a diary *per se* fosters reflexivity, without necessarily requiring detachment and disembodiment; on the contrary, it is the

occasion for diving again into the felt experience of sound, drawing emotional connections between place and subjectivity. The contemplative posture that they encourage fulfils the same goal of the "first" soundwalk: education (here, self-education) to attentive listening. Perhaps more importantly, in our diaries we are alone with our embodied thoughts and memories, dressed only in our self-honesty; the absence of the researcher in those pages/mp3 recordings sets the participants free: here they face, embrace or escape their visceral resonance with place and sounding bodies, and do so with the same messy language of everyday affects. Unlike interviews, which inherently foster a discursive (i.e. somewhat logical) narrative, sound diaries do not entail a logic, thus opening the doors for non-logical cognitions such as emotions, impressions, free associations, imagination — "as-if" spaces (Thrift 2008:234). They enable researchers to study the becoming of places through the becoming of people, while raising their sensory awareness. Therefore, it is less important *what* participants hear, than *how* they hear it — i.e., their personal perceptions and interpretations — for it is there that the individual and the social meet in place-making (Wood and Smith 2004). Sound diaries offer access to the embodied emplacement of subjectivity in the social setting, speaking the same messy language of daily experience. However, there are some *caveat* that require attention in the use of sound diary technique: first of all, they should be treated as a complement to more structured techniques, such as sensory participation, interviews and surveys, which reintroduce theory-laden order and frames to the narratives; recording can be perceived as spying, thus blocking ashamed participants from keeping their sound diary; sometimes, sound can be lived as unspeakable and untranslatable, and participants — alone with their blank diary — may experience the "writer's block"; lastly, recording in public places can be strictly normed, and require preemptive inquiry. To recap, the sound diary is characterised by:

- The audio-/visual reflexive account of spatial experiences
- A focus on processuality, i.e. the tension between being and becoming-in-the-moment
- An embodied thoughtless response to sound events, that resembles the messiness of everyday experience
- Access to difficult-to-articulate, in-the-moment practices and emotions

- In-the-moment intimacy and emotionality
- A longitudinal potential, account for the cognitive change in the subject
- The acknowledgement of the interplay between past (memories) and present (perception)
- Ethnographic accessibility: the materiality of the sound diary, the fact that it is an object that can be shown, shared and accessed simplifies the ethnographic relationship, in that it makes it easier to "plug into" the participants' narratives (Latham 2003): rather than probing the way with words, the diary becomes both the gate and the key.

<center>***</center>

Sensory research is a fertile ground, both epistemologically and socially. For academic interests, it brings us closer to knowing the unspeakable through the felt; for human interests, it brings us closer to each other and to the environment, to recognising that we are sensory beings and admitting that we are fragile; and fragility is the ground and the boundary of every ethnographic relationship.

> We all need to stay in touch with our surroundings, as every sound carries very specific meanings, no matter where we live. Even though, as urban beings, we can no longer fully integrate our lifestyles with the cycles of nature, it is vital that we retain conscious contact with our environment. Cities are full of acoustic clues which-on many levels-are important for our survival: we must listen to our cities as the indigenous people listen to their forests. (Westerkamp 1974)

STS: mapping sound and technical notes

In that Empire, the craft of Sound Engineering attained such Perfection that the recording of a single song comprised the sounds of all the versions that had come before it. In the course of Time, those Extensive tapes were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Sound Engineers evolved a recording of the Empire whose multiple tracks were those of the history of the Empire and coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the Study of Sound, succeeding Generations came to judge a recording of such Magnitude cumbersome, and, not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigours of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the master tape are still to be found, Sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar; in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of music studies (Daughtry, 2017, p. 80, based on Borges' story about the 1:1 map, in Borges, 1975:131)[64].

Sensory research ought not be confined to creative methods or the socio-humanistic field. To give sound research a more comprehensive methodological treatment, I put in my thinking-toolbox some of the methods elaborated by STS. Science and Technology Studies are, to this moment, the discipline that sits at the intersection between social studies, urban planning, and engineering with regard to the empirical investigation of soundscapes. Its main concern is noise pollution, which is the second stress factor in European urban communities (WHO 2018)[65]. One approach to noise pollution is to declare noise a public enemy and ban it from urban hearing experience. Typically, said approach relies heavily/solely on quantitative data, de facto assuming that noise is measurable and, therefore, to some extent, an objective information. This is incorrect, and holds true only insofar as we define "sound pressure" and "noise" as synonyms. In fact, even the first is not measured "objectively" most of the time, but is adapted to human hearing, which enhances mid-range frequencies (those of human voice, for example). When I mentioned the 55dBA of traffic noise, earlier, I was using a

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[64] (Borges 1975:131)

[65] At the time I am writing, more than 100 million people experience a long-term exposure to 55dBA traffic noise — that is, they are having an ongoing 24/7 conversation with friends in a small room. Although, in this case, it is neither friends nor a conversation, rather an undesired monologue of boisterous machines.

weighted unit of measurement (*dBA* instead of dB), that is specifically tailored to human hearing. This is the first point I bring home from STS: relativising the unit of measurement.
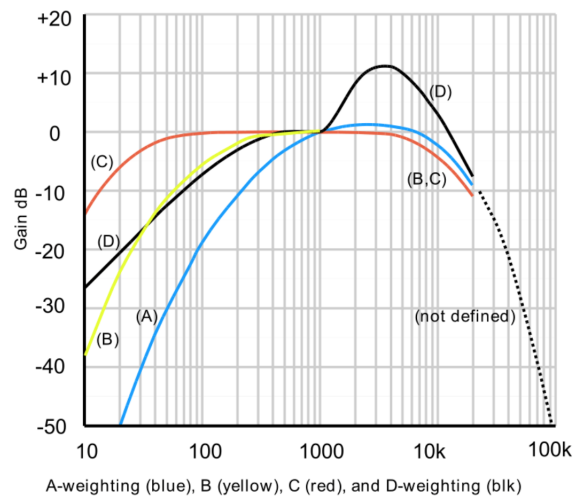

Figure 1. Weighting curves as a function of frequency

Fig. 6: Comparison between several dB measurement weightings.
From https://www.softdb.com/difference-between-db-dba/ (23/10/22)

To inquire into soundscapes and noise pollution, some within STS propose the idea of an *urban soundscaper* – a speculative function combining the role of an acoustic researcher and designer in combination with the skillset of a sound artist – might speak to these needs (Radicchi et al. 2021:7). This hybrid figure responds to the 2002 Environmental Noise Directive that draws on anti-noise quantitative approaches to map and silence European soundscapes, and argues that although noise has been shown to have potential negative effects on children's development (Belojevic et al. 2012), the contemporary soundscapes to which we are exposed are too complex to simply declare war on noise. STS research going in this direction treats response to noise as part of the overall experience of a place, so that apparent paradoxes may happen, when for example one develops a strong attachment to a noisy neighbourhood, by virtue of the meaning

attached to that very noise. To this aim, I will mention only two methodological case studies[66], one in Greece and the other in the UK.

Tsaligopoulos et al. (2021) studied noise pollution and architectural alternatives in Mytilene, Greece, through the concept of ecological connectivity. They adopted a rich interdisciplinary approach that integrated architecture and ecology. The latter, in particular, seriously challenges the WHO's definition of noise pollution as a mere matter of sound pressure level. In fact, noise (traffic, machinery, the very population of the city) does not only directly affect human health; it disrupts an urban ecosystem's ecological *connectivity*. Connectivity is the degree to which a land/soundscape facilitates the movement of species across resource patches, at a structural (barriers or corridors) or functional level (afforded/impeded behaviours) (*id.*:22). In the eye of the ecologist, the city is a mosaic of resource patches; not a pretty one, though, but a Pompeian one, broken and interrupted by cracks, dust and extraneous clutter. From this perspective, then, the ideal response to the disruption of the acoustic connectivity of a city would be to connect acoustic and architectural patches, both structurally and functionally. Green rooftops and green walls, they suggest, would transform a discrete-model city with isolated islands of acoustic and biodiversity into an integrated archipelago of sounds. Tsaligopoulou et al.'s approach is based on a powerful combination of the DPSIR framework, developed by the EEA (European Environment Agency), ecological connectivity theory, and acoustic mapping. DPSIR is a decision-making-oriented approach developed to provide quick response to the galloping urbanisation. It states that Driving forces (e.g. increased tourism during the summer season) exert Pressure (e.g. change of land usage, increased urbanisation) on an environment, forcing its State (noise and biodiversity levels) to change according to specific Impacts (e.g. environmental noise), to counter which Responses (e.g. improving ecological

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[66] Some other work has been done about:
- The co-designing of Nauener Platz, Berlin (Schulte-Fortkamp and Jordan 2016);
- The City of London recognising its "buzz" as an iconic part of the City's soundscape (City of London 2016);
- The Welsh government implementing soundscape planning as more than mere anti-noise policy (Welsh Government 2018);
- The use of technologies to map noise/silence places (Hush City in Berlin, (Radicchi 2018; Radicchi et al. 2021), ComfortUP! in Valencia, NIOSH App in the US);
- The workshops of Hildegard Westerkamp, Pauline Oliveros's deep listening practice, Akio Suzuki's soundwalks that use offline media, Janet Cardiff's audio walks and installations.

connectivity) are needed. The DPSIR framework allows the researchers to pinpoint the chain of events that leads to deterioration of the soundscape, and to direct resources to tailored responses. Furthermore, noise mapping points at the most fragile regions. The recorded sound files were processed through R software[67] to determine an Acoustic Complexity Index, as a measure of place connectivity. Lastly, the ecological connectivity framework provides a fresh view on the soundscape concept. As a matter of fact, a soundscape, like a landscape, conveys a static picture of a space; on the contrary, connectivity is all about flow, of species, resources and sounds. This is paramount in the contemporary dynamic cities, where soundscapes change rapidly in the duration of a day; as a consequence of urbanisation, migration, gentrification, nightlife. The questions, then, are: 1) is it more important to create quiet places, or connected, soundly places? 2) How do we implement the ecological concept of connectivity to sound/conflict studies?

On the other hand, Carson et al. (2021) contribute to the advancement of environmental justice through citizen science. They start from the claim that "when place meanings and soundscapes do not align, place attachment could be weaker, resulting in a loss of agency among residents or degraded community character and identity. Such disconnections could compound the negative health impacts of soundscapes across diverse neighborhoods" (*id.*, p. 37). To investigate the phenomenon, they develop the concept of the *noise paradox*, which happens when sources of (potentially harmful) noise levels are not perceived as noise, rather as identifying traits of the soundscape (*id.*, p. 35). The noise paradox usually concerns Low Frequency Noise (LFN), whose dominant frequency sits between 10 and 250 Hz (Pawłaczyk-Luszczyńska et al. 2003); LFN wavelength is considerable and makes the noise travel long distances before it fades out. Moreover, its perception is complex, since it involves both hearing and proprioception, in that we almost "touch" LFN in our bellies, due to its intense vibration. This kind of synesthesia further complicates the labelling of noise as "noise". In their Sound Around Town project, Carlson et. al distribute dB(A) metres to the participants. Upon listening to the sounds of the neighbourhood, they are asked to fill two surveys: a "validated sense of place" survey, and a sound classification survey. Both are shown below. The latter expands the traditional human-nature dichotomy developed

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[67] Packages Seewave (Sueur, Aubin, and Simonis 2008), TuneR (Ligges et al. 2023), Ineq (Zeileis and Kleiber 2023) and Soundecology (Villanueva and Pijanowski 2023).

by Brown (Brown, Kang, and Gjestland 2011) for sound classification; more interestingly, the first thematises the attachment to the place and its role in the noise paradox. Based on the result of the inquiry and the measurement, the authors observe that sometimes natural sounds might be regarded as noise and anthropogenic noise might be accepted as a characteristic trait of the soundscape. This contradicts theories that usually form quantitative studies[68]. Drawing from the sense of place theory, they conclude that the noise paradox is a matter of dissonance between one's structure of place meanings and the surrounding soundscape. There are two types of place meaning: environmental place meanings and sociocultural place meanings. Environmental place meanings reflect the biophysical traits of the surroundings (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001; Stedman 2003); sociocultural place meanings relate to social connections, cultural values and possibly a sense of community (Manzo 2005). Topophilia — place attachment — arises from the interaction between environmental and sociocultural place meanings. For example, if I grow a sociocultural attachment for my noisy urban neighbourhood, a sudden gentrification would cause dissonance between my attachment and the deprived soundscape. Therefore, it is evident that sociocultural place meanings are woven on top of our acoustic physiology; sometimes they add to it (if I like the social noise of an open-air market, the basilar membrane of my inner ear is well suited to amplify it[69]), sometimes they contradict it (I like the low hum of the distant highway in the mountains near Vernante; although LFN is unhealthy, it is part of my childhood memories and it reminds me of home). Their findings can be summarised by the table below.

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[68] For example, the biophilia theory, according to which human beings would be "naturally" attracted to "lively" and "lifelike" things, and therefore they would prioritise natural soundscapes (Kellert and Wilson 1993). Another frequently mentioned theory is that of attention restoration, which claims that nature can restore one's psychological energy (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989).

[69] The basilar membrane of the inner ear physiologically enhances the main frequencies of the human voice (Moore 2013), of which an open-air market is full.
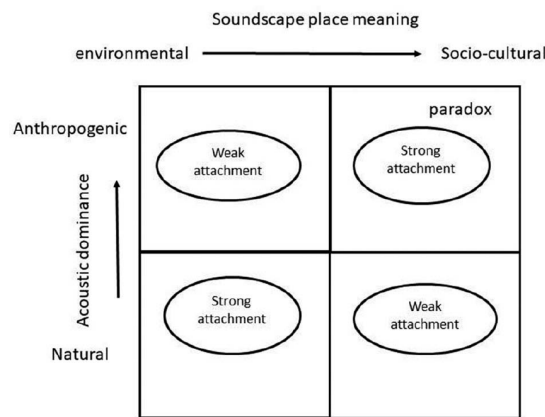
Figure 2. Understanding the noise paradox through sense of place. Given that natural sounds are healthy and many anthropogenic sounds are not, this model explores how certain patterns of anthropogenic sounds such as low-frequency noise might be preferred by certain listeners. For example, if someone is experiencing a lot of anthropogenic mechanical sounds, they may still have a strong place attachment because those sounds support sociocultural place meanings.

Fig. 7: Soundscape place meaning and the noise paradox.

Table 1. Sense of place survey that measures sense of place through environmental and sociocultural place meaning. Items from Larson *et al.* (2018), Schultz (2002), Liefländer et al. (2013), Raymond *et al.* (2010).

Place meaning and place attachment items	Constructs
1. My local area has natural beauty	EPM1: Environmental Place Meaning
2. My local area feels like home	EMP2
3. My local area provides opportunities for enjoyment of nature	EPM3
4. My local area is peaceful	EMP4
5. My local area has people who share my values	SCPM5: Sociocultural Place Meaning
6. My local area includes many people whose company I enjoy	SCPM6
7. My local area feels like a close knit/neighborly community	SCPM7
8. My local area says a lot about who I am	PA8: Place Attachment
9. My local area is the best place for doing activities I enjoy	PA9
10. I feel happiest when in my local area	PA10
11. I am very attached to my local area	PA11
12. I identify strongly with my local area	Place identity
13. I would not substitute any other place for my local area	Place dependence
14. My favorite places are outside in nature	NR14: Nature Relatedness
15. I spend time outdoors whenever I can	NR15
16. I notice plants and animals wherever I am	NR16
17. I feel very connected to all living things and the Earth	NR17
18. My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am	NR18
19. I think about how what I do affects the Earth	NR19
20. Belonging to volunteer groups in this place is very important to me	NR20
21. The friendships developed by doing various community activities strongly connect me to this place	CB21: Community Bonding
22. I live here because my family is here	CB22
23. My relationship with my family in this place is very special to me	CB23
24. Without my relationships with my family I would probably move	CB24

Fig. 8: Environmental and socio cultural place meaning items.
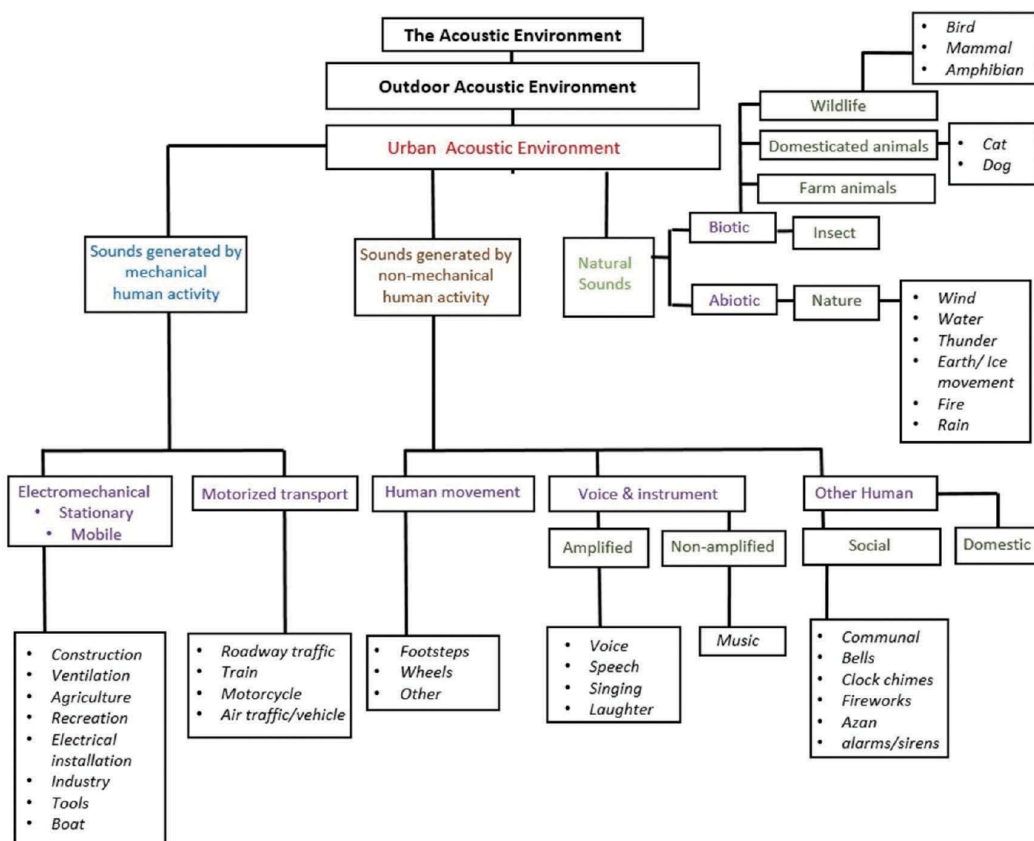
Figure 3. Revised typology of sound types, adapted from Brown *et al*. (2011). In this adapted typology, we list mechanical anthropogenic sound sources as sounds generated by motorized human activity, non-mechanical anthropogenic sound sources as human sounds not generated by motorized activity, and natural sounds as sounds sources that are not produced by humans in any way.

Fig. 9: The acoustic environment typology.

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What did I bring home from STS? First, the epistemological imperative to relativise the unit of measurement. Be it in a quantitative (dBAs instead of dBs) or qualitative sense (implementing reflexivity and auto-ethnography in the research design), the unit of measurement should reflect the scale and the nature of the study object. From Tsaligopoulou's study I distilled the concept of ecological connection, which resonates with the overarching theme of the relationality of the soundscape that I encountered in phenomenology. Further, her focus on bird songs and migrations, depicted a porous and flowing image of the city, one that I applied in my interviews and soundwalks, where movement, change, and migration are pivotal. From Carson and

colleagues I treasure the hybridisation of a qualitative attentiveness to place meanings, and their detailed sound typology. The first (especially its corollary, the noise paradox) helped me with framing my own listening biases about what is noise and what is sound; the second informed my analyses, so that I could insert the perceived sounds in a specific category.

The selection of participants: theory of argumentation

This research is exploratory in its scope and, as I was conducting it, I was already aware that it was the beginning of a vaster reflection that would require more effort, and much greater resources: intellectual, financial, and temporal. This contained scope required an efficient criterion to select my participants, which was fulfilled by eloquence. Eloquence is the qualitative equivalent to statistical significance, in that it takes few eloquent participants to gather significant (both meaningful and partially extendable) conclusions about the study object (Cardano 2020). Sample selection that is guided by eloquence is both purposive and theoretically informed, and responds to explicit criteria that ought to be defended through argumentation. The better the participants fit the criteria, the bigger the room for extending the results of the research — its "conditional plausibility" (*id.*:71).

In this case, the choice of my seven interviewees was informed by the sensuous scholarship framework's notion of multisensoriality, and by the phenomenological stress on the diversification of perception. Thus, my theory-laden criterion was to provide a diverse array of sensory accounts from the most distant points-of-hearing: engineering, architecture, dance, ethnomusicology, design and sonification, and so on. In particular, the key informants involved are exponents of the different disciplines I crossed during my journey into sonic homemaking, thus reflecting the bourdieusian suggestion to always ground theoretical considerations into the lived-life of people. My sampling choice for the interview section of the research is an embryonic form of most-different-systems design, whereby the cases radically differ in the property space

(e.g. their status, ethnicity, age, education) but nonetheless show homogeneity in regard to the object of study (the perception of sound and silence). This design forms the argument from irrelevant difference, that is: even though the interviewees radically differ in their structural positions, they share common properties with regards to the sonic experience in Stockholm. This, of course, needs to be proven by fieldwork and subsequent analysis. My goal was to probe if, as I drew from theory, sound as a homemaking vector indeed is a fundamental need; and what (if any) common ground could be found between such distant hearings.

Differently, the choice of the soundwalks participant was informed by the critical-case design, whereby the property space is divided into two hierarchies, and those who occupy the highest or the lowest position are selected as eloquent cases, by virtue of the awareness their position fosters. Yana, my soundwalker, is a Ukrainian refugee and a professional *domra* (Ukrainian mandolin) player, who used to teach at the Odessa National Music Academy. She occupies two opposite positions in the property space of sound perception: on one hand, she is part of the élite of classically-trained concert performers who can rely on their cultural capital and atmospheric power to restructure homes far away from home; on the other hand, she is a refuge in a country that is openly hostile towards immigrants (now more than ever, given the political weight of far-right Sweden Democrats). In both cases, she occupies a critical position that, according to both the theories about immigrant place-making and the argumentation theory, makes her a potentially eloquent case.

Again, the very limited numbers of cases in this researcher are to be attributed solely to the lack of further resources, not to purposeful choices or hybris. In the future, an extended research on sound homemaking would benefit from one of the four qualitative designs proposed by Cardano (*id.*:80-107): the extreme-case design, the critical-case design, the most-different-systems design, and the most-similar-systems design. A purposive sampling of eloquent cases who fit the theoretically-informed criteria of the selected design would prove invaluable for comparative and systematicity purposes.

Case studies

Now that we can think sound, now that we have explored it, we shall do something with it. Here lies the core of my discussion. That is, what happens when the noisy strive for home-making meets the ideal of silence as herald of a "natural" religion? when gentrification intertwines with a pervasive urban planning strategy to fight noise and prioritise quiet areas as safe, healthy and desirable features of the city? In this chapter I draw together socio-historical transformations of the Swedish society, whose unique interaction concurs in creating an imagined middle- and upper-class community that repels outsiders to preserve its privileges. This community is built under the aegis of lagom[70] (moderation) and order, reproduced through the individualised spiritual relationship with nature, legitimised by silence as a naturalised good of distinction, enforced through a rigid body discipline and ghettoising urban planning, and backed by the resurgence of right-wing nostalgic nationalism. The interaction is outlined in the map below. The broadest (and most rooted) features are the spiritualisation of nature, and the religious component of nation-building. On one hand, transcendence is undergoing a process of individualisation and deinstitutionalisation in Sweden ; i.e., it has less to do with the religious than the spiritual, and it is more related to self-realisation than structured rituality. On the other hand, despite being one of the most secularised countries of Europe, Sweden counts more than 50% of its citizens as paying members of the Church of Sweden[71], and pilgrimages are on the rise, boosting the presence of the parishes in the everyday life of Swedes; in everyday life, Swedish Lutheranism takes a pietistic shape, with a strong emphasis on frugality, humility, restraint, order, and cleanliness. Galloping secularisation, however, does not translate simply into the disappearance of transcendence. It leaves a gap that is filled by nature, reinterpreted as a catalyst for spirituality. In a forest or in a city park, one can be alone, find shelter from noise — i.e. uncontrolled, undesired social contamination — and position themselves in the wider existence. Silence, the most valuable asset of nature, is the key to transcendence and a panacea for city-sick minds. The individualised spirituality-in-nature leads to the naturalisation of silence, moderation, and order as

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[70] Literally, "just enough".
[71] The largest Lutheran denomination in Europe, with around 6 million members at the end of 2021. The Church of Sweden has been separated from the State since 2000.

desirable qualities of both the individual and the urban bodies; as it is shameful to openly declare oneself "religious" in a secular country, these qualities easily take on absolute value — rather than Lutheran. Furthermore, the narrative of silence connects with the strict body politics that the Social Democrats enacted since the 30s, whereby it became common sense that a healthy State is made by healthy citizens. This nexus connected self-discipline with nation-building, and both to nature, for the most authentic form of fitness (and of the nation) is to be found in wilderness. Discipline, authenticity and nature resonate with the present-day nostalgia of right-wing parties, which promote an individualistic nationalism that excludes chaotic and noisy outsiders, and thrives on ambiguous mixes of spiritual and secular nationalism. Those who cannot fit in the order of a quiet State — quiet meaning both politically condescending and acoustically silent — are therefore excluded for the sake of purity. Gentrification is an agent of exclusion, and pushes migrants outside the white Stockholm, through nightmarish rents and urban plans that make the cheaper outskirts more attractive to the poor. Not everyone can afford to fulfil the narrative of silence, moderation, and order, which is a middle- and upper-class rhetoric affordable for those who have the time to visit far away reserves, the money to buy falu-red summer houses, and the symbolic capital to adhere to the nostalgic-spiritual reframing of nature. The result is a clean, quiet and white Stockholm, where silence is a loud symptom of cultural anaesthesia, the indifference to the Other, whose noise is a hindrance to one's reconnection with one's true self in nature, the roots of Swedishness, and ultimately an healthy Sweden. The unexpected assemblage of apparently unrelated parts results in an urban mindset that easily stretches from cancelling noise to cancelling those who make it, thus making sound a conflicted territory for home-making.
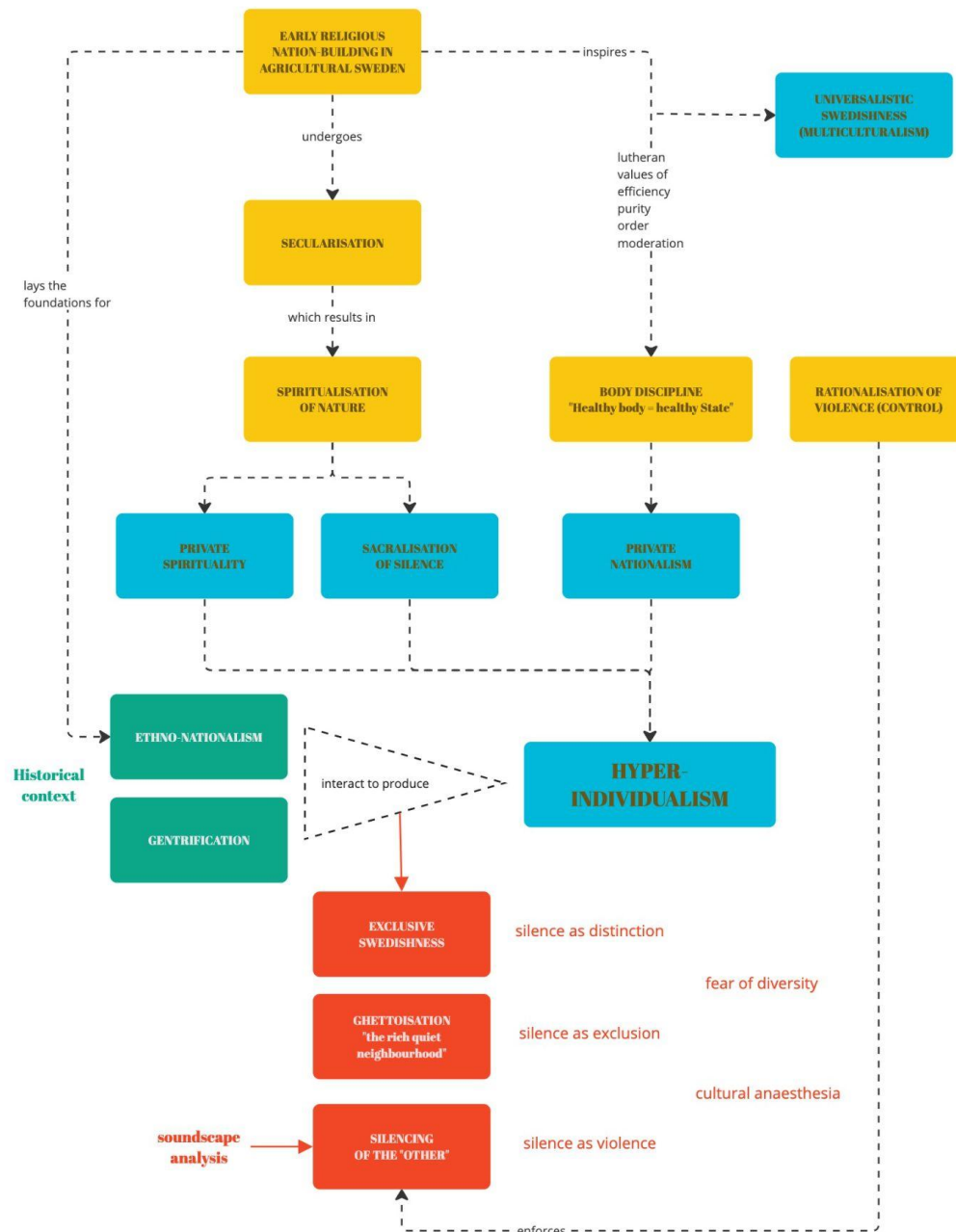
Fig. 10: Analytical flowchart of the socio historical forces that led to hyper-individualism and the silencing of the Other in present-day Sweden

Naturally silent: spirituality in nature

Silence — the distinguishing feature of hi-fi soundscapes — is a luxury commodity in Sweden (and, I suggest, wherever individualism, distinction, and decor concur in gentrification), naturalised through a patriotic-deistic narrative of nature and quietness. In silence, social inequality (socio economic polarisation, geographical segregation) connects with body politics (distinction, purity, restraint) and nature (the "roots" of nationalism, restorative nostalgia, natural quietness of the past Golden Age).

AUDIO DIARY
THE TREES OF TYRESTA

This is a silent audio diary. Silence is the main character here; so it was in my thoughts, too. Tyresta is where I felt closest to the essence of Sweden. Imagined or real, does it matter? Here I camped in an utterly inadequate summer tent, I risked hypothermia, woke up early with the birds to witness the sun rising from a sea of thick fog over the lakes. Here I dropped my roots, all of them, and accepted a state of suspension of my identity. I was I, whatever that meant, dancing softly over lichen pillows.

Wear a pair of decently insulated headphones and listen to the silentscape of Tyresta. Where does it take you? When would you go there? When would you not? Is something missing in the soundscape or does it feel complete?

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Tyresta nationalpark is a time machine within easy reach of a bus. It is the largest ancient forest in Southern Sweden. From the touristic website:

> Here you will encounter ancient knotty pines and tall spruces. [...] Wild
> boars, beavers, roe deer and various woodpeckers are inhabitants that you

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may have the greatest chance of seeing. But most forest inhabitants show themselves seldom, and it is perhaps *the silence* that is most striking. [...] Although Tyresta is close to a major city and is a popular natural area, the forest offers a sense of wilderness. At lakes and viewpoints, you can see how the forest stretches out — wild, calm, strong and living.

(https://www.sverigesnationalparker.se/en/choose-park---list/tyresta-national-park/national-park-facts/, accessed 17/06/2023)
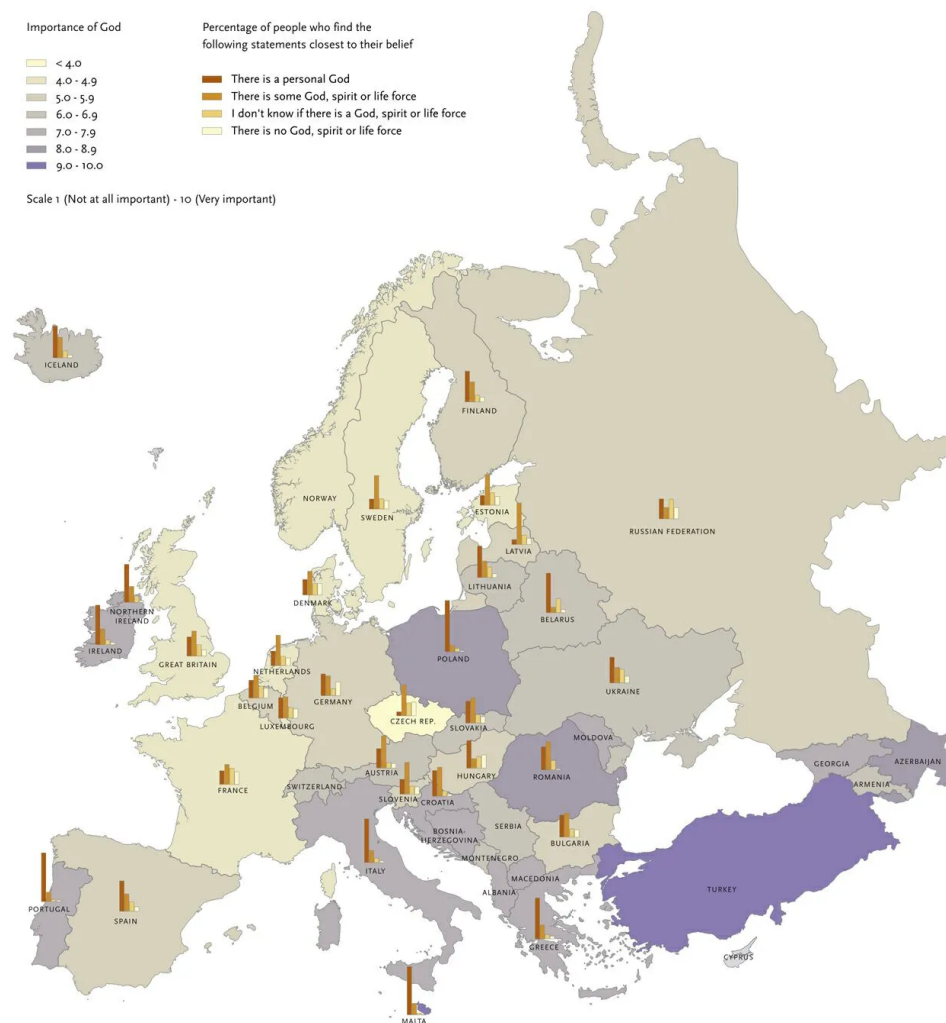

Fig. 11: Importance of God chart (Halman et al. 2022)

Many Europeans are proud of it. Some think it is too bad. However, both agree: Europe is a secularized continent. Europeans do not go to church

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anymore, they do not believe in God anymore, and they do not seem to be religious at all. Are these assumptions true? It depends. Unmistakable, some of them are not. One thing is for sure: the old continent is not as secularized as it seems. (introduction to the topic "Religion", European Values Study 2022 (Halman et al. 2022:60))

Religion is but one way to meet the existential need for a sufficient reason why things are the way they are, and what our place in the world is. The Swedish case is interesting, for although it is officially a secular State (the separation from the Lutheran State Church was sanctioned in 2000, and a specific reference to religion in the constitutional preamble was rejected), the majority of people believe that "there is some God, spirit or life force" (Halman et al. 2022:67), and only one out of three Swedes declares that they do not belong to any religious denomination (id., p. 71). A recent line of research (Thurfjell 2020; Thurfjell et al. 2019; Uddenberg 1996) retraces the philology of current Swedish spirituality along a smooth line that connects Lutheran-inspired nation-building with a modest form of private green spirituality.

It happens that you go out into the woods. [...] Your self-image is that you are someone who enjoys being in *nature*. [...] *You are not religious*, yet when you are alone in nature it can almost feel like you come into contact with something, not directly God or anything similar, but still something *out of the ordinary*, something deeper and bigger… [...] If you were to name any place that is almost a little spiritual in your life, you would say nature. Nature, you might say, is connected to *who you most deeply are*. It is linked with your childhood, with your *origins* and with the very innermost rooms of your person. [...] In that moment, a *stillness* spreads within you. (Thurfjell 2020:7, my translation and my emphasis)[72]

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[72] From now on, consider the quotations from David Thurfjell's *Granskogsfolk* translated by me from the Swedish original, since, unfortunately, it has not been translated into English.

Thurfjell's words describe the spirituality of the *granskogsfolk*, how he calls the Swedes: the silence-seeking people of the spruce forest[73]. They evoke a strong nature-driven affect, one I felt touristically — like the time I tasted a *kremówka papieska* in Krakow: a vicarious savouring of sweetness and texture, yet missing the heritage of Pope John Paul II pushing through the sac-à-poche. Similarly, the Swedish longing for nature has roots that date back to the beginning of nation-building. Before anything else, a warning: it is always necessary to remember that an identitarian narration is one thing, and history is usually another; the distance between the two is covered by the manipulations of tradition-making and nation-building. In fact, up until

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[73] As I will point out later, his theory specifically refers to the urban middle class, which includes a vast portion of the population.

the mid-1800s, Sweden was a land of peasants and farms, Stockholm looked very differently, and nature was probably not perceived as an idyll at all:

> In the beginning the city was given its mark and seal: walls and towers along the water. Protective stone was raised against everything that lay outside, against the enemy and the wind, against the cold and the dark. At one time the city had lain tightly curled like a hedgehog in a crevice in a hill. The walls both defended and concealed. Scandal and plague lurked in the dark of the alleys. Those who were protected by the strength of the walls could be killed by their stony chill. Sun and wind seldom got through to cleanse the city. A choking stench rose from piles of fermenting garbage along the shoreline and from the slimy waste of the gutters. In the city there were more alcoholics, criminals, and suicides than anywhere else. [...] But still many of them sought their way there — and made their mortal sacrifice. (Fogelström 2000:10)

Properly reformulated, this "cold and dark" (definitely romantic) past serves both the "forest spirituality" and nostalgic nationalism. To understand how this came to be, how nature became a secular religion, I believe it is best to unravel the story from the end, the present, like archaeologists, detectives or physicians, as if rewinding a tape — rewinding history.

Pilgrimages, city parks, rooms of silence, and folk music

Today, the vast majority of Swedes live in the few big Southern cities (only the Stockholm and Skåne counties have more than 100 people/km^2), and the majority of residents fall into the urban middle class. It is this precise category that has been created in the late 19th century (Ruth 1984), when elites reimagined Stockholm as a modern urban capital and, metonymically, Sweden as an advanced urbanised country that fulfilled the Lutheran principles of modesty, purity, and hard work; the very same class was targeted by the enduring Social Democratic governments between 1932 and 1976,

to ensure that the representatives of the new ideal-type were socially and physically fit (Frykman 2019); in the present day, they are ensnared by the nostalgic rhetorics of the reactionary right. Now, it is them who relish nature as both a cure for city-sick minds, and as a catalyst for the spiritual. Since this nature-spirituality is a volatile matter — invisible *per se*, and taboo in a secularised country —, it is hard to grasp. Therefore, I focus on its traces, which surface in several sensory practices: pilgrimages, walks through city parks, rituals in silence rooms, and folk music.

Pilgrimage was forbidden in 1544 in Sweden, according to the Lutheran principles; since then, a revival has happened. To celebrate the jubilee year 2000, the Church of Sweden planned a national pilgrimage of over 2000 km; during four months over a thousand people walked for a day or more (Davidsson Bremborg 2013). The initiative served as a model to structure subsequent pilgrimages: an organised group leisure activity that includes periods of silence and moments of sharing, that is mainly focussed on the walking itself, and not on specific religious pilgrim places (Davidsson Bremborg 2008:149). The "new" pilgrimage is based on seven keywords conceived by pilgrim minister Hans-Erik Lindström: slowness, freedom, simplicity, silence, light-heartedness, sharing and spirituality. Except for the addition of "spirituality" to the inspiring principle of the new pilgrimage model, apparently little sets it apart from a mindful hiking experience. Moreover, survey results (*id.,* p. 159) show that group meetings during pilgrimages are the least favourite activity; on the contrary, silent walks gather most favour, with both the highest mean score and the lowest standard deviation, indicating that participants are quite homogeneous with respect to their liking of the activity. Statistically, the new pilgrim is generally a highly educated middle class person (*ibid.*) who seeks a physical disconnection from the city and a spiritual reconnection with nature, and, through nature, with their inner-self. Thus, pilgrimage is not oriented towards a religious place; the place to be reached is inside, the physical strain is the proof of successful self-expression; every drop of sweat is one more brick into the foundations of a healthy purified individual. Regardless of the chosen means of transport, a pilgrimage is always a metaphorical form of walking. To go on a pilgrimage (*per-ager*, Latin for "across the field") means attuning one's pace to a rhythm, either social or intimately private, that is out of the ordinary. The feet march at a different rate, the routine is bracketed, a sense of destination (related to *destiny*) pushes the body

forward. The catalyst for a successful inner pilgrimage is nature, *utomhus* ("out of home", outdoors), the silence that creates a sacred space. Here lies the difference between the hiker and the pilgrim: by venturing into silence one is alone with themselves, and devotes their physical effort to transcendence. The stress on the journey itself, rather than the destination, is typical of the process of Caminoisation (Gemzöe 2020), and *pilgrimsvandring* (pilgrimage) is clearly based on the Camino de Santiago, in that they celebrate simplicity, communing with nature, and criticise the contaminated and contaminating postindustrial society. Much like *peregrinos*, Swedish pilgrims are moved by a variety of reasons. Factor analysis of the pilgrims' motivations shows three markers: "leisure", "spirituality", and "escape", with significant overlapping. The sociological common denominator is individualism: being fit, getting out into nature for a physical challenge, spiritual deepening and escape from everyday life are private endeavours; the pilgrimage is a form of individualised spirituality detached from specific institutional holy places (*id.,* p. 164). The sensory common denominator, on the other hand, is silence. A quiet moment is a chance to be alone, without pressures from society, from the Other epitomised by the urban noisescape. "There is no need to be social" (interviewee, *ibid.*). Silent walks are structured moments of social relief that reflect a high level of self-expression and individualism. In silence, everyone seeks their own theology. The new nature-pilgrimage is not about structured religiosity, it is about individual empowerment. This fits with Swedish being one of the countries with the most self-expression values in combination with secular-rational values (Gemzöe 2020).

Fig. 12: The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map - World Values Survey 7 (2023).

Source: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/, elaboration of (EVS/WVS 2021)

It results in a shift from institutionalised religiosity to a spirituality that is at one time holistic and private. Even the Church of Sweden has turned to empowering individuals by giving them the tools for personal meaning-making (Rydinger 2006). In the relation between the individual and nature, a sense of being part of something greater may arise (Davidsson Bremborg 2008:552), one may find their right place in life, and a physical, embodied relationship with the transcendent, whatever one wants to call it: "In nature one is closest to God" (Uddenberg 1996:46). Nature is *det stora sammanhanget*: the big context[74]. Silence nurtures an individualised spirituality that responds to the wish of "not having to be polite and take responsibility for others" (interviewee, Davidsson Bremborg 2008:554). In silence one ignores extraneous soundscapes and, by extension, their inhabitants. The need to escape, to be alone, not just to avoid but to *forget* sociality, speaks volumes of what is hidden in silence: the frustration originating from

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[74] This is the title of psychologist's Nils Uddenberg's essay.

social tensions, the fear of contamination that the pilgrim counters by seeking purity, quietness, privacy, detachment and rootedness. This is not to say that *utomhusupplevelser,* outdoor experiences, are mechanically fostering social exclusion and ethnic inequality. Seeking spirituality-in-nature is a complex practice, and is not inherently good or bad. What I argue is that the individual and the institutional narratives are alarmingly attuned in emphasising one side of the coin: individualism, privatisation, homogeneity, exclusion. There is also the opposite to be found in a spiritualised nature: the collectivism of Turner's *communitas*, the sharing and diversity of species in the ecosystemic equilibrium, and the inclusion of seasonal migrating specimens — yet, these are not the foci of the narration of spirituality in Sweden, today. As a Caminoised experience, *pilgrimsvandering* is tailored to the city-sick wanderer and often related to physical fitness. However, the desire to be alone is not socially admittable, and is said with a touch of shame. Indeed, nature-spirituality is not antisocial; on the contrary, it rests upon the requirement of "sharing" among the keywords; hence a homophilous network is needed to work as a plausibility structure (*id.*, p. 555), and nature summons ancient cultural heritages. In silence there are both individualism and collectivism; as I shall highlight further on, the tension between them is at the core of the negotiation of Swedishness, or the Swedish identity.

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REWINDING WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR
1. PILGRIMAGES

- Pilgrimages are an example of an individualised spirituality that is detached from structured religiosity.
- *Pilgrimsvandering* is a Caminoised form of pilgrimage, in that it focuses on the walking practice, physical effort, and a variety of personal motivations, rather than the destination (holy place).

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[75] Credits for the cassette icon go to Good Ware at Flaticon: https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/cassette-tape_3350617?term=cassette&page=1&position=1&origin=search&related_id=3350617

- Transcendence is reached through nature, in silence.
- The relation with nature fulfils several needs: feeling part of something bigger; healing oneself from the contamination of the city; being alone without openly rejecting others.
- Silence creates a sacred space for private spirituality, at the expense of sharing.
- The stigma of antisociality is avoided by choosing an homophilous group of peers to go on a pilgrimage with.
- Individuality and collectivism are co-present in the practice of pilgrimage, and both inform the spiritual experience.

Fig. 13: *Guide to silence*

A brochure showcasing 19 "tranquillity-filled" city parks in Stockholm, provided by Stockholm's municipality. Available at https://parker.stockholm/guide-till-tystnaden/ (accessed 20/05/2023)

The mundane manifestation of the pilgrimage ideal-type is the city park. Here, the demand of being alone while being together is fulfilled. Nature is presented as a separate, out of the ordinary place imbued with healing properties, by virtue of its secludedness and distance from the noise of the city. The relation with it is sensory: it is an opportunity to "listen to the birds and the wind in the trees", to "follow nature's seasonal changes", to "go for a walk in the woods to collect your thoughts" (Stockholms stad 2021:5). Furthermore, nature is reassuringly de-politicised: "Regardless of culture, religion and tradition, people have always sought strength and relaxation in peaceful nature" (*ibid.*). City parks are adamant in suggesting an individual experience of nature, for they are "so large that it is always possible to find a quieter part, where there are fewer visitors" (*id.*, p. 6). The municipality goes as far as to remind visitors that "on a sunny day there are more people in the park than on a rainy day"; ultimately, this is "*your* park" (*ibid.*, my emphasis). Silence and negative sociality renew their partnership as ministers of the self-healing process. In silence, the park pilgrim is advised to practise listening, to reach a state of heightened sensory awareness ("our ears have the chance to wake up", *ibid.*).
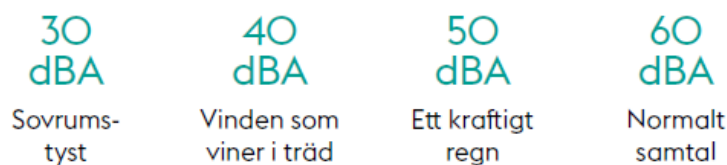
Fig. 14: Reference sound pressure levels in *Guide to silence*
A reference guide to sound (pressure) levels, provided in the guide. *30dBA bedroom-silent; 40dBA wind blowing through the trees; 50dBA a heavy rain; 60dBA normal call* (Stockholms stad 2021:7). It is interesting to notice that the maximum on the scale (i.e., noise) is represented by the only human and city-related activity, which, incidentally, is also the only social one.

A brief description illustrates the specifical marvels of each park; out of the total 19, 13 comment positively on the distance from the city, or the park's morphological ability to fend off urban noise ("...it is protected from the noise of the city", "...the hills provide shelter", "... a soundproofed walking path", pp. 13-14). No human being is present in the 19 photos showcasing the parks, whereas many benches are framed in first-person view, as if to suggest that the viewer imagines themselves there, alone, in silence. Nature is painted with a nostalgic hue ("...the tranquillity of a bygone era is present", p. 13), which evokes cultural roots and a forgotten past. Lastly, a new ingredient is added to the recipe for an individualistic spirituality: fitness. Indeed, one desirable feature of city parks is an outdoor gym, which itself is often a semiotic index that points back to nature (stone dumbbells, wooden poles and machines, running paths in the woods). Fitness is a form of body discipline that, together with the individualistic tension within Swedish society, deeply shaped the making of the Swedish national identity.

A stricter form of body discipline with spiritual implications happens indoors. Rooms of silence (*stilla rum*) are accessible places within public institutions (usually airports and universities) that offer space for prayer, meditation, and reflection. They range from religious individual prayer rooms to secular collective rooms of reflection, and include multi-faith- and meditation rooms. Here, the shift from structured religiosity to a self-defined spirituality is mediated by the materiality of space. Generally, there are no permanent religious artefacts around which a group could gather; the decor is simple and modernist, more neutral than welcoming, and if the room is not small, it is usually subdivided by windscreens that supposedly allow multi-faith prayer, all the while making the room smaller and exclusive. Architectural minimalism is both silence materialised and a strategy to fabricate silence through materiality. Visible signs instruct the users to be quiet in respect of others. Like pilgrimages and city parks, rooms of silence provide "haven from stress", "a refuge from demands and expectations" (from the rooms of silence in the University of Agder, Norway), and fulfil the "spiritual need for silence" (Malmö University). Similarly, silence, spirituality and individualism connect in a natural(ised) frame, according to the belief that nature is a-political and non-religious. Thus, non-figurative art that recalls natural elements inhabits the bare environment, alongside birch branches, wood finishes, stone containers, sand, incense, matches and the like. Materiality is at the same time the product and the producer of

social relationships that mediate actions and meaning-making (Christensen et al. 2019:301), and rooms of silence speak the same narrative of spiritual social detox of *granskogsfolk* spirituality, except in the former nature is reduced to a de-politicised, non-denominational aesthetic inlay for the minimalistic gaze. The result is that the restricted and normative materiality of the rooms of silence disciplines the users' bodies, forcing them into an individualised mould of spirituality, performed alone and in silence, inhibiting collective rituals (e.g. Muslim) and socialisation (Christensen et al. 2019:299). The rooms are not neutral; on the contrary, they tell us that 1) spirituality should be experienced alone and quietly, since the rooms discourage collective use (a confirmation of the pilgrimage and city parks rhetorics); 2) multi-faith is modelled after multiculturalism, so that different groups do not actually *meet* in the *stilla rum*, but are co-present (reproducing the pilgrims' need of homophilous in-group); 3) more importantly, the presence of *stilla rum* as de-politicised non-denominational spaces within secular (educational!) institutions reinforces the argument of the supposed universality of spirituality and silence (Cadge 2012:67). This expands the reach of individualised spirituality out of the niche of pilgrims, and showcases it as an ideal way of life for which "well-being has become dogma and authenticity the new authority" (Christensen et al. 2019:317). Rooms of silence introduce another ingredient to the recipe for exclusive soundscapes: the strategic use of materiality and space. From the small scale of a room of silence to a larger gentrified neighbourhood, space is both the product and the producer of social exclusion.

REWINDING WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR
2. CITY PARKS, ROOMS OF SILENCE

- City parks and rooms of silence are mundane manifestations of the individualised nature-spirituality, tailored to the city-dweller;

- They fulfil the same need of transcendence, healing and aloneness ideally fulfilled by wild nature;

- City parks stress their radical distance from the city and its noise; by this virtue, they grant an out-of-the-ordinary experience.

    - Urbanised nature is presented as a-political and non-religious, and universally healthy, according to some scientific arguments.

    - The experience of the park is sensory, individual, and its main feature is silence.

    - Silence restores park-hikers from contaminating sociality.

    - Nature is nostalgic, in that it evokes bygone eras of wellness and purity.

    - City parks reproduce body discipline through rhetorics of fitness and outdoor gyms.

- Rooms of silence are the materialisation of self-defined spirituality in secularised institutions.

    - The materiality of the rooms forces users to adopt individualised forms of spirituality, and discourage collectiveness. Even multi-faith rooms are modelled after multiculturalism, and separate heterogeneous groups of users.

    - Modernist and minimalistic decor collaborate with norms in enforcing silence. Spirituality should be private and quiet.

    - Natural decor and aseptic interiors suggest a de-politicised and non-denominational space, which reinforces the argument that spirituality and silence are universal *desiderabilia*.

    - The materiality of the rooms of silence is a spatial strategy that exerts body discipline through a regulation of sound and presence.

The last piece of the puzzle directly thematises sound as a means of distinction and links it to nation-building: it regards the appropriation of folk music by the nostalgic-nationalistic right. In Sweden, the repertoire and legitimation of folk music was established on nationalistic foundations (Sara Parkman, interviewed by Jacobson Båth 2011) according to which Swedish folk music was a rooted heritage resulting from a homogeneous ancestral national folk identity (Kaminsky 2012:75). Today, folk

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musicians and scholars alike struggle with freeing themselves from the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD), member party of the government coalition and the second largest party in the Swedish parliament. In fact, rejecting the popular mythology of folk music as ethnically "Swedish" (i.e. of culturally "pure" descent), would mean to disown the very basis of its legitimation. The seeds of debate about the Swedish immigration policy was planted in the second postwar period, when anti-Nazi sentiment, collective guilt at having rejected asylum-seeking German-Jewish refugees, and a progressist wave brought to the Social Democratic party to pass one of the most inclusive immigration policies ever implemented (Hansen 2001:208–16). Based on the principles of equality, freedom, and cooperation, it stated that no one would be forced to assimilate; on the contrary, each immigrant would have the chance and the support to maintain their cultural identity, while learning to *function* fully in Swedish society[76]. No matter how marvellous it may sound, scholars point out that this welcoming policy actually hid a paternalistic posture based on a taken-for-granted native superiority (Mauricio Rojas in Nestius 1996:260), and that while everyone was busy helping immigrants to adapt, nobody cared to teach native Swedes to do the same (Daun 1996:153–56). The acritical — therefore ethnocentric — immigration policy resulted in many immigrants ending up in the asphyxiating apartments of the 1965-75 Million Programme (*Miljonprogrammet*)[77], far away from the wealthy capital, spatially and occupationally segregated, if not unemployed (Kaminsky 2012:80). The economic crises of the late 1980s and late 2000s pushed the Social Democratic government to severely cut funding to the immigration policy; this, together with gang violence, rising populism and nostalgia, led to the resurgence of the far-right. SD equate the superiority of the Swedish social system with the intrinsic value of folklore (*id.*, p. 81). They go further and claim that they "wish to completely dismantle those taxpayer-supported programs whose purpose is to support the multicultural societal order, as well as those whose primary purpose is to shock, *disturb*, and provoke" (Sverigedemokraterna 2010). Folk music does not *disturb*, because its roots lie in the supposed mythologically pure Swedish past. According to the rightist

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[76] Considering the present times, it seems sheer folly that a measure was even thought of, such as *hemspråkslära*, the right of immigrant children to learn their mother tongues at school.
[77] A colossal public housing plan, geared towards the entire population and not only the poor, that aimed at — and succeeded in — building one million new housing dwellings. At the time, the entire Swedish population counted 8 million people.

nostalgic argument, there is a self-contained Swedish ethnic identity and tradition, enriched by regional variations, which should thrive uncontaminated by other cultures. The problem is that left and right parties agree on this: the former adhere to a multicultural model, which presupposes the independence of cultures; the latter reject any mixing. The result is the same — "each nation its own solid color" (Kaminsky 2012:88). For this very reason, today folk musicians are in a dire situation: challenging the sole party, SD, that actually wants to fund them, while redefining Swedish folk music — all this, without losing its legitimation and meaning.

REWINDING WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR
3. FOLK MUSIC

- Swedish folk music is based on pre-industrial nationalistic foundations that grant it legitimation by virtue of a supposed ancestral cultural purity and homogeneity.

- It is a contested field where musicians struggle to oppose the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Sweden Democrats, which equates the superiority of the Swedish social system with the intrinsic value of folklore.

- Both political narratives (multiculturalism and populist nationalism) converge on the exclusiveness and supremacy of the Swedish social system: the Social Democrats praise the progressive values of the Swedish democracy (as opposed to immigrants being "cultural") and suggest that different groups should co-exist separately; the Sweden Democrats refuse any supposedly contaminating contact with immigrants, and argue for separation.

- Folk music is an example of sonic heritage used to fortify a national identity, and to exclude sonic outsiders from a pure and homogeneous national soundscape.

Individualism, collectivism, and the discipline of the body

Being a pilgrim, walking through a city park, meditating in a room of silence or enjoying folk music *per se* does not make a person intolerant, of course. Rather, on a macro level, private natural spirituality, body control, and nostalgic nationalism converge on a model of exclusive Swedish identity and hyper-individualised conception of the self and society. By supporting it, institutional (including scientific) narratives and local practices create what medical anthropology calls an "explanatory model" (Good 1986; Lynch and Medin 2006), a semi-structured system of causes and effects that provides people with satisfactory explanations for troublesome issues, prioritising explanatory power over factuality. Pilgrimages, city parks, rooms of silence and the conservative narrative about folk music create social spaces that resonate with the individualistic-exclusive explanatory model, whose roots are deep.

Today, when anti-immigration is the most important reason for voters to support the radical right (Arzheimer 2018), immigrants are inserted into one of five anti-immigrant frames (Elgenius and Rydgren 2019): 1) as illegitimate competitors over scarce resources; 2) as costs for the welfare state (welfare chauvinism); 3) as threats to the ethno-national identity; 4) as criminals; 5) (especially Muslims) as threats against the liberal values. The first two economical frames resonate with the functionalism behind *utomhusupplevelser*, outdoor experiences, aimed at *fixing a broken machine*, the city-rusted body, that must be fit and healthy. The perceived threat against the ethno-national identity basks in the ideal of an exclusive (distinctive and discriminatory) Swedishness, grounded in the ancestral roots of nature and folk heritage, in the quietness of the forest and in the lone rooms of silence. Silence requires self-discipline, which fears social and especially acoustic contamination , for noise is the archenemy of the healthy individual. Roots, silence, and exclusive spirituality are restricted to a homogeneous in-group. "National belonging (nationality) is not the same thing as citizenship and to completely assimilate may take generations. [...] As a rule, Swedish citizenship should be a privilege for Swedes", says a Sweden Democrats' manifesto (SD 2003:5). On the contrary, as criminals and illiberals, immigrants are depicted as incompatible (at times, irredeemable) outsiders: here collectivism provides the

paternalistic solution of adopting the "superior" Swedish social system for everyone, regardless of either side's ability (and willingness) to listen to each other.

What brought this convergence on individualism? A historical gaze suggests a long-term nation-building process that hinges on the tension between individualism and collectivism, and the discipline of the body. In 1984, Sweden entered the top-ten list of the most individualistic countries (Hofstede 1984): here, the ratio of cohabitation without marriage is highest than most other countries (Popenoe 1988); labour unions and laws concerning working life stress individual well-being; elderly people often live alone and/or in rest homes (Padyab et al. 2019); people radically separate the public from the private sphere, to avoid any dependency relations outside their inner-circle: "To live by oneself, without any interference from other people, seems to be given a higher value in Swedish culture then the qualities of company and togetherness" (Daun 1991:167). Social democracy defined equality as sameness and individualism. Yet, collectivism is sought after in formalised social interaction, the preferable way of communication (*ibid.*): conflict is generally avoided and ritualised through bureaucracy; difference is under-communicated by selecting a rather homogeneous in-group of intimate connections, with whom one shares a common denominator. *Samarbetsförmåga* — the ability to cooperate — is a required asset in job listings, saying that the individual should "fit in". Sweden is an outlier in the World Values Survey, too, which makes it a critical case to study democratic implications of individualism and collectivism (Heinö 2009:302). In a sense, the US and Sweden share the same fuel — individualism — but not the engine: the first empower the individual above anything else; the second delegates to the State the task of securing individual happiness. In the latter, formal groups serve the dual purpose of ritualising communication on a shared basis, and to pave the way for power-seeking people. In this sense, individualism and collectivism intertwine in the construction of the Swedish identity[78]; here, they both are ways of "dealing with uniformity or sameness in a differentiated world" (*id.* p. 171), through independence and homogeneity. Contemporary national identity formation in Sweden went through nationalism, socialism, multiculturalism, and liberalism, of which hyper-individualism is the latest incarnation (Heinö 2009). The Swedish identitarian journey began with nationalism, the

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[78] For a more detailed insight on "Swedishness", see (Daun 1996).

"happy democracy" of the 60s, when high living standards combined with almost complete homogeneity in terms of nationality, language and religion (*ibid.*). It was in the postwar period that the model of the "good Swede" as "an individualised democratic citizen" (*id.*, p. 303) was naturalised: not just a "Swedish" but a universal value. After that came individualism which assumes that identity is a free choice representing the *authentic* nature of the person. As the individual replaced the nation as the core unit in society, being Swedish was depoliticised, i.e. the Swedish national identity was separated from a nationalist discourse, and therefore nationalism became taboo, at least until 2022's elections. As a consequence, groups that are deemed overtly nationalistic are considered *un*-Swedish, a stigma that mainly befalls Muslims (*id.*, p. 304), but in general every group whose actions can be understood in terms of "culture" instead of "individuality". The pride of claiming a de-nationalised identity[79], and liberal values (e.g. gender equality, tolerance, anti-nationalism, anti-racism) actually informs a nationalist practice that uses individualism as an exclusive criterion, mainly applied to migrants. It is the latest development of a historical dialogue between individualism and collectivism, which today settled on a hypertrophied version of the first, and an instrumental simplification of the second, whereby the collectivity is restricted to an homogeneous in-group of individuals.

> For the educated bourgeoisie, the reorganization of the senses was something that began in the words and then became flesh. (Frykman 2019:71)

As the nation-building process unfolded, the rhetoric of fitness implanted individualism into body discipline. Since first post-war Sweden was an agricultural country (think of Pippi Longstocking), to propel it into the XX century modernity itself was nationalised and became part of the Swedish identity in the form of rationalism, industriousness and, ultimately, fitness (Löfgren 1989). From the 1930s, an interplay between State policies, class interests and mundane trends started moulding Swedish

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[79] The proposal of a general amnesty for asylum seekers was rejected by a coalition of Social Democrats and Moderates (from the opposition). Both agreed that each applicant should be given an individual trial, proving that across the whole political spectrum, the individual is regarded as the core unit of society.

habitus into the idea of a "Strong Society"[80] where the welfare state gained a presentable form in its citizens (Frykman 2019:69). Essentially, a healthy society would correspond to a healthy body, and vice-versa — *civitas sana in corpore sano*. Gymnastics, alongside with sex education, vegetarianism, scoutism, nudism and jazz became the bodily proof of modernised Sweden, not anymore restrained by a backward management of the body. The body and the senses were the building blocks for the *authentic* Swede:

> It is a huge revolution. [...] …in order to endure one must have physical strength, a trained, well-formed body, flexible, well oiled — a machine to live with. This applies to men. But it also applies to women. (Social Democratic journal *Morgonbris*, 1934)

To legitimise the modernist "revolution of the body", it was once again connected with nature and thus naturalised. The body was defined as "nature", the prime source of authenticity, and its natural habitat was outdoors, not in the city:

> When you are [...] still "city pale" and tender-skinned, as if you were afraid of nature, you feel lost and confused. [...] Nature [...] is the entrance to the sanctuary of health, [...] which strengthens body and soul. (Henzel 1934:82)

Canoeing, camping and youth hostels boomed; in nature one could train the *authentic* body and even transcend it by contacting the past and cultural roots. In this sense, here lay the seed of the present-day convergence of nature, spirituality, and the body. To paraphrase Frykman, the countryside became a nationwide sanctuary (2019:76) and Stockholm became the showcase of the modern identity, where simplicity, naturalness and rationalism meet. In modern Sweden, one could create themselves through training; everyone bore the responsibility for their betterment; and the media idealised life as a

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[80] The Social Democratic prime minister Tage Erlander (who served from 1946 to 1969) used these words to describe the new ideal of Sweden.

civilisation process (see Elias et al. 2000). However, the requirement was that one was able to free themselves from whatever cultural bindings their context entailed, thus laying another seed of individualisation and de-nationalisation. To sum up, new identities are experimented with physically before they are cognitively structured (Jackson 1983) and collective identities take shape in the aestheticisation of the body (Featherstone [1992] 2007). In Sweden, the body was the birthplace where the modern Swedish identity was born, and the gym where it was trained. The body, nature and spirituality were bound together by the notion of the "authentic" body, which was only to be found outdoors. The intense intervention of the welfare state sowed the idea that "someone else knew best", i.e. the design of the Swedish body — both individual and national — was delegated to the State, yet the responsibility of fitness was strictly individual.

Ultimately, the goals of individualism and bodily order converged in the nation-building process. Modern Sweden, the Strong Society, was built upon strong, hyper-individualised core units, i.e. fit and efficient individuals who could draw from a seemingly unlimited pool of authenticity: nature. Recently, individualism, homogeneity, and body discipline gained common ground in the new forms of private transcendence. Spirituality is achieved in nature through silence. Swedish secularisation is in fact the relocation of religiosity to a number of spheres: macro (nation-wide secularisation), meso (adaptation of religious organisation to secular norms, e.g. rooms of silence), and micro (private spirituality, Caminoised pilgrimages) (Christensen et al. 2019:302). The convergence of private transcendence, exclusive silence, hyper-individualism, under-communication of difference in homogeneous in-groups, and a nature-bound ethno-nationalism lays the foundations for exclusion, mainly in the form of gentrification, "part and parcel of a way of being that directs away from somatic forms of knowledge [...], that celebrates and values difference primarily through its abstraction — e.g., marketing, mythology, mediated representations — absent the intimacy required of more haptic entanglements with the neighbourhood, its textures, and traditions." (Kulkarni 2021) Silence, as a symptom and a practice of exclusion, is a limitation to the legitimacy of someone's atmospheric power. Exclusive civilisation requires the stratification and specialisation of the senses; it establishes the legitimacy of the sensory capacities of some, and nullifies that of others (Feldman 1994:406). The politics of

exclusion become geographies of segregation whereby the perceptual (therefore social) distance from the body of the Other is increased (*id*., p. 407). In silence violence is noiseless, and exclusion (segregation, gentrification) expands in a vacuum of cultural anaesthesia (*ibid.*).

Fig. 15: A spruce tree in Ed, Västra Götaland County, Sweden.

The forest spoke words of solitude.
Is the tree alone
questioned by its siblings?
or is I,
answered by what-ifs?
In silence, I.
(05.06.2023)

Taming noise:

gentrification and distinctive silence

The architecture of cities increasingly mirrors this division of domestic space in its creation of 'protective zones of distance around the individual', creating 'islands of undisturbed peace', for urban subjects. (Sachs 1992:129)

LISTEN TO
GIFT OF GAB – THE GENTRIFICATION SONG

https://youtu.be/ArwI4l8N4Mk

Listen to Gift Of Gab's The Gentrification Song (Gift Of Gab 2018).
Bear in mind that Gift Of Gab (Timothy Jerome Parker) was renowned for his rapid firing style, and is name is a proof of that (for instance, compare it to Lay it down).
Pay attention to the flow first, before you try to make sense of the lyrics.

--- read further after the first listening ---

The beat is based on a laid-back soul guitar sample. The arrangement is simple and the tempo is relaxed, as the vocal performance is, with little dynamic range. It feels to me as a tired, sour and frustrated lament. The lyrics illustrate well the connection between space and the senses in the concept of "home" (here, the city neighbourhood). As Zukin puts it, "aesthetics always play a crucial role in constructing not just the habitat, but the habitus of gentrification" (Zukin 2016:203).

This ain't the same place it was
Different space and buzz,
[...]
It was a place I used to call home
I tried to chase the energy but now it's all gone
And only memories remain
I tried to feel the feeling but the city ain't the same
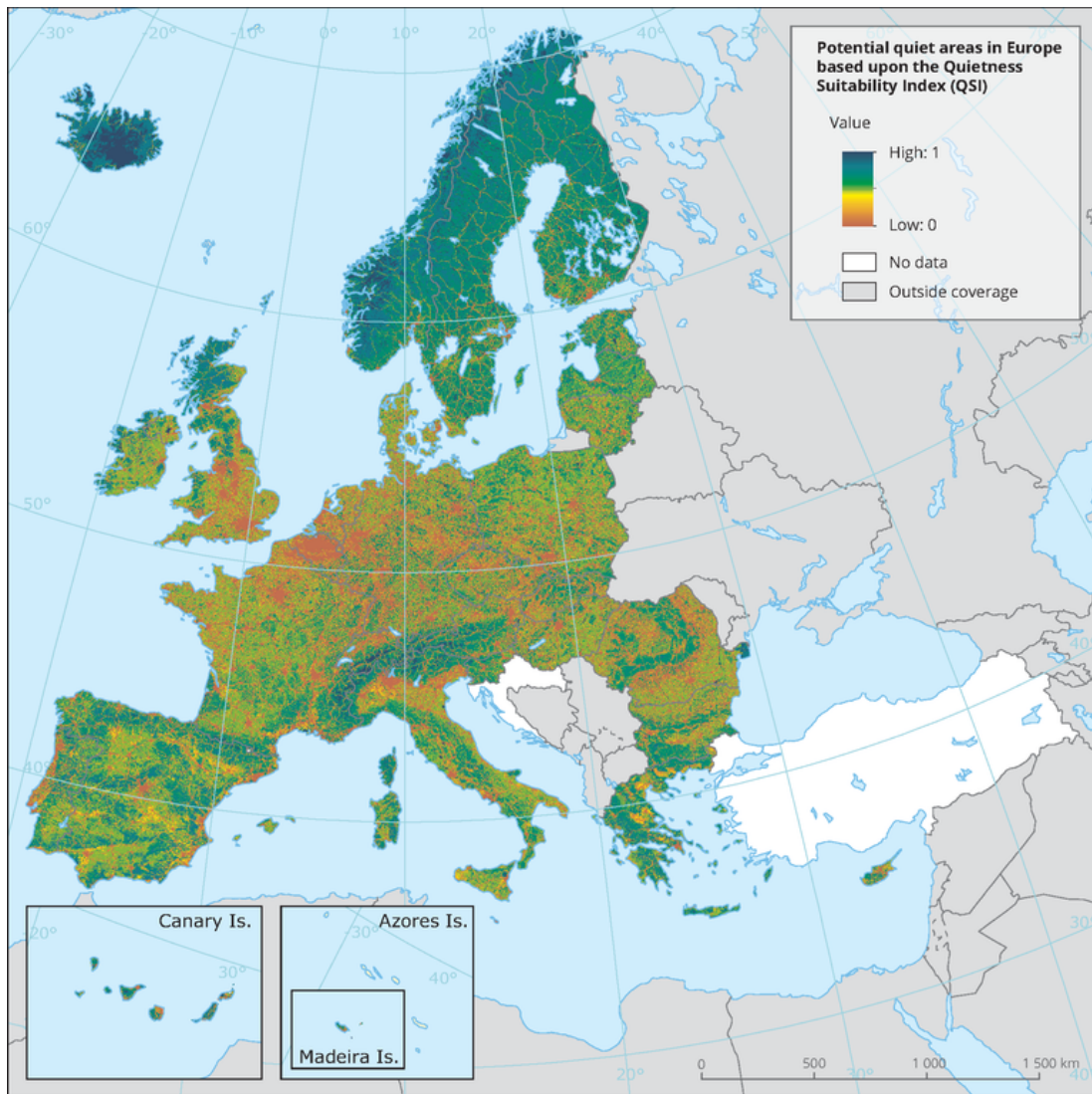
Fig. 16: Map of potential quiet areas in Europe

European Environment Agency. Accessible at

https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/quietness-suitability-index-qsi-2

The concept of gentrification was coined by Glass (1964:xviii) as follows:

> One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes. Shabby, modest mews and cottages have been taken over when their leases have expired, and have become elegant,

expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses have been upgraded once again Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed.

Gentrification, historically, is "the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use" (Zukin 1987:129). In the post-industrial era, it can be recognised more generally as the expansion of capital (both corporate and private) in the urban space: having already colonised all available territories, capital turns back to the city and internally re-differentiates it (id., p. 141). Necessary conditions for gentrification are 1) the "contagious abandonment" of large inner-city areas (Berry 1982); 2) the presence of first-wave highly-educated middle-class gentrifiers attracted by the low rents and seeking a space to plant their own practices of cultural consumption; 3) an active real-estate and housing market and a condescending institutional support[81]; 4) the presence of "super-gentrifiers" (Zukin 2016) who subsequently displace the former by virtue of their higher economic capital, and attract corporate investments and institutional approval enticed by the new decor; 5) a resulting cultural market that valorises and validates business investment in the gentrified area, thus consolidating the process as inevitable (natural) and desirable.

In the cultural validation of gentrification, the socio-economic production of space and sensory perception are tied. Indeed, the fact that cities with the highest percentage of artists in the workforce also show the highest rates of gentrified neighbourhoods, illustrates how the sensory revamping of the city works as the façade of the underlying socio-economic forces to validate rising housing costs and displacement through depoliticising beauty. The cultural validation of gentrification legitimises the reproduction of a class. In a sense, the higher social strata undergo a cultural (sensory) constitution; in this, gentrifiers differ from the rest of the middle-class: their collective residential choices, the amenities and look clustered around them, their high educational and occupational status are structured by and structure a very perceivable habitus. Thus, gentrification is a process of spatial and

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[81] It is worth noting that, although gentrification is primarily a privately financed action, a precondition for it is usually a strongly favourable expression of the local governments.

social differentiation, i.e. distinction (Zukin 1987:131), in which "a new place is created, more elegant and expensive than before […], [with] a completely new atmosphere […] and taste" (Franzén 2005:54). The pivotal role of the senses in gentrification processes is double: they are at one time the atmospheric weapons of the gentrifier's aesthetic arsenal, and the comforting evidence of their new haven. It is through the sensory rationalisation[82] of space that gentrification naturalises an exclusive space: it is already hard to argue against the green and the beautiful; even more so, when they are showcased in a purified environment that offers no alternatives but only positive reinforcements, the senses are inebriated into thinking that what they perceive is naturally desirable.

Gentrification is the result of the alignment of two social bodies: the private and the public. On the one hand, the socio-economic system produces contagious abandonment and rent gaps in neglected areas, which makes gentrification possible, thanks to the cooperation of like-minded institutions. On the other hand, there are gentrifiers who are willing to reappropriate lower-class areas, revamp them, and culturally redefine their class identity, sensory showcasing their new lifestyles (De Martini Ugolotti and Genova 2023; Ferrero Camoletto and Genova 2019; Franzén 2005:57). In the public sphere, new social movements may coalesce and confront the actors of gentrification; this, however, is something that is worryingly rare in the Swedish political milieu, and often unsuccessful (see the Södermalm example, further below).

	System	Life-world
Private sphere (socio-economy; desires, cultural validation, sensory affirmation over space)	*Economic system: rent gap*	*Gentrifiers* *(consumer identities, life styles)*

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[82] Simplification, distinction and exclusion. What happens to the sensory milieu of a gentrified space is much akin to what happens in the making of a metaphor (e.g. an ideal-type): a complex concept is simplified, some aspects are rejected and others are amplified for the sake of eloquence over completeness. The result is a highly expressive, easily recognisable sensible sign that links the spatial signifier (the polished, quiet, warm, IPA-buttery, chabby-coarse neighbourhood) to the social signified (the middle-class person seeking cultural validation of their status).

Public sphere (politics, institutions; Weltanschauungen, strategies, resistance)	*Political system: opportunity structure*	*New social movements (collective identities)*

Tab. 8: Social forces that shape gentrification
adapted from (Franzén 2005:57), in turn adapted from (Habermas [1981] 2019, Figure 39)

Pre-gentrification residents usually show common traits: they have consumption patterns of lower social classes, constitute a different ethnic community, and are older (Henig 1982). Conversely, gentrifiers are generally young, highly-educated and higher-income people whose aestheticizing practices and economic actions tend to homogenise and "upgrade" a neighbourhood. Gentrification, especially in the city centres, is often championed in the name of "preservation" of architectural gems; however, it strikes severe blows at the social body, because it 1) erodes the asset of low-rental housing; 2) forces selective migrations of pre-gentrification residents towards poorer and underserved neighbourhoods, thus 3) causing social and psychological trauma to those who are unwilling and/or unable to move; 4) reduces social mixing and fosters segregation through the socioeconomic mechanisms of revamping and residualisation[83].

The failure of new social movements and the "spirit" of Södermalm

This trend has been proven on a smaller scale in Södermalm, a former working-class neighbourhood in inner Stockholm (Franzén 2005; Tatrai 2015), and more generally in the capital as a whole (Andersson and Turner 2014; Olsson 2008b, 2008a).

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[83] On one hand, gentrifiers enhance the exchange value of real estate through renovation and new amenities; on the other, their doing redirects investments from the periphery towards the centre, thus de-valuing outer-city real estate.

Fig. 17: Södermalm
Left picture: Södermalm neighbourhood in Stockholm (created by user ויקיג'אנקי under Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 2.0 licence). Right picture: postcard artwork by Kate Rochester, showing Södermalm as the place of "coffee & treats".

Södermalm is, together with Gamla Stan (the historical nucleus of the capital), the most central neighbourhood of Stockholm. Its name means "Southern rock" and refers to the landscape of rocky hills and sea-facing cliffs that once hosted thousands of workers. Once known as the "slum" of Stockholm, with cramped and crumbling wooden houses, it is now touristically described as Söders höjder, the stunning "Southern heights"[84]: a gentrified neighbourhood for the seekers "coffee and treats", industrial architectures, and hip amenities — again, nature as an identitarian totem. Södermalm is the metonymic example of the gentrification of the wider inner-Stockholm area. In the 1970s, it had a low social profile and a working-class ageing population, mainly living in neglected tenements. A rent gap quickly developed, which was filled by younger newcomers: students, artists, immigrants, attracted by the low rents. They formed new social movements and new lifestyles, which fostered the re-evaluation of the former working-class identity into identitarian aesthetics, which they defended against the municipal modernist policy of demolition and radical

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[84] https://www.visitstockholm.se/event/soders-hojder/2021-07-10/1100/1230/, accessed on 26/05/2023.

renewal. Unexpectedly, though, their devotion to the working-class identity of Söder (this is how it is commonly nicknamed) was instrumental in levelling the ground for gentrification[85]. Afraid of losing their homes, and eager to defend their community, many residents associated in co-operatives[86] and privatised much of the local public housing. This, together with the deregulation of the fair rent system in 1998 by the right-wing municipality, made Söder increasingly attractive for both public and private investors. Soon, property developers and the municipality bought and then demolished, renewed and/or repurposed large portions of the neighbourhood, which is now the "artsy" island of Stockholm, the middle-class Östermalm, its aristocratic sibling (for a detailed comparative account see Franzén 2005). Qualitative research shows the dynamic unfolding of gentrification:

> "When I moved to Söder, I felt about it like a…well it was like an own city in the city in away. There was another atmosphere, people saluted each other, you talked a lot with your neighbors and things like that. A familiar atmosphere, basically." (Anna, 54, in Tatrai 2015:54)

> "Yes, I actually think that what is most unique with Södermalm is, despite all, a little bit the Södermalm-soul (*Södermalmsandan*), as it is called. I do not know if I can really define it, but I think that they are people here residing who are…a little bit like me." (Sara, 67, in Tatrai 2015:46)

> "There is another category of people moving here, than then, many years ago. The cars are nicer, and the interest to operate something in a residential cooperative is weaker. Because those who are coming, they believe they can pay five millions, and then they do not have to do anything else. […] There was another one who put up 'private' on the pier, a municipal pier." (Matts, 55, in Tatrai 2015:47)

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[85] The Haga area in Göteborg, has a very similar history, in which new social movements failed to prevent gentrification because they 1) could not form and maintain a collective identity with well-defined borders, 2) appealed mostly to conservational activism, which aligned with the aestheticising gaze of gentrifiers (Thörn 2012).

[86] Co-operatives (commonly *co-op*) are a unique form of tenure that dates back to 1920s Sweden. Cooperative housing means that an association of all members formally owns a property; they have shares of the property and collectively decide on maintenance levels, investments and periodic fees that cover running costs. Members include those who have purchased the right to live in one of the dwellings, which happens through a bidding race involving a real estate broker, and some of them form an elected board of directors (Andersson and Turner 2014:5). Technically, every member owns a share of the entire structure and not their own property (e.g. apartment). However, should they decide to sell it, they get their share of profit. According to Co-operative Housing International (https://rb.gy/1i53j, accessed on 27/05/2023), 25% of the entire Swedish housing stock is owned by co-operatives.

At first, desirable homogenisation offers a reassuring sense of familiarity, which evokes a quasi-spiritual attachment and identitarian bond to the neighbourhood and its *anda*, spirit. Then, super-gentrifiers start to eye the revamped post-industrial Söder and showcase their status-symbols. With them, a new wave of investments and privatisation comes; the neighbourhood atmosphere is commodified for the new wealthy: sourdough bread bakeries, flower shops and fancy cafes start mushrooming, while public space shrinks.

Ostentatious as it may look, gentrification can be surreptitious and counterintuitive. Zukin (2016) defines three paradoxes whereby gentrification can be perceived as unanticipated, unimportant, and uneventful. It seems unanticipated because, in time, the alignment of public policies and private investments ensure that the gentrifiers' habitus succeeds in defining a new "natural" habitat; thus gentrification, now, appears unavoidable and sudden. Furthermore, in numbers, it is statistically a smaller phenomenon than the rising urban poverty and cumulative disadvantage (ibid.); however, it is strictly intertwined with them, and can be regarded as an analytical symptom of deeper inequality (this is precisely my point regarding Stockholm). Finally, gentrification is uneventful in that apparently, many quality-of-life conditions in disadvantaged neighbourhoods do improve following gentrification; though, as Zukin puts it, "the operation was successful, but the patient died" (id., p. 205). In other words, people are displaced, disentitled to feel "home" in a place where they were often already rooted, made feel "wrong" by the naturalising forces of public policy and aesteticisation, and pushed towards other disadvantaged communities. The paradoxical nature of gentrification makes it easy to socially *mettere la polvere sotto il tappeto*, "put the dust under the carpet".

Stockholm: all-exclusive

What happens if we zoom out? The 1970s saw gentrification blossom throughout Europe. Sweden swam against the tide and introduced the Social Democratic "housing mix policy", according to which the main goals of public housing were 1) to provide a home to everyone, regardless of their income — hence the Million

Programme; thus 2) fostering a mix of social and demographic categories (Bergsten 2010). But it was the early 1990s that imparted a radical shift in Swedish housing policy. The liberal-conservative government voted for the deregulation of the housing market and for local decision-making regarding tenure conversion — mainly, public housing turned into private co-operatives (see the previous footnote). This had several consequences, especially in the inner Stockholm:

- from 1990 to 2010, due to conversions public rental housing shrunk from 19% to 7% (Verhage 2023);
- municipal housing companies now compete with private rental companies (Bengtsson 2012);
- more generally, the regulated and subsidised social democratic housing system, based on public housing, transitioned to a mainly deregulated market system, based on cooperative housing (Andersson and Turner 2014).

Year	Stockholm city	Rest of Stockholm county	Rest of Sweden	Entire country
2000	4500	13,500	6000	24,000
2001	7200	4800|	4000	16,000
2002	2000	700	4300	7000
2003	100	100	2800	3000
2004	70	70	5460	5600
2006	0	20	2180	2200
2007	1000	2000	5000	8000
2008	11,600	900	5500	18,000
2009	8000	2200	4600	14,800
2010	7500	2500	5000	15,000
Total	41,990	27,090	51,840	120,920
Percentage	34.7	22.4	42.9	100.0

Source: Bostadsmarknaden 2011–2012. Karlskrona: Boverket (Swedish Board of Housing, Building and Planning) (http://www.boverket.se/Global/Webbokhandel/Dokument/2011/BME-2011-2012.pdf).

Tab. 9: Number of public housing dwellings sold in Sweden from 2000 to 2010 (Andersson and Turner 2014 : Table 1). Proof of the ideological (political) side of gentrification is evident if we look at years 2003-2006. Despite no real change in the housing market *per se*, it was in this period that the Social Democrats regained the majority in the Town Hall.

As a result, today Sweden has one of the most liberal housing regimes in the world (Lind and Lundström 2007). This connects with my argument about the atmosphere of individualisation and exclusion in contemporary Sweden, for this political and economic system provides yet another social frame of inequality, namely spatial segregation. The shift towards a market-based housing system generated two social phenomena that converged on segregation: gentrification of the inner-city, and residualisation of the outer-city. Gradually, the inner-city impoverished its public housing stock, as tenants associated in co-operatives, bought properties at a State-controlled price (far below real market value), revamped and rented them at over-inflated figures, aided by the municipality's liberal majority. The inner-city attracted residents with more resources in terms of education and income, enticed by the big foreseeable capital gains resulting from the conversions. In parallel, the outskirts selectively-attracted those who fled from the unaffordable housing market of the inner-city, i.e. residents with fewer resources. As the inner-city was socially upgraded, the outer-city was downgraded. Even worse than this, peripheral public housing was sold straight to private rental companies, for often local dwellers did not have the socioeconomic nor the cultural capital to associate in co-operatives, which is no straightforward feat for a non-Swedish-speaking immigrant or a less-educated person. The spatial by-product was severe segregation, i.e. distance, between the high-income, highly-educated and the low-income, less-educated dwellers. The important point, here, is that the latter tends to overlap with the category of "immigrant".

Table 2. Population and socio-economic data for different geographical and tenure segments of the Stockholm housing market, 1990–2010. All data except for the population change data (data columns 1 and 2) refer to people aged 20–64.

Location	Tenure	Share of all residents in Stockholm city, 1990	Share of all residents in Stockholm city, 2010	Mean Income change, 1990–2010 (overall change from 1990 to 2010 is 100)	% in work income quintile 1+2, 1990	% in work income quintile 1+2, 2010	% in disposable income quintile 1, 1990	% in disposable income quintile 1, 2010	% low educational level*, 1990	% low educational level*, 2010	% non-western immigrants, 1990	% non-western immigrants, 2010
Inner city	Home ownership	0	0	132	55	42	14	17	14	0	0	0
	Cooperative	10	21	111	35	31	18	15	11	6	2	6
	Public rental	6	2	88	46	48	21	23	21	13	4	9
	Private rental	19	10	97	43	43	22	21	17	10	3	7
	Total	35	33	114	41	36	21	17	16	8	3	6
Inner suburb	Home ownership	9	8	118	30	24	14	12	14	6	1	4
	Cooperative	7	19	99	33	32	14	15	16	9	2	9
	Public rental	15	9	81	49	54	21	26	33	21	8	26
	Private rental	12	10	85	42	47	20	24	23	14	3	13
	Total	44	46	100	41	38	18	19	24	12	4	12
Multifamily outer city	Home ownership	2	1	84	29	36	13	19	17	14	2	26
	Cooperative	2	3	78	38	46	17	25	20	19	14	35
	Public rental	9	6	64	54	67	24	36	40	34	23	56
	Private rental	2	5	57	42	64	17	37	32	32	9	47
	Total	15	15	70	48	59	21	32	34	28	17	47

(*continued*)

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Table 2. (*Continued*)

Location	Tenure	Share of all residents in Stockholm city, 1990	Share of all residents in Stockholm city, 2010	Mean Income change, 1990–2010 (overall change from 1990 to 2010 is 100)	% in work income quintile 1+2, 1990	% in work income quintile 1+2, 2010	% in disposable income quintile 1, 1990	% in disposable income quintile 1, 2010	% low educational level*, 1990	% low educational level*, 2010	% non-western immigrants, 1990	% non-western immigrants, 2010
Single-family/ mixed outer city	Home ownership	5	4	98	29	28	13	14	15	9	2	12
	Cooperative	0	1	93	34	34	13	14	18	15	3	18
	Public rental	1	0	77	50	55	18	26	28	26	16	33
	Private rental	0	1	61	36	60	15	31	29	28	3	34
	Total	7	5	93	31	33	14	16	17	13	3	16
Total	Home ownership	16	13	109	30	27	14	13	15	8	1	8
	Cooperative	19	44	103	34	33	16	16	14	9	3	10
	Public rental	31	18	75	50	58	22	29	33	25	12	34
	Private rental	33	25	83	42	49	21	26	20	16	3	18
	Total	100	100	100	40	40	20	20	22	13	6	16

*Low educational level is less than 10 years of school education.
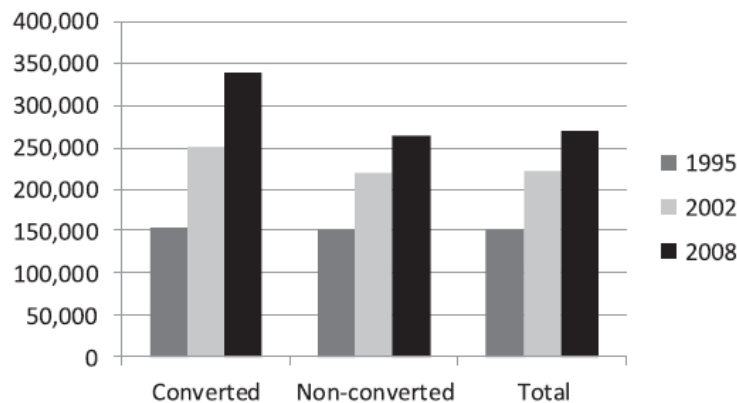Source: The Geosweden database, Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University.

Tab. 10: Population and socio-economic data for different geographical and tenure segments of the Stockholm housing market, 1990-2010. All data except for the population change data (columns 1 and 2) refer to people aged 20-64 (Andersson and Turner 2014 : Table 2).

Indeed, data regarding the proportion of non-western immigrants (last column of the table) show that they are severely segregated outside the inner-city "ivory tower", with just a mere 6% of immigrants who can afford to live in places like Södermalm. Furthermore, inequality rapidly gets intersectional if we look at income and education: there is an utter economic gap whereby there has been a substantial relative income gain in the inner city, and a colossal relative income loss in the outer city (30 percentage points lower than the average income change between 1990 and 2010); and an uneven educational upgrading, in that 1) the absolute number of people with a low educational level[87] is more than three times greater in the outer-city than in the inner-city (28% vs. 8% as of 2010), 2) its reduction is much slower in the former (Δ_{edu_ic} = 100% vs. Δ_{edu_oc} = 21%), and 3) in private rental, its level stayed the same over a 20 years' time span(32%). Bridging the data shows that the average income and education are low for immigrants living in the immigrant-dense housing outskirts; non-western, first-generation immigrants constitute more than half of the working-age residents in the outer-city (ibid., p. 15). Furthermore, using an index of dissimilarity measure, Andersson and Turner proved that the spatial separation of low- and high-disposable-income is increasing in Stockholm (ibid., p. 14). One may ask: "Why is gentrification not happening in the suburbs, too?". This is easily understood: the multifamily rental housing in the outer-city is simply less attractive. Huge blocks of anonymous red bricks without any historical fashion, inhabited by a majority of recently arrived immigrants, often unemployed and with low income and education levels, and burdened by social stigma, do not attract the cultural and economic capital of gentrifiers. Also, for the reasons stated above, the majority of immigrants do not associate into co-operatives, the main gentrifying actors in Sweden. Thus, converted

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[87] Less than 10 years.

properties with higher values coagulate in the inner-city, where high-income highly-educated Swedes live — the Matthew effect.

Tab. 11: Conversion is worth it!
Average work income (SEK) in converted and unconverted properties in 1995, 2002, and 2008. Source: The Geosweden database, Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University (Andersson and Turner 2014 : Figure 6)

To conclude, the compositional effects of gentrification lead to a severe segregation of immigrants outside inner-Stockholm, which is converted into a homogeneous milieu of relatively young, middle-class, well-educated and high-income residents (ibid., p. 21). Those who leave (immigrants or not) earn much less money than both the stayers and those replacing them, crowding residualised outskirts. Conversions, carried out on economical and ideological grounds, have reduced the social mix in Stockholm (ibid., p. 26) and eroded the public housing stock, a resource for the poor.

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Gentrification legitimises exclusivity in the production and consumption of space; it resonates with the claims of an innate Swedishness, rooted in natural spirituality, silence, fitness, and distinction. As I have pointed out before, gentrification happens as private life-worlds (i.e. values, behaviours, desires, lifestyles) and public opportunity structures (i.e. institutions, politics) align. In fact, the peculiar harmony of the leftist advocacy of multiculturalism and the rightist cry for separation push together towards segregation. In other words, the public sphere is currently providing the

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systemic frame to legitimise the private endeavours of gentrifiers. The trends regarding public housing, privatisation and ghettoization of marginalised minorities prove that this is happening, especially in the hyper-gentrified Stockholm, the epitome of a larger fear of the Other in the "greedy Sweden" (Cervenka 2022)[88].

In parallel, the sonic milieu mirrors social polarisation: sound is regulated as private expression, for it dangerously lingers on the brim of "noise" when it trespasses into decorous public quietscapes[89]. Although one could figure a romanticised duality: a silent Stockholm that opposes the rising tide of peripheral noise, it is not the case. Silence is, as I pointed out earlier with regard to pilgrimages, hiking, spirituality and folk music, the ubiquitous benchmark of the "healthy" society. The suppression of noise is a scientifically-informed operation conducted both in the capital and in the outer-city. Here, with the exception of a few bazaars and venues, the scattered layout of multi-family blocks disperses people and sounds. Whereas the wealthy inner-city observes silence as a status symbol, the poorly-serviced dormitories that orbit around metro stations or shopping centres sink in silence for the lack of homes, i.e. open spaces where difference can be communicated and emplaced, and belonging may be negotiated.

I shall now approach the end of my reflection, where I contrast institutional soundproofing protocols with the expressive soundscapes of migrants, and argue that, for diversity to be an home-making asset, soundscapes should be given space to vary, touch, mix, and communicate, rather than "soloed" and sanitised.

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[88] To get a sense of how dramatic social inequality has become in Sweden, suffice it to quote part of the synopsis of *Girig-Sverige* ("Greedy Sweden"), a report by economistic journalist Andreas Cervenka, winner of *Stora Journalistpriset 2022* ("The Great Prize for Journalism 2022"): "Housing prices that rush the most in the Western world. […] The gap between the super-wealthy and the rest of the population has widened rapidly. The share of the economy owned by the richest percentile is higher than in the United States, and Sweden has more dollar billionaires than Japan and Brazil. Sweden is a country where the tax on labor is among the highest in the world, but where assets are taxed significantly lower than in many other countries. It is a country where in 2021 there is housing fever, stock market fever and crypto fever. At the same time. Where the hunt for quick money has become a new popular movement. In 1996, there were 28 billionaires in Sweden. Today they are 542. Together they have become 30 times richer in 25 years. At the same time, the proportion of Swedish households with low financial standards is the highest ever." (Cervenka 2022)

[89] See Franzén (2005) and Thörn (2012) about the rarity of squatting, Kaminsky (2012) and Amundsen (2019) about the strict regulation of street performances, and the whole work by Staffan Mossenmark (2012, interview below) as a noisy claim against the silencing of public space.

Using atmospheric power to reclaim space: protocols and expressive soundscapes in Stockholm

The sonic polarisation of Stockholm, the "divided city" (Olsson 2008b), traces an ideal-typical continuum with two extremes: exclusive silence, and expressive soundscapes, each with its social actants[90]: protocols, and hybrid communities. On one hand, the State follows international guidelines (City of London 2016; International Organization for Standardization 2014, 2020) to regulate national soundscapes through the removal of noise; on the other hand, local sonic actions aggregate into larger soundscapes which, for their loudness and diversity, entail a great communicative potential.

The war on noise is based on scientific evidence (partly cited above) that noise is unhealthy (Belojevic et al. 2012); from this principle follows application in urban planning, engineering, and policing. To provide better quality soundscapes, Sweden incorporated the European guidelines for noise abatement (European Parliament 2002) into its legislation (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 2005), hence the proliferation of city parks as quiet areas, and the capillary policing of *ordningsvakt*[91]. The European Environmental Noise Directive is, to this date, the only one regarding the impact of soundscapes on the citizens' quality of life. And it does so in a negative way, i.e. literally *negating* part of the urban soundscape, noise. The focus is on urban "agglomerations" (European Parliament 2002:iii), which suffer from an excess of noise, to be cured with noise limits and "quiet areas", based on the insalubrity of noise and

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[90] I borrow this term from actor-network theory, which includes humans and non-humans actors into the production of the social field (here, soundscapes).

[91] An *ordningsvakt* ("order guard") is a civil-servant appointed by the Police Authority to contribute to the maintenance of public order. They are mostly present at crowded events and in large venues, especially during the weekend, to monitor alcohol-related excess, violence, and crime. They can put someone in custody, before police arrive. I witnessed myself a pristine example of their silencing action: around *midsommar* of 2022, I was going home from a party with a group of friends, fellow students at either SU or KTH, Stockholm. As we took the escalator down to Hornstull metro station, one of us put on some chill lo-fi music from a tiny Bluetooth speaker hanging from his belt. Two *ordningsvakter* shouted an order in Swedish, which we did not understand. Some seconds later, they made their way through us, grabbed, lifted, and dragged him onto the other escalator and outside the station. They had warned us that the music was too loud for the (empty) public space, and since we did not comply, we were now prohibited from using that metro station. We walked all the way back home, not for the lack of other metro stations, but for the need to fill the silence left by institutionalised violence with words of friendship and support.

"Strategic Noise Maps" which should be elaborated at the estimated cost of 0.15 euros per affected citizen (id., p. ix). As much helpful as these guidelines may be in exposing environmental noise issues in the local public debate — a merit I do recognise —, they rely on the medicalization of social life, whereby healthiness[92] is a necessary and sufficient condition for social desirability (Todres, Galvin, and Dahlberg 2007; Todres, Galvin, and Holloway 2009). This results in a surgical discourse in which a disease is diagnosed — noise —, the antidote is synthesised — silence —, and a competent professional is appointed to administer it — the State. As much as this is helpful for physiological wellbeing, I argue that a "quality soundscape" does not coincide with a "healthy soundscape", rather with one that is both "healthy" and "expressive", for there is no point in being a healthy yet silenced individual.

A Swedish Soundscape-Quality Protocol was elaborated, validated and introduced into the ISO methods for the evaluation of soundscape quality (Axelsson, Nilsson, and Berglund 2012; Nilsson and Berglund 2006). It acknowledges that soundscapes are not a simple "noise-silence" dichotomy. Still, it falls in the corollary-bias that soundscape quality is enhanced by *nature* sounds and distorted by *traffic* noise" (Nilsson and Berglund 2006:904, my emphasis), thus restricting the protocol to the

$$\frac{noise \cdot unhealthy}{urban} = \frac{silence \cdot healthy}{natural} \Rightarrow \frac{noise}{bad} = \frac{silence}{good}$$

equation. The maths behind it gives scientific leverage to gentrification, which — as I argued before — seeks to bring the silent, the healthy, and the natural in the inner-city, and to grow a forest of soundproof status-symbols in an immigrant-proof soundscape — in its nostalgic-nationalistic (exclusive) form.

$$\frac{noise \cdot unhealthy}{urban} = \frac{silence \cdot healthy}{natural} \Rightarrow \frac{immigrant \cdot otherness}{exclusion} = \frac{native \cdot order}{distinction}$$

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[92] If it is healthy, it is good. If it is beautiful, it is good. If it is green, it is good. The gentrification mantra.

The authors show that the expectations about a place deeply influence the perception of the soundscape, so much so that despite high sound levels, only 1 out of 4 respondents consider Hong Kong noisy, and 1 out of 3 consider it quiet (Lin and Lam 2010). Indeed, expectations do not stem from health diagnoses, but from daily negotiations between the social and the individual — precisely what sound is all about. They grow in the same soil of desires, values, fears and explanatory models. It is here, on the micro scale, that the complexity of the macro is given meaning and put to action. Here lies the potential for people to use atmospheric power to counter the silence of distinction, de-naturalise it as the only way of being *sound*, and build a diverse, expressive and loud home.

Rinkeby, in North-Western Stockholm, is a neighbourhood where many of the post-war *invandrare* ("immigrant" guest workers) settled. Here, the main form of dwelling is the multi-family house in an isolated island of building blocks; the attained educational level and the average income are sensibly lower than the Stockholm average (Andersson and Turner 2014) and gangs and violent crimes are a severe issue (Boccagni 2017; Irwin-Rogers et al. 2019). The Million Programme buildings contain people and sounds, and few public spaces offer room for sonic exchange. However, two practices of sonic home-making answer to the metaphorical and architectural silencing: connective-musicking[93] (Small 2011), and home-sounding. Connective-musicking happens either when people purposefully use music in a phatic mode, i.e. to connect social groups in a conversation, whatever the ultimate goal; or when the connection is the unplanned by-product of musical practices. Fikret Çeşmeli, a Turkish *bağlama*[94] player, exemplifies the first case. About the second, home-sounding is the creation of a sonic atmosphere as the aggregate of everyday actions with a strong identitarian meaning. The soundscape of Rinkeby's small shops illustrates it.

Fikret Çeşmeli was born in the Anatolian village of Konzanh, Turkey (Hammarlund 1994). He migrated to Sweden in 1975, when he was 14, and settled in

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[93] In Small's terms, *musicking* is a term that focuses on music as practice, rather than a product (which was for a long time the study object of musicology and ethnomusicology). It is nothing new, it is always music, but from a performative perspective.
[94] A long-necked lute.

Rinkeby. He took a *bağlama* course at a Swedish association and in 1990 he put together many musicians of very diverse geographical origins under the name of Yeni Sesler, "new voices". He travelled all the way to Istanbul to reach the Turkish market, as well as the Swedish one. His music is in many aspects a social conversation: he learnt how to play a traditional Turkish instrument at a Swedish association; he decided to include both Turkish folk music and his own compositions, based on contemporary Turkish poems, with the purpose of reaching a wider audience. Moreover, in his home-village, non-religious music is *haram*, forbidden by Allah; nonetheless, he pays respect to the Turkish identity through the uncompromising separation of Western and Turkish instruments in the final mix. Fikret's story illustrates how migrants act in several sonic fields[95], thus making them especially eligible for creating instances of connective-musicking, i.e. hybrid soundscapes that can be home to different voices, sometimes harmonising, sometimes contrasting. Migrants are constantly oscillating between fields, homes and identitarian struggles, and music is no piece of furniture that they simply bring along. It is a resource of atmospheric power that, like in Yeni Sesler's case, can be harnessed to make a home far away from home. The hybrid soundscape of Fikret's "new voices" welcomes Turkish (both traditional and new), Swedish and world music aesthetics. It resonates with the struggles of immigrants mediating their identities through sound. When Fikret brings his album to an unappreciative acquaintance back in his Anatolian village, he is both seeking recognition, and providing a new communicative bridge between the traditional soundscape of the village and the curious second-generation Swedish youth, who oscillates between told traditions and lived vibes. In Sweden, his music connects four fields: the Turkish republic, the Anatolian village of Konzanh, Swedish society, and the transplanted Konzanh village in Rinkeby. The expressive soundscape questions the *doxa*, the unchallenged "normality" of the senses, and fosters communication and listening among very different actors, from the *bağlama* player to the municipality funding the local association for Turkish music. The atmospheric power of Fikret's music reshapes and enriches the material and sensory resources of his communities — networks, gigs, and headquarters for the association, now acting as a "village café" —, maintaining meaningful relationships between the Anatolian migrants, the Swedish municipality, and made-home Rinkeby. It synthesises

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[95] In the Bourdieusian sense.

the history of both places, both homes, and helps musicians and listeners to claim a piece of the world as familiar, haven and heaven, without covering their ears to new conversations. As Hammarlund puts it, "he is aiming at some kind of integration into Swedish society, leaving even the transplanted Anatolian village but at the same time keeping his ties to Turkish culture" (id., p. 319). Connective-musicking empowers homely soundscapes, questioning the naturalness of silence.

Besides music professionalism, migrants exert their atmospheric power in more mundane vibes. Their activities carry sonic information, part of which has familiar traits that spread through space. As a consequence, when meaningful sounds aggregate into atmospheres, they start to structure homely soundscapes which possess identitarian value. As familiar sounds form a familiar rhythm in space, soundscapes start to resemble diffused homes where migrants can return to (see Bonini 2010 for examples). Rinkeby shows at least two instances of home-sounding: the Somali Culture and Sports Week, and small shops. The neighbourhood is home to several self-organised initiatives which counter the socio-economic polarisation of the divided capital. While suburbs mushroom around big shopping centres, here migrants repurposed several non-commercial premises to accommodate small shops. Storage rooms, laundries and garages now host food-, general-, and niche stores. In fact, they also serve as village cafés, i.e. meeting venues for local residents (Olsson 2008:9). Albeit precarious (their status is regulated as "temporary" by the regulatory plan), small shops stem from the tactical re-use of space, and some more than others use aesthetics expressively, contributing to the "familiarity" of the surrounding atmosphere. They are, most importantly, examples of spatial care, which is the precondition of home-making. As Olsson puts it, "representations and symbols of [cultural identities] are also present, e.g. in shop names, product ranges and the language of the advertising signage. […] With the establishment of the small shops, the architecture has been transformed. Meanings have been added to it which, in a different way from previously, reflects the heterogeneity of Rinkeby's population. The small shops, therefore, have enriched Rinkeby with something more than just a broader mixture of functions" (id., p. 11). The soundscapes made of radio playing, news buzzing on the TVs, and Rinkeby Swedish jargon (Milani and Jonsson 2012) are sensory prosthetics of the people living there, and

reflect people negotiating a place in the community. As I have pointed out before, making something audible often leads to it getting visible.

However, home-sounding is at risk of racialising space, when the homogeneity of soundscapes is associated with the immigrant stigma, and the familiarity of a soundscape comes at the expense of another. This is a concrete risk in Rinkeby because of its geographical isolation, its apparent homogeneity (though "migrant" is not at all a homogeneous group), and the stigma fueled by violent crimes and xenophobia. However, Rinkeby shop owners negotiate their permission with the municipality and the owners of the rented premises, a bridge that gives them both social and cultural capital, for they fill structural holes between two social groups, and bring into their community functional knowledge about the Swedish entrepreneurial system.

On this point, the Somali Culture and Sports Week (SCSW) represents a true dialogue. Consolidated over several years, SCSW revolves primarily around football, and attracts people of various Somali descent from all over Scandinavia to the Rinkeby area (Olsson 2008:6). Parallel to the matches, a great deal of events about Somali culture unfold during the Week. As in the case of small shops, the organisers developed a practical knowledge of the Swedish bureaucracy and a vast transnational network. What is more interesting, the artistic (mainly music) milieu highlights the various ways of being Somali today in the Scandinavian context. Traditional music and mash-ups offer young participants counter-images that oppose the immigrant stigma, and several successful models offer them material to cultivate hybrid identities: not just Somali or Swedish, but Somali-Swedish, for example. The music played, the speeches, the various dialects and shared stories constitute a public soundscape that 1) publicly displays difference, 2) roots difference as part of Scandinavian (Swedish) society, and 3) weaves a texture of vibrant familiarity for the young generations (id., p. 9).

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In the 2019 movie *Ad Astra* (Gray 2019), whenever Astronaut Roy McBride (Brad Pitt) feels distressed, he is brought into a "comfort room". It is a white cube with powerful speakers; while projectors paint the walls with natural landscapes, the sound

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of birds, trees and windy hills envelop the "patient". As time goes by, though, "nature" fails to sedate the inner psychological struggle of the character, who seeks support from another astronaut to escape and find closure. The comfort room reveals itself for what it is: a social container akin to a correctional facility. The risk of the anti-noise or "low-dBA" narrative is that of highlighting only the medical benefit of quietscapes. In fact, physiological well being is an individual (and individualising) property[96], and does not tackle any underlying social conflicts.

There is no absolute yardstick to measure the quality of a soundscape. Rather, one should preemptively decide what the goal of measurement is. Is it to improve health conditions? to increase the value of a residential area? to foster social cohesion? Each goal requires different reference points and units of measurement. Showing that heard traffic noise should be lower than 50dBA in quiet areas says nothing about the social issues that "exclusive silence" bespeaks. On the contrary, the heterogeneity and resourcefulness of a diverse soundscape fosters expression and communication between actors who share a place. A homely space that is open to new sounds can be sonically repurposed to welcome new voices. Ideally, institutions would offer room for the *bağlama* player to listen to the sound of summer red houses, and for the Swedish white-collar to listen to the struggles of Anatolian villages.

On the contrary, within Stockholm's gentrifying frame, silence is a symptom of distinction and exclusion. However, not communicating is impossible (Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson 2011), therefore silence is not absence of communication. Rather, it is the sensory manifestation of social inequality and spatial polarisation of different social groups, often legitimised by a medicalising legislation. Yet, silence is broken by hybrid soundscapes of migrant musicians, cultural events that cross identities and generations, and familiar atmospheres around small shops. The sounding of homes creates diffused places where migrants can return to; a pervasive soundscape that is not easy to mute. In this sense, making something or someone *audible* is instrumental for making them *visible*.

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[96] At least in Western societies, that is.

LISTEN TO
YASIN BIN- HEY (RINKEBY)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJvPc-OVWKA

Yasin Byn is a Swedish rapper, born in Rinkeby from Somali parents. He became famous first as part of the large hip hop collective Ghetto Superstars, and then as a solo artist. He was involved in multiple gang crimes around Rinkeby and served time in prison twice. After his success, he moved to Dubai. Hey (Rinkeby) is a cynical ode to his neighbourhood, which at the same time pushes him to "pack up and leave" and "pulls [him] back". The beat is based on a steel drum, which is partly associated with the Western African diaspora.

(translation from Swedish)
There are days when I want to pack up and leave
But as soon as I let go, something pulls me back
What could it be Can someone give me an answer
Because I can't understand why so hard
I can't tag she holds me tight
And it is thanks to her that I am where I am
Still, it's love for the area I'm from
The bride I love the area I'm from
Hey oh hey old lady are you coming with me
She said "no oh no even though I'm with you I've heard a lot of shit a lot of fires and wars
I can go anywhere you want but I will never go there"
[...]
I don't know what you heard my area it's nice
Where the chocolate is yummy and the grass is green
I can show you around if you're ready to haffla [party]
Show me azonto dhaanto salsa
The style from Milan but supports Barca
Kushen from Kriskis call as Alaska
From different countries we have all gathered
Black or white we stand up for each other
Love to my brother he also wants to be big
Now he plays in his yard but he dreams Camp Nou
Love to my sister a beautiful lawyer
She protects me in court now even though she wears a shawl
And that is why I protect them to my grave
That's why I'm standing here, that's how I'm left
That's why it's love for the area I'm from

Expert ears explore the sounds of home

> Contrapuntal sensory histories can be recovered from the scattered wreckage of the inadmissible: lost biographies, memories, words, pains, glances, and faces that cohere into a vast secret museum of historical and sensory absence (Feldman 1994:415).

As we have seen, migrant soundscapes are *compositions* of multiple voices where generations and identities cross; given a flexible institutional frame, hybridity makes space for multiple belongings and deals with difference in a relational way. The heterogeneity and resourcefulness of a diverse soundscape fosters expression and communication between actors who share a homely space that is open to new sounds and can be sonically repurposed to welcome new voices.

People contribute everyday to the hybridity or uniformity of the soundscape. The aggregate effect of their actions interacts with policies, investments and trends to shape the sonic fabric of the lived-world. It is here, at the micro level of vibrational negotiations, that the soundscapes of home and inequality become meaningful; here, the macro-juncture of hyper-individualism, spirituality and silent nature and the micro-tactics to reclaim space sonically manifest. I shall follow the voices of eight experts along with their reflections about how sound makes space for home. Each is familiar with peculiar soundscapes and describes in a unique sonic language different ways of sounding out home; each contributes to a contrapuntal sensory history that ground this sociological journey into the lived-worlds of people. Additionally, each has a sensitivity that is shaped by their own profession, which adds elements of intersubjectivity; as we will see, their accounts often connect.

Karl Bolin, acoustic engineer

It is worse to be deaf than to be…blind, because you lose social interaction. And hearing is always there. It is a very important sense. You can't turn it off.

Karl Bolin is an acoustic engineer and lecturer at KTH (Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan), the technical university of Stockholm. His research focuses on wind farm noise reduction through the sound of vegetation. He is adamant in his awareness that noise is an "interface" between social science and engineering. Swedish itself has two distinct words to describe "social" (i.e. environmental) noise, *buller*, and technical (i.e. broadband) noise, *brus*. In Sweden noise "is a proxy of the rural-urban conflict", which has many "resonant surfaces", among which wind farms. They are the heralds of urbanisation in an idyllic countryside where "people think that they have contributed enough", and reject the noise of the invading city. The rural landscape is the source of authenticity for natural spirituality, bears the roots of Swedish identity, thus should be safeguarded:

There are emotions of neglect and emotions of unfairness for those actually living in these environments. This is what we enjoy here, and that's why we are here. I mean, I've been here for…well, *my relatives have been here for 300 hundred years* (laughs). And now this should be done in order to help others.

Sound is relevant both as an identitarian tool, and as the prime channel of socialisation. In fact, whereas "sight is important for localisation, sound is a socially important asset". Indeed, the conflict revolving around wind farms is a symptom of a deeper "not-in-my-backyard" itch, a struggle to preserve a soundscape of pure silence against a foreign noise. However, "soundproof labs which are dead-silent are not a healthy soundscape. Parks and recreational sites where you have less noise are of course important, but spaces [should be] filled with sounds that you are positive to". There is no easy two-way correspondence between silence and the quality of soundscapes: rather, the signature of liveable soundscapes is complexity and the capacity of evoking strong positive affects. Livable complexity, aptly specified by architect Kubokawa (last interview), seems to be the key to homely soundscapes that acknowledge diversity.

For Karl, regulating noise is a *duty* towards people and a quieter environment, exemplified by the recollection of summer cottages. The silentscapes of nature have an almost magical power of purifying the individual from the noise of the city. This property is rooted in the timelessness of nature: rurality lives in mythical time, that of ancestry and pre-modern past. Should urbanisation ever devour the rural space, then summer would be the only "necessary time" to shut down the machines of modernity and recharge in silence. The very enterprise to mask the "noise" of wind turbines with the "sound2 of vegetation (notice the different word choice) bespeaks an effort to entangle modernity and the rural past, city and nature, describing an identity that is less cyborg and more lichen, reconnecting symbiotically with timeless roots, silence, and purity.

> In Stockholm I bike from T-Centralen uphill. On the way up, I bike through Humlegården, and now they put the bike lane just by the road, which wasn't there before. Before I had to bike through Humlegården, on gravel roads. [...] It's a very large difference now. Before, in just a few minutes I was in a sort of relaxed mode. I enjoyed nature: if it's summer time or winter time, it doesn't matter, if it's spring it's beautiful…you kind of relax with just that sound and you get immersed in that environment. You don't get that kind of feeling while you are in this urban landscape. Also, Stockholm has much higher houses [compared to Uppsala], which means that you see less sky, and also the sound becomes more…higher [sic]: your

Karl's last remarks illustrate the atmospheric power of a city garden, paired with his own sensitivity. Soundscapes are multisensory interactions, immersive atmospheres that can, at times, become imposing, like the capital heard by the less-urbanised ears.

Sara Lenzi, sonification designer

Karl's relational and affective description of sound resonates with the experience of Sara Lenzi, sonification designer, postdoctoral researcher in industrial design engineering at TU Delft:

Sound always communicates informative content that is related to the *environment*. [...] About the source that generated the sound, the refractions, the place where we are; additionally, there is always an *emotional* content. [...] It is the sense that develops first. We respond to sound *in a visceral, unmediated, uncontrolled way*. And everything is amplified: if a sound bothers you, it's a nuisance you feel in your gut.

She emphasises the sonic qualities that we discovered in our initial phenomenological exploration: the relationality and embeddedness of sound, and its *visceral* experience. Its unmediated nature fosters strong affective reactions, especially towards noise, which

partly explain the urge to cancel "foreign noise" mentioned before. "Background noise data [...] do cognitive work on us", she says, with coincides with Karl's remark that "long exposure to background noise, albeit unconscious, stimulates a stark sensitivity to undesired stimuli", like traffic noise.

Sara's field, sonification, involves the techniques of soundscape design (or, as Staffan Mossenmark said in the 7th interview, "sound gardening"), whereby some part of the sonic texture of a space is carefully engineered to achieve a certain goal. Whether it be to brand an electric car's engine, or to signal informatic attacks via loud bird screams, sonification addresses the visceral response to sound. "Each [sonic] mapping", she says, "is based on metaphors: the network is a forest, and informatic events are forest sounds. Accumulation is an example: you are in the forest with a lone bird, and then all the chirping accumulates in one point — it tells you something". Again, we come back to something familiar: metaphors. They are an apt tool to research and convey sound, for both metaphors and soundscapes commune with the emotional tides of our raw perception, and can quickly indicate something greater: a threat, a stranger, a familiar atmosphere. The experience of sound is inherently embodied, and its viscerality allows it to radically home-ify a place:

> In hospitals, staff and patients transform dry and precise noises into contents with a very strong emotional charge, as if they were a Mozart or a profound artistic experience, because *for them it is their whole world*.

or to mute its homely atmosphere:

> Sound is a manifestation of individual and group personalities, of belonging. *Surgically silencing it often means silencing a particular group, a particular personality type*.

Here, the connection between soundscapes, identities and belonging starts to take a defined shape: spontaneous processes of meaning-making imbue sound with a homely

quality. Such processes are often rooted in memory, multisensory, and relational. The sound of home seems never to be a unique one — like silence —, rather a choir of familiar voices:

> The *caffettiera*. It is linked to a memory from when I was a child, because I only heard it on Saturdays or Sundays, because my parents were at home, and woke up later than usual…I could smell the coffee pot, slowly the aroma, and for me that was it: "Sunday"! It's a multisensory memory, because even when I hear a recorded, artificial sound [of a *caffettiera*], it also automatically releases an olfactory memory, and the two are inseparable. I like following the sounds of the house objects — *they are all friendly sounds, I experience them as a small composition*. When I wake up there is my routine, there is always a sound related to this routine. If one is missing, I notice.

My Gren, dancer, folk singer

In her study of hospital soundscapes and the sonic worlds of patients, Sara stresses the embodiment of sonic perception, which she describes as *visceral*. Therefore, I turned to art, namely dance and singing, to dive deeper into the relationships between sounds and the body. My Gren is a Stockholm-based professional dancer and teacher at SKH (Stockholms Konstnärliga Högskola), and a folk-singer. She offered me some of the most powerful words I have ever heard, which I report unabridged:

You dance in a space and then you feel comfortable there. You come into a room and — maybe everything is new, or you are coming into a place where you don't know anything…and if you are feeling like [she starts crying] you don't belong, or you just don't know what to do with your body, then if the is the possibility for you to just dance in the space, *then you'll own it*, because you can't lie with your body. *If you move, if you dare to move as yourself in space, then it becomes yours*. Especially when you come into a place and you don't know what I'm allowed to do, how I'm supposed to be…It has to be a place where it is safe for you to dance.

The point here is appropriating space through performance. It connects with Rinkeby's small shop atmosphere, the Somali Week events and Fikeret's hybrid music. Provided a degree of safety, "performing a space" moulds it, plays it into a familiar place, one where one is "supposed to be" because they communicate the willingness to belong in a sensory way, which is inherently relational and open to the Other — this is why it is called *social* dance. Her crying expresses a nude, visceral, existential, uncompromised need for home. The performative body can *extract* the homely-ness of space, and it can do it in a conversational way, as dance shows.

Indeed, dance and sound are intimately related, and their interplay may suggest that the otherness of a foreign soundscape can be acknowledged by *doing something* with it. An example is *Jazzfoglar,* her study of a hybrid dance style that mixes jazz with the moves of birds:

I feel very energetic when I become a bird. My perception becomes razor-sharp. My energy can come out and go everywhere, but when I go into dancing as a jazz bird, it goes very *slim*, and I feel *angular*. [...] I become very curious about things. We do call and response with others and the audience. [...] One of the strong pedagogical values is to come into a different body language. You are really jazzy, but you have to embody something else.

This is a professional example of how performance can bring people to embody otherness, but it might be as simple as familiarising with foreign soundscapes, entering the Rinkeby small shop area with genuine curiosity and not a consumer's ear.

On the other hand, My's experience with folk singing, *külning*, describes a more intimate way of making home by performing space.

> When I sing [*külning*] I feel like I am the power source. I feel oneness with nature: you get the echo — I don't usually do it indoors. I can lose myself in the sound. [...] On a big boat it just vanishes: WAAAAH, and it's so vast, and I'm so small. I really feel connected to nature, to my own voice, and to my body's connection with nature.

Külning was an ancient style of calling, whereby women would emit loud, long, high-pitched glissando melodies to call back the hunters. The highly directional crisp sound would echo far away and cover vast distances. This type of performance connects to natural spirituality and the natural roots of Swedishness, individuality and self-affirmation. It is the individual counterpoint to the social appropriation of space exemplified by dance. Yet, as much as she is focused on herself, she keeps the conversation open: she is so small, and the world is so big. Both the different lexicon used and the coherence of the relational approach suggest that the two ways of appropriating space through performance are compatible.

LISTEN TO
a modern rendition of *külning*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6l7ADnmDzCk

Myrkur is a Danish singer, originally part of the Danish black metal scene, and currently diving deep into the Scandinavian folk soundscapes.

Toivo Burlin, musicologist

Hearing is a metaphor for surviving. It gives enormous information about both the environment and ourselves. Music has a lot to do with our humanity. The outside world can be a reflection of the inner world through music.

From both Karl's and Sara's words, and from My's singing the identitarian value of sound emerged. On this point, Toivo Burlin mentions the music of Sapmi, one of the native people of Northern Scandinavia. One myth that is especially tied to sound is that of the Vitra, or Saivo. Vitra are non-human beings, although very similar to us. They are like shadows who live lifes parallel to ours. They are deeply connected with nature, and they sing forbidden songs at the sacred time of death.

There is a connection between Saivo, landscape and sound — there are roads that are taboo for people to go to, or to build houses along. Along these roads it is said that the songs of Saivo could be heard. [...] Over the centuries, there were many contacts between Sami and Swedish people, and on the other hand, Sami people themselves became modernised, so in that contact the soundscapes changed. [...] Saivo songs don't sound human, they sound…chromatic, not major or minor. Strange sounds, something that is otherworldly.

The Sapmi interconnected soundscape bears the transformations of society — theirs and the Swedish one, which overlapped over the centuries. The Vitra songs are changing, as

Toivo research hints, to accommodate new sounds and new elements of the modern society. Once again, sound bears a strong identitarian value. The new element, here, is its historicity: centuries of identity-building accumulate into the melodies of the Vitra.

The connection with nature is shared by Swedish society, which "has a strong connection with the outdoors, since Sweden had a late industrialisation and urbanisation, which raised the sensitivity to disturbing noise". Noise is allowed as "a one-time excess"; shortly, noise is carnival. The appreciation of silence is taught and institutionalised:

> The Swedes learn from childhood that silence is good, you *must* talk socially but silence is secularly sacred. Nature is the Swedish holy temple, sacred. [...] Further, music has been financed from the State since the 1960s, so maybe that has a lot to do with the [official] music scene. [...] Folk music, in particular, is very institutionalised.

Compared to the Vitra songs facing modernisation, the major change to the Swedish soundscape after industrialisation, says Toivo, was immigration. It changed both the Swedish demography and sonic palette. Yet, this is not a static *status quo* but an ever-changing process; like My, Toivo stresses the space-making potential of sound practices:

> With music you build a sounding landscape around you. If you play music, even for yourself, *the sound around you is a prolonging of yourself*. It shows who you are and where your borders are.

The sounding home is a prosthesis of the self, and this hints at why, probably, one feels such an intimate aggression when foreign sounds "invade" our private soundscape, or the gentrified public space. In Toivo's case (he was born in a small village in Northern Sweden), the sound of the city is an unfamiliar one, he feels the need to go back to

nature; as he puts it, "I can also enjoy the sound of the city, but it's not my first sound language".

Maria Malmström, social anthropologist

Toivo's mention of historical change, immigration and "imposing" soundscapes takes us to Maria Malmström, a Swedish social anthropologist who specialises in Middle Eastern studies. She was in El Cairo when al-Sisi's military force killed about one thousand protesters. Her embodied experience of soundscapes of violence and death questions the political effects of atmospheric power, and the inequality that is embedded in air vibrations.

Sound is kept in us as a body memory. After I was in Cairo during the massacre [in 2013], I came back to New York and I was freezing whenever I heard the sound of a helicopter or fireworks. It meant war, dictatorship, shootings. [...] Sound is a matter that produces affects, that create emotions.

Sound makes barriers porous, and when those barriers are our body, trauma and inequality can claw their way deep into our memories. The El Cairo case epitomises a radical imbalance in the distribution of atmospheric power: El-Sisi's soldiers *set the tone* of the entire city by dominating the loudest sources of death. There, the appropriation of the sonic space expanded into the colonisation of the oppressed bodies,

which could not but shut up and tremble in response to the solo of weapons. In this sense, the appropriated soundscape reproduces social inequality and obeys to a totalitarian ideology.

In the Swedish case, Maria highlights a different implementation of body control through sound:

[The constant police presence] shows the authority of the state, the only one who can use violence, it is regulation and control. Silent, controlled, ironic: this is the persona you want to reach. This is high-class. Then you are the "right" person. If you cannot fit, you are abnormal. You don't fit.

A silenced soundscape reproduces both the hierarchy of power of a strongly statalist nation, and the class-divide, where the ideal-type neatly coincides with the gentrifier: the disciplined bourgeois living in a quiet neighbourhood, or a safe gated community. The silent-persona model clashes with Maria's perception of home: the lively soundscapes of New York and El Cairo, which despite being different, "both [are] creating *my city*. I felt the need to come back. This is home". Soundscapes of home are elastic, they have an attraction that magnifies with distance. They ask you to come back. In Sweden, Maria says, certain soundscapes of home bespeak class-interests:

The media highlight that it is a must to have a summer house; during the pandemic, even more so. This means that you have money. Think about those who can go to opera. If you cannot be quiet, *you don't belong there.* [...] There is an economic aspect to *affording silence*, the silence that you want, because in the silence that you don't want…you feel unsafe.

Such soundscapes inherently reproduce inequality, in that they require resources that are unequally distributed, especially in Stockholm, as we saw. *Desired* silence becomes part of the symbolic capital of upper classes, and proof of their economic power. The media institutionalise silence — for example in Ingrid Bergman's movies or summer houses

commercials — which stems from "nature, purity and religion". Uniquely, Maria admits that her own home-soundscape is a hybrid one, the mixture of her multiple belongings:

> The sound of the ocean on the West Coast is the sound of home. Brings back my childhood, my culture, but also summer, relaxed mood. [...] About the city…I can't say, because it doesn't feel home anymore…it's indoors soundscapes: conversations with people I like.

Lina Olsson, urban studies

> In the urban environment there is a *class component*: in upper-class neighbourhoods there is an expectation that you are living in an area that is *yours*, where you have your peace. This is compatible with the idea of a culture of silence here in Sweden.

On the same line, urbanist Lina Olsson remarks the class fracture between wanted and unwanted silence, owned and dispossessed space. The overarching "culture of silence" — a moniker to describe the aforementioned structural juncture — systematised the idea that owning a place grants the right to tune its soundscape. Thus, silence becomes the expression of a claim over space: this area is mine, and its soundscape is a prosthesis of my aspirations. Institutions support this "culture" in that they strictly regulate noise "as low as 55 dB, almost as low as speaking voice, which is a big obstacle to urban development in Sweden. [...] Noise regulations are about protecting your own private

house from external noise. In the bedrooms, the most intimate part, noise should be even lower.".

LISTEN TO
DAVE MATTHEWS BAND – DON'T DRINK THE WATER

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yr983MfFvk

Despite their specific reference to the European colonisation of America, Dave Matthews' lyrics are a powerful and emotional metaphor of the silence of space as part of the larger process of exclusive appropriation.

Can you not see?
There's no place here
What were you expecting
Not room for both
Just room for me

So you will lay your arms down
Yes I will call this home

Away away
You have been banished
Your land is gone
And given me

And here I will spread my wings
Yes I will call this home

What's this you say?
You feel a right to remain?
Then stay and I will bury you

What's that you say
Your father's spirit still lives in this place
I will silence you

Interestingly, Lina focuses on another space where inequality transpires through sound: means of transport.

The Stockholm transit system is more mixed, because they have the metro. Metro has a higher status than buses, then typically in bus-based transit system you don't see white-collar male workers, they prefer the car or the rail transport, it has a higher status. This happens in Malmö. The bus transport system is a place where the immigrant population really can feel at home, because it uses the bus system so much.

Transportation systems host deeply unequal soundscapes, and their porosity is attuned to class-based sensitivities. Osmotic buses host lively and loud migrant soundscapes, whereas private SUVs safeguard middle- and upper-class silentscapes. On the other hand, Lina argues, sound tactics applied in Rinkeby work in the opposite direction, that of "accommodating difference". There is a movement towards systematisation, both in the Somali Week and the small shop area, "whose purpose is to accommodate something that is different from the dominating context". Similarly, the underground rave community interestingly appropriates the noisy textures of industrial society and owns them, making music out of them. In line with what My and Toivo observed, performance approaches sounds in a constructive way.

Rumi Kubokawa, architect

Architecture is the discipline of home-making. There, at the intersection between aesthetics, social science and engineering, I looked for answers to the question that inspired this journey: how to make home through sound? how to do it in a silent frame? Rumi Kubokawa is a Stockholm-based professor of architecture at KTH. Born in Japan,

she grew up in Brazil, moved to London and later in life settled in Stockholm. She encountered extremely different soundscapes, from the loud birds of Brasil ("you couldn't sleep at night") to the noise pollution of London ("here, the sounds you hear through the walls are problematic"), to the rigorous silence of Japan ("everything is regulated with signs. You should keep quiet"). As a consequence, she emphasises the cultural nuances regarding the perception of sound:

> In Brazil people want to hear you, they want to take place in the soundscape. In London, the sounds you hear through the walls are problematic. People find their own kind of integrity somehow being abused by the neighbour walking upstairs. [...] In Brazil you feel safe when you know that there is people around.

The point here is not to make any culturalist generalisation, but to notice eloquent differences in Rumi's idealisation of her home soundscapes across the world. Phenomenologically, there is intersubjective material that can be extracted from her words. It has nothing to do with what *each* Brazilian or Londoner thinks, but rather with the existence of a collective sensitivity that attunes to different sounds. In particular, the problem of old housing in London and a common reaction to multiculturalism is the development of a hyper-sensitivity to contamination. Sound is pervasive, sometimes intrusive, and as Maria pointed out, when it crosses the boundaries of our body, it affect us viscerally. Sound is the ambassador of otherness, and the strong reaction to promiscuous soundscapes confirms that "home" is a prosthesis of the body. Cross its walls, and you cross my skin. An answer is *passive housing*, a type of construction that completely isolates the interior from the outside, a safe cocoon: "Walls so thick that I just exist by myself", which is in her opinion the case in Stockholm. In this way, sound becomes just one aspect of an overall intolerance to others: people feel invaded. This engenders the risk of (literally) structural exclusion:

> The whole idea of communication, of *having the right to exist, and taking some space* that is not only a kind of physical space…you talk, you make sound, you

laugh, you walk in your apartment… [...] It reflects the notion that the Other is somehow a stranger, [...] an annoying presence. *The tyranny of everybody having to be silent.*

Yet, she says, there is another answer.

Rörelse means movement. [...] How you go from one room to another. So you think about *sequences*, and how the body relates to that, and to landscape. A sequence of spaces that the body goes through. [...] When I arrived in Stockholm from London I was in T-Centralen, the central station. And there is this corridor where everybody comes together, and it's very noisy, lots of different people talking and walking. I felt so relieved and home. Because of movement, people talking in different languages…it felt so alive, just because people were there, in masses. [...] It is important that one does not start to separate people so much, and draw lines, and people become the Other. [...] The *mix of soundscapes* is very interesting. In Japan, in this huge buildings, you can go in, go up nine floors…and then you go to the right and take this corridor and then you go to a record shop, and then along the way you passed a little restaurant, and then there is some people living there…and there are so many different uses to the building. [...] Incredible differences: small spaces, big spaces…that starts to create a very different environment, where you cannot tell exactly what is what. [...] You don't get an hegemony of "everybody quiet". [...] I would think more of a hyper-mix of uses. [...] It would be the neighbourhood that would decide how to [...] gather many different noises in one place. [...] You get *educated out* of this understanding of noise [as "other"], and this kind of habit of getting comfortable with just what you want to hear.

Despite its bombastic *anime*-sounding name, the *hyper-mixed* soundscape is the coming together of everything I have noticed so far regarding sonic home-making. It takes into account the embodiment and spatial embeddedness of sound; its diversity accounts for different articulations of materiality, haven and heaven; it is radically relational in that it is literally a conversation on community-scale; it treats soundscapes as processes and not as still landscapes. More importantly than anything, it embraces conflict in the making of home, which is inherent in the process, and should not be

overlooked or muted, lest inequality be reproduced through the silencing of the noisy. The hyper-mixed soundscape is found at the borders, where sonic (and social) differences touch, clash, and negotiate room for belonging. Here the *porous home* can be negotiated, instead of suffered.

> There are a lot of things happening at the borders. [...] There, things end, things change. [...] You can create walls that bring things together [...]. Home is a place where you feel safe, and if you think about safety you usually think about building a fence against the outside world. Think a bit further: home can be a place that, instead of creating a division me-world, becomes more and more exposed. [...] You don't build fortifications. [...] In Sweden the tendency is to create a society that separates, with buildings and walls. But if the relationship between the buildings and the city were more porous…

Staffan Mossenmark, composer

Rumi's voice advocated for the approach of hyper-mixed soundscapes. Another voice suggests how to achieve them in the public space. Staffan Mossenmark is an eclectic Göteborg-based composer and sound artist, who specialises in public sound art with a strong political drive[97]. Whether it be composing for an orchestra of Harley Davidsons in the main square of Stockholm, or having tens of bodybuilders dragging long metal chains across the streets of Göteborg, he strives to raise "awareness of the sounds we are making, so that we may design the soundscapes we live in, through a

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[97] https://mossenmark.com/start.php

selective listening that sharpens your senses". "Soundscape gardening", he calls it. Like gardeners, we should take care of the sonic texture of our cities: sow, water, prune, reap. Hearing is very overlooked, both in everyday life and by academia; Staffan remarks that this very underestimation magnifies the spatial potential of sound:

> Normally you look straight, at the first level of the houses. But then you say "let's see what's up there", close to the roof…it's a BEAUTIFUL part of the house, but you never see it, because you never lift your head. It is the same thing with listening. [...] It gives you a relationship with space and the city, and an understanding of part of living there.

He too underlines that sound is relational. Moreover, the mnemonic content of soundscapes strengthens the sonic relationship with the city. Sounds are rooted in memories, and this is why we are lost when we do not recognise any familiar sound, or when sudden silence wakes us: "When we move to another place, we don't know its sounds, we can't read it". Contemporary cities host multiple sound textures, and the most diverse palette of individuals, i.e. a multitude of potentially lost people. Therefore, Staffan argues, there is an urge to "make sound in the *agora*", for regarding public space, lest "we use it, someone is gonna take it".

> **I**t is about thinking that *this is possible*, pushing the borders of how people can think in space. [...] Sound is the stage to start a conversation and to involve people. "You can do this too, take the streets". [...] With the "Verona Risuona Improv Orchestra[98]", once we had a professor of viola da gamba from the conservatory; he was playing with a guy who just bought a new electric guitar. They worked together, it's a conversation. Using sounds to make community. [...] We need to be out there.

Here, the *what* and the *how* of hyper-mixed soundscapes come together: their content is conversation and community building, allowing different languages to cross social

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[98] https://www.mossenmark.com/performant-events/index2.php?url=verona19

cleavages — be they age-, class-, gender-related or else —; their form is, as My said, a *daring* one: the actors involved — institutional or not — should express the idea that having a conversation and appropriating space *is possible.* To summarise, creating hyper-mixed soundscapes is a practice of place-making that harnesses the relationality, viscerality, and pervasiveness of sound practices to infer the possibility of appropriating home-spaces in a multivocal way. The conversation about the making of homes out of space should embrace conflict, for sound is inherently dynamic and ever changing, and soundscape are ongoing negotiations of emplaced identities, "a creative discussion that kills consensus".

> *Sound is about identification*. You stand up and breathe. Everybody makes their own sound. How you move. You can quickly and surely identify someone who's coming, walking or moving around. *Sound is a second skin: this is who I am.* You will remember exactly the sound of a person. It is a sounding picture of a person, [sound is] memory. [...] It is an invisible ghost. [...] Something that you can see, it's static. But *sound…it can't be static, it is always living.* It's like a movie. [...] The sound of the city is proof that we are living together, it's…safeness, it's living.

Lastly, as all the other voices remarked, soundscapes themselves are, despite their name, multisensory. Although in this reflection I chose (also provocatively) to focus on sound, it is clear to me that it was the harmony of solitary pines, nordic breeze, silence, friendly voices and warm melodies, the mild smell of the Swedish forest, and the taste of *kanelbullar*, that made me feel home some 2000 kilometres from home, in a moment when loneliness haunted me in covert ways.

> Engines…I like the sound of an engine. When I choose a car, it is because of its vibrations. [...] The sound of a pen on paper. Small sounds, connected to tactility, texture, material, paper, fabric. It is connected to other senses. [...] It is all about the atmosphere.

Conclusions: social harmony

The question at the core of this research is straightforward: how do we make home through sound? Specifically, how do migrants in Stockholm sound out homely soundscapes, despite a silencing regulation? I can summarise my work in three main conclusions:

1.

HYPER-INDIVIDUALISM JUNCTURE

Individualism, fragmentation and precariousness are spreading throughout the post capitalist world. As a result, the individual is the last bastion against a fluid modernity that flows and does not settle. Identity is a certainty, a backup, and a resource. As such, it must be safeguarded. Sweden, as one of the most individualistic countries in the world, is no exception. Admittedly, the roots of the Swedish nation-building journey lie in collectivist multiculturalism, inspired by universalistic principles.

However, the religious backbone of the Swedish national identity historically laid the ground for the current emphasis on the individual as a self-sufficient mechanism in a well-oiled machine. Namely, the Lutheran values of efficiency, purity, order and moderation were institutionalised by the Social Democrats through fitness politics. Body discipline, out-door gyms and hiking became the status-symbols of the modern Swede. "A healthy body equals a healthy nation" was marketed as the equation of national modernity. Being "fit" could refer both to wellbeing and to the possession of the necessary requirements to belong to the new Sweden. While the politics of body discipline privatised the individual body, they privatised nationalism, in that both types of "fitness" were an individual responsibility.

In parallel, the religious roots of the nation were overshadowed by the streamlined principles of modernity. Secularisation resulted in forms of privatised

spirituality that sought to answer the enduring need of existential meaning. In particular, secularisation converged on the spiritualisation of nature, the place where one could detox from the contaminating environment of the city, avoid undesired social contacts, and find a privileged gateway to spirituality. Nature is the Swedish secular religion, and its rituals are strictly private, for spirituality is a private endeavour for the betterment of the self. The result of these historical processes is a convergence of social forces on the hyper-individualisation of identity, which is expressed as a quest for authenticity that is explicitly private, for others might produce noise and distract from the goal.

2.

NATURE AND SILENCING PRACTICES

The habitat of the individualisation of the body and spirituality is nature. Here, silence promises purity, order and transcendence. There are no dissonant voices in natural quietscapes, only ancestral textures of a nostalgic past. The contaminating Other is muted, the homogenous stillness is reassuring. To this point, the sacralisation of silence intertwines with the current socio political context of Sweden. The successful populist narrative thrives on claims of order, exclusion and security.

Through the lens of ethno-nationalism, nature is where the ancestral roots of "authentic" Swedishness lie, an innate heritage that cannot be achieved by foreigners. Silence, then, becomes an audible metaphor for the political silencing of the Other, who is feared as a vector of sociocultural contamination and disorder — noise. This process is not confined to rhetoric and media; it is well perceivable in the highly regulated soundscapes of Sweden.

On one hand, a tight regulation of sound pressure levels pushes architectural firms to design highly functional soundproof buildings and neighbourhoods, where little is left for chance. Strict policing enforces silence legislation. On the other hand, gentrification monopolises inner-Stockholm. Skyrocketing real estate prices, intrusive municipal renovations, private interests and tenure conversions made the inner-city a white island surrounded by an archipelago of migrant neighbourhoods. The core of the

city is the symbolic reservoir of the upper class, and the silence is its long arm. Symbolising purity, order and control, the silence of the inner city gives you no choice but to focus on the visual beauty of the Scandinavian architecture. When it intertwines with ethno-nationalism and gentrification, silence acquires new meanings and performs distinction, exclusion, and symbolic violence.

3.

SOUND SCHOLARSHIP:

HYPER-MIXED SOUNDSCAPES

You might ask, then, what is the "hip-hop of Stockholm"? What I am asking is what sonic strategies of resistance and space reclamation are there (if any) to counter the silent tide of gentrification? What the Swedish case seems to suggest is a less bombastic, more lagom answer. Even though there seems to be no collective movement to champion the expressive identities of segregated immigrants in Sweden, the Rinkeby case and the interviewees' stories show the potential of sonic strategies to claim an open belonging to a place called "home". "Open" as in "open ear", listening, and sharing space through constant negotiation. This is what hyper-mixed soundscapes are all about: an unmitigated, immediate, conflictual field where different habitus have their say, for it is impossible to blind our ears. In music, harmony embraces both consonance and dissonance. The inherent openness of hearing bridges the I and the Other; a double-edged sword, for it may be an opportunity to hear in soundscapes the reverberation of society (both its issues and creativity), or an easy lure for the xenophobe to silence the Other behind the scientifically-proven category of "noise".

These results would have been impossible to achieve without a sensory approach. Audio diaries, elicitation interviews, soundwalks, participant listening and field recordings were not simply useful because "if you want to study sound you have to use sound". The reason has to do with the topic of homemaking. Home is lived before it is thought of. I belong to a place that sounds familiar, smells familiar, feels familiar,

tastes familiar, looks familiar. The conceptualisation of home is an analytical work that follows from the vibrant material of embodied life. This is precisely what sensory research is tailored to: questioning experts about the soundscapes of home exposed the visceral processes of spatial appropriation; letting a refugee listen to the soundscape of her new home unearthed the connections between memory, displacement, and homemaking. In a historical juncture where ethno-nationalism markets exclusivity as the panacea for misplaced fears, where functional urban planning and separation clearly failed, it is exactly those visceral processes that we, as sociologists, must tantalise. We need a felt sociology that deals with felt issues.

<div align="center">***</div>

At the end of this adventurous journey in sound, I have learned much about me, the producer- and the sociologist-me. I believe it is my duty to research the social in the sonic and the harmonies of the social, for it is there that the visceral meets the historical, that the context vibrates with life and emotions. In Bourdieusian terms, it is in sound (and the other senses) that the embeddedness of micro and macro becomes eloquent, because it becomes felt. Thus communicable, if you agree with phenomenologists, as I do. Also, it is my duty to record the sound of the social, the voices of people and their machinations to negotiate "home" in a social space. For I firmly believe that putting a pair of headphones on my head, listening to your soundscape, wearing a simplified facsimile of your habitus, trusting my perception of the Other to a sense that cannot be turned off, is first and foremost a radical gesture of trust. And it is from trust that both ethnography and home blossom, if there is someone to nurture them. If there is someone who listens. Our uniqueness is that we are tuners of places; listening is our choice.

Extras

Appendix A:
Useful dimensions for a sound inquiry

In his article, Feld (1984:386–88) provides an approach to integrating ethnography with meso- and macroscopic sociological inquiry of sound phenomena. Indeed, from one hand, the following dimensions refer to social structures such as labour division, class cleavages, capital and so on; from the other, it is the lived, embodied and irreplaceable voice of people that is intended to answer the questions. Somewhat like Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I believe that Feld's approach to sound is instrumental for subsuming (inter)subjective sonic experiences into a vaster sociological discourse. In other words, recognising that, as a teacher told me once, "le cose piccole non sono necessariamente piccole cose" (small things are not necessarily irrelevant[99]).

Competence

1. Who can make sounds/music, and who can interpret/use
2. What is the pattern of musical acquisition and learning?
3. Are there stratifications of skill and knowledge? What types? sanctioned, recognized, and maintained?
4. Is musical acquisition assumed to be unproblematic?
5. Do ideologies of "talent" determine or constrain acquisition and competence?
6. What is the relationship between competence, skill, and desire for music?
7. What are the differences between production and reception skills, for individuals, across social groups?

Form

1. What are the material musical means and how are they organised into recognizable codes?

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[99] The English translation misses the original play on words. In Italian, inverting the adjective-noun order often changes the meaning of the construct, sometimes lightly, sometimes radically. Here, "piccole cose" (small things) refers to their compact size; "cose piccole" (things small), on the contrary, refers to their (ir)relevance. I owe this teaching to Mario Cardano, professor of sociology at the University of Turin, Italy.

2. How are musical means distributed across settings and participants?

3. What are the preferred aesthetic orderings?

4. What are the boundaries of perceived forms? What does it mean to be wrong, incorrect, or otherwise marginal from the standpoint of code flexibility and use?

5. How flexible, arbitrary, elastic, adaptable, open is musical form? How resistant to changes, internal or external pressures, or other historical forces?

Performance

1. What are the relationships between makers and materials?

2. What is the relationship between individual and collective expressive forms and performance settings?

3. How are forms coordinated in performance? How adaptable and elastic is musical form when manipulated by different performers at a single moment in time or over time?

4. How do cooperative and competitive social relations emerge? What meanings do these have for performers and audience?

5. How do performances achieve pragmatic (evocative, manipulative) ends, if at all?

Environment

1. What resources does the environment provide? How are they exploited? What relationships exist between resources, exploitation, and the material means and social occasions for performance?

2. Are there co-evolutionary patterns, ecological and aesthetic, linking the environment and sound patterns, materials, situations?

3. What are the visual-auditory-sensate relationships between people and environment, and how is this pattern related to expressive means and ends?

4. What myths or models scaffold the perception of the environment? Are these related or complimentary to conceptions of person, society, expressive resources?

5. What mystical or cosmological associations with the environment support, contradict, or otherwise relate to the socioeconomic context of musical beliefs and occasions?

Theory

1. What are the sources of authority, wisdom, and legitimacy about sounds and music? Who can know about sound?
2. Is musical knowledge public, private, ritual, esoteric?
3. What dimensions of musical thought are verbalised? Taught verbally? Non-verbally?
4. Is theory necessary? How detached can theory be from practice? What varieties of knowledge and activity count as musical or aesthetic theory'? How is music rationalised?

Value and Equality

1. Who values and evaluates sounds? Who can be valued and evaluated as a maker of sounds?
2. How are expressive resources distributed, specifically among men and women, young and old? How do stratifications emerge?
3. How do balances and imbalances manifest themselves in expressive ideology and performance?
4. Do sounds deceive? Mystify? Who? Why?
5. Are sounds secret? Powerful? For whom? Why?
6. How do musical materials or performances mark or maintain social differences? How are such differences interpreted? How are they sustained? Broken or ruptured? Accepted or resisted?

Appendix B: Pedagogy of listening

Apart from being renowned for the *World Soundscape Project*, Schafer put considerable effort into teaching. In particular, during an experimental music course for first-year students at Simon Fraser University (where the WSP began), he devised a set of exercises to educate to attentive listening. The exercises followed his general principle that "one learns about sound only by making sound [...] [that] may be crude, but [is] *ours*" (Schafer 1969:1). The exercises familiarise listeners with the analytical concepts of noise, silence, tone, timbre, amplitude, melody, texture, rhythm and, finally, soundscape — which is composed of the previous. Furthermore, Schafer suggests that these exercises be accompanied by interdisciplinary multisensory metaphors (for example, he uses graphic schemes) to foster an intuitive and deeper understanding of said concepts. Although they were devised for university students, the ear cleaning exercises were also performed with children, adolescents, and adults. In this appendix, I collect some of them. Since I find Schafer quite elitist in his definitions of noise, silence, and listening in general ("For the insensitive person the concept of noise is invalid", 1969:5), for each concept I suggest that you seek your own definition first, and then co-define it with the participants.

Noise

A. Define noise. Seek a local definition, one that makes sense for the context at hand. Then open the debate and let the students negotiate a common definition, or a plurality of definitions. Does the noise-sound distinction reproduce social inequality?

1. Discussion: if you do not like a piece of music is it noise?

2. Try recording the previous discussion. afterwards play back the recording. Concentrate on listening to the sounds you did not intend to record. What other sounds (noises) do you notice?

3. The following text is to be read by a student at the front of the class in a normal voice. During the reading the teacher cues the class periodically to smother the reader with bursts of noise (roars, whistlings, hissings, gurgling, screams,

shufflings, laughter, applause, etc). Then, discuss the interplay of noise and sound.

> My voice will at times be smothered by noises which are louder and more chaotic than my reading. At other times this noise will cease and my voice will be heard as the only sound in the room.
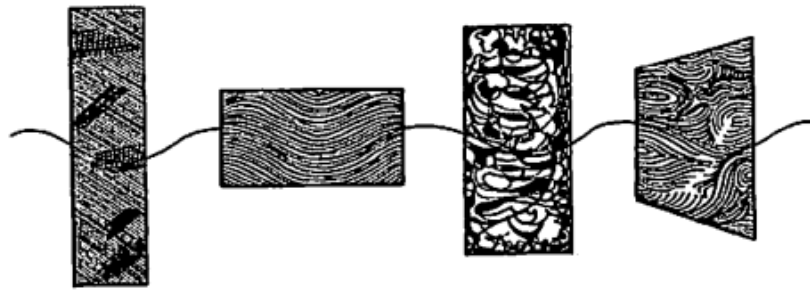
4. Take the noise inserts alone in a new context. They are now to represent a rowdy crowd, say during a scene of a movie. Are they still noise?
5. have the students record noises and then compose a rhythm with them. Are they still noise? Where is the boundary between sound and noise?

Silence

A. Define silence. Seek a local definition, one that makes sense for the context at hand. Then open the debate and let the students negotiate a common definition, or a plurality of definitions. Go beyond the simplistic silence=absence of sound equation. Silence establishes the first dimension of sound: duration.
1. A take-home assignment: Silence is elusive. try to find it!
2. try to pass a sheet of paper throughout the class silently. everybody listen for the sounds of the paper being passed.
3. Just as in absolute darkness the tiniest light is an event of unique significance, in a container of profound silence even the dropping of a pin becomes uniquely important. Try this. Place pin drops and other diminutive sounds in containers of profound silence.
4. As the students enter the class, the teacher stands at the door motionless with a pile of paper in their hand and a sign pinned on their jacket reading: "Take paper.

Write down the sounds you hear". The students entering take paper and record the sounds within and outside the room. A discussion follows to see how sound sensitive the students have been. Did they hear the teacher accidentally dropping a kleenex on the floor ? And so forth. Two girls have engaged in periodic chatter. They were asked to read out the list of sounds they had heard. While each had recorded the sound of the other's voice, neither had heard her own voice.

Tone

A. A tone is an instantaneous sound that cuts through silence at constant frequency, timbre and amplitude (volume). It entails the creative gesture of establishing a relationship with others and space. It is a phoneme. The tone establishes the second dimension of sound: pitch.

1. Assume you have been mute for a long time. try to feel the vibrancy of cutting the air with pristine sound — the terrifying freedom of the ictus.

2. The class is given a single tone. How expressive can a one-tone composition be made merely by punctuating it with silence? The tone may be short or long, repeated rhythmically or arithmically. Different students are asked to conduct the class in this exercise. With their finger the conductor creatively incises sound into silence.

3. Another way to help a tone live by using space: the class stands around the room. The student conductor with both arms outstretched slowly pivots so that only one portion of the class is heard singing the tone as it slowly moves about the room in a circle. Interest in the tone is sustained by using the total acoustic space available.
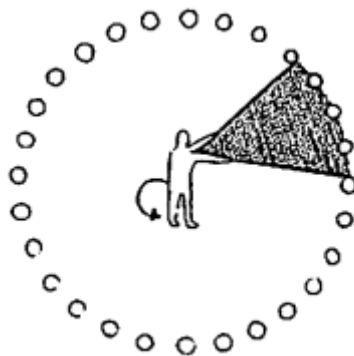
Timbre

A. Timbre is the colour of a tone. If a trumpet, a guitar and a voice all play the same tone, timbre is what makes trumpetness, guitarness, and voiceness. Timbre suggests a third dimension, for warm tones seem moving towards the listener, and cold ones, away from them.

1. A problem: given one tone and the following text, how do we make the text itself an example of the condition it is describing?

> "Timbre is the tone colour of the note".

For example, the class may divide the text into syllables, give each syllable to a different voice and by seeing them one after another and sustaining them, a single line is produced which slowly changes colour. Are there other solutions?

2. Name some instruments with a warm tone colour. name some with a cool tone colour. any differences of opinion?

3. If different singing or speaking voices sing or recite the same passage independently, the difference will be largely one of timbre. Eyes closed, have the class identify the different voices and describe the differences.

4.   A variation on the previous exercise: Have one person recite the same passage, while trying to produce as many different timbres as possible.

Amplitude

A. Amplitude is the fourth sonic dimension: loudness or softness, volume. It may suggest spatial properties: loud sounds act as gravity centres that pull the listener in, they are heavy; soft sounds retreat to the horizon or, conversely, give a sense of intimacy.

1. Attune your ears to the whole spectrum of amplitude. Choose a tone, start producing it as softly as you can, so that only you and your immediate neighbour can hear it. Then, slowly, do a crescendo, until not even a scream can be heard in the room.

2. Do the same for softness. How soft can music be made to sound? Students are called to the front of the class and asked to hum a note as softly as possible. The class closes their eyes. When they hear the note they put their hands up. The amplitude of the sound must now be progressively reduced until one by one the rows of the hands stay down and only one or two students at the front directly before the singer raise their hands. This, then, is the effective limit to which a pianissimo may be pressed.

3. How can a single-tone composition be made interesting by employing amplitude, timber and silence as colouring and shaping devices? Students are asked to fill a one-minute container of silence with an interesting one-tone composition.

4. Note that amplitude produces sonic tensions — between the horizon of silence and the foreground of loudness — that break the walls of the room; in other words, amplitude sets a relationship between the real space and a virtual space that inflates and deflates according to the power of sound.

Real Space
Virtual Space
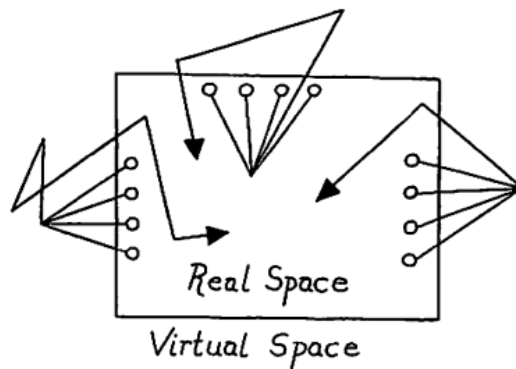
Melody

A. A melody is taking a tone for a walk. It is a combination of pitch-shifting tones. In speech, we call melody inflection.

(1) A melody moving in freedom

(2) The same enhanced by amplitude

(3) The same broken by silence

1. the students are given two tones and allowed freedom to treat them as expressly as possible in brief improvisations. they may change pitch, timber, amplitude, and so on. the full expressive potential of two given tones must be exploited before the student is given new tones.

2. Individual students are asked to improvise melody suggested by the following words: 1) high swinging 2) deep and sad 3) light tripping 4) "that strain…had a dying fall 5) cold getting warmer 6) agony to laughter 7) heavy to light 8) it flees into the distance 9) thick 10) help! Discuss the relationship between melody, emotions, and change.

3. Ask the students to draw a psychographic line of a specific melody.

Texture

A. Texture is the combination of multiple sonic lines (noises, silences, melodies). In music, it is called counterpoint.

1. Ask the students to produce a thick sonic texture. Then a thin one. How do they differ?

2. Ask one student to speak or sing. Is this the most transparent texture? Is it still a texture, even? What is the minimum number of voices required for a texture? Experiment.

3. Listen to different pieces of music and comment on the textural differences.

4. Illustrate the sonic textures of different soundscapes with drawing, painting, or other creative material forms, so that texture may be visualised, and a dialogue established between the senses.

Rhythm

A. Rhythm is the predictable repetition of sonic material. It is the direction of the walk. Rhythm gives time a form. It alters the perception of time, making it regular (mechanical) or irregular (stretched, compressed).

1. The mechanical clock was the first technology that divided time into proportionate cells which *sounded*. Western rhythms are based on clock-like time divisions. However, people are poor mechanical clocks and rely on a fluid conception of abstract time. Ask students to describe a steady circle of an arbitrary duration. Confront the results.

2. Build a polyrhythm with the class; use the names of the students for this purpose (Mar-ta | An-ge-lo). Then add body movements to emphasise the different rhythms.

Soundscape

1. Noise, silence, tone, timbre, amplitude, melody, texture and rhythm interact within a cone of tensions that we call soundscape. A place experienced through the ears, as well as a piece of music, is a journey back and forth through this cone of tensions.
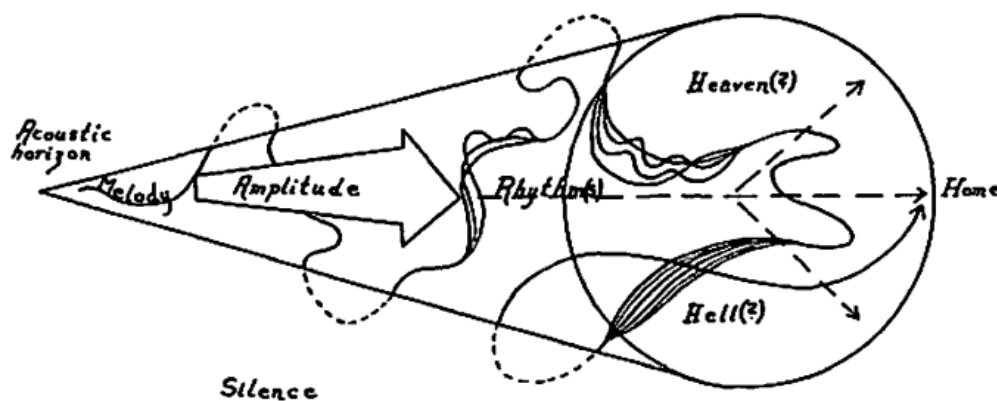
1. Establish a set of sounds of any kind. Divide the class in groups and assign each a subset of sounds. Ask the class to create a soundscape by changing pitch, amplitude, timbre, texture, duration, and silences.

2. Now, draw the following schema and ask the students to change their expression according to the instruction pointed at:
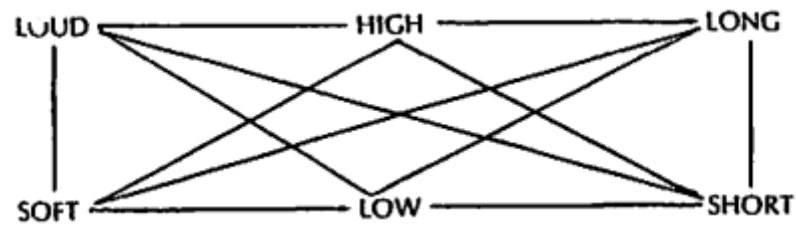
Discuss how soundscapes are dynamic, relational, and the relationship between people, space, place, and sound.

3. Read this excerpt from Paul Klee, and ask the students to make a soundscape that mimics what he saw along his walk. They are not required to use any musical skills, speaking works fine.

Appendix C: The original flowchart

This is the original handwritten version of the analytical flowchart explaining how historical forces interacted over the last century in Sweden and converged on the present-day juncture of exclusion, silencing and distinction. I believe it is important to retrace the steps that brought to the ethnographic conclusions, to de-aestheticise and contextualise them, and simply to enjoy the process one went through. It is some journey the one summarised here!
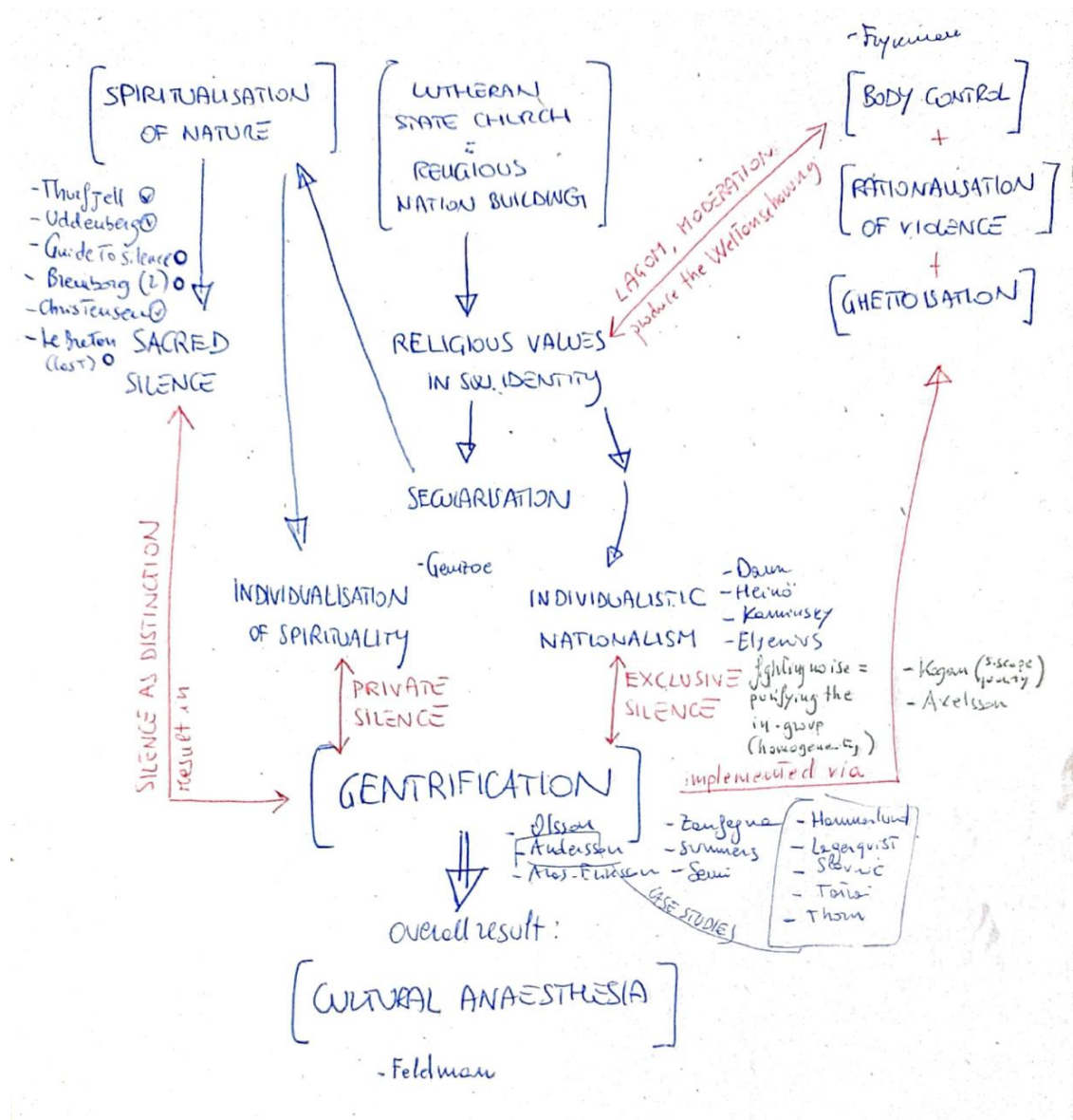
Appendix D: Experimental soundwalk

Even in the most turbulent teenage years we did [my dad and I went fishing], so it was an important thing. But we never said anything. I remember once how we went home after fishing until four in the morning, it was starry and hazy and absolutely beautiful, then dad just says "yes, this is nice, Andreas"... and I understood that he didn't only mean the starry sky and the landscape, he meant this with us, that we were there. That he meant me. (Thurfjell 2020:233)

Music is a language that embodies meaning in sound (154), i.e. draws my attention directly to sound itself, not at some structured meaning behind/beyond it (unless it is a very didascalic music, like that of some old Western cartoons). In music, sound = meaning, whereas in ordinary speech, sound → meaning. Music does not have references in things, for its goal is to stir my body with emotions, to make bodily listening (i.e. dance) possible. I followed Olga Kovalenko, a Ukranian refugee in Stockholm and former *domra* (mandolin) teacher at Odessa Conservatory, in a soundwakl through a familiar part of Stockholm. Here you can listen to how background sounds, voices and vibrations intertwine with memories to summon the sounds of Odessa, *home*. Further, you may assist to an experiment of homemaking in which Olga plays the domra in an unfamiliar place, and describes how music performance draws space closer to home. Like the West African vendors (Stoller 2010:115) demonstrate daily, one person has "the ability [...] to confound the established special orders, either through physical movement or through their own conceptual and political acts of re-imagination" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:17). Olga does precisely this, in her struggle to sound home far away from home.

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