Soundwalking: A Methodological Suggestion For Studying The Urban Areas[1][2]

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Abstract

This article focuses on soundwalks as a methodological technique and reviews its potential for the sound studies in urban areas. As Hildegrad Westerkamp describes "a soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment (1974)." I offer a methodological technique for qualitative urban research combining Westerkamp's soundwalking and R. Murray Schafer's ear cleaning exersices. Schafer introduces these exercises for music students aiming a focused and clean listening during his composition classes. Combining ear cleaning exercises with soudwalking create a deliberate listening for urban sounds. This type of an approach to urban sounds may broaden researchers' perspectives on sonic knowledge that urban areas have to offer in the everyday basis. To be able to describe how can it be used a technique, firstly, I introduce the field of sound studies. Secondly, I review the literature that uses or excludes soundwalk as a method in the field. Finally, I suggest ways of using soundwalk including clairaudience exercises for qualitative urban research.

Keywords: Sound studies, methodology, soundwalk, qualitative research.

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Ses Yürüyüşü: Kentsel Alanları Çalışmak için Metodolojik Bir Öneri

Öz

Bu makale, kent alanlarında yapılacak nitel araştırmalar için, metodolojik bir öneri olarak ses yürüyüşüne ve vaadettiği potansiyele odaklanmaktadır. Hildegard Westerkamp'in tariflediği gibi, "ses yürüyüşü esas amacı dinlemek olan her tür gezintiye denir" (1974). Bu çalışmada, Westerkamp'in ses yürüyüşü ve R. Murray Schafer'ın duyum temizliği egzersizlerini bir araya getirerek nitel bir araştırma tekniği öneriyorum. Schafer bu egzersizleri, kompozisyon sınıfındaki müzik öğrencilerini temiz bir duyuma ve amacı olan bir dinlemeye yöneltmek için kullanıyordu. Bu iki tekniği birleştirmek ve bir kent sesleri araştırması için kullanmak, araştırmacılara tasarlanmış ve düşünülmüş bir dinleme olanağı sağlar. Böyle bir yaklaşım da, kent seslerinin gündelik hayatta her gün sunduğu işitsel veriye dair araştırmacıların perspektifini genişletebilir. Ses yürüyüşünün bir teknik olarak nasıl kullanılacağını önermek için, öncelikle ses çalışmaları alanının tarihsel gelişimini anlatıyorum. İkinci olarak, ses çalışmaları alanında bu tekniği içeren ya da içermeyen çalışmalar için alan literatürünü tarif ediyorum. Son olarak da, bu tekniğin ayrıntılarını ve alanda nasıl kullanılabileceğine dair ayrıntıları bir öneri olarak tartışıyorum.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Ses çalışmaları, metodoloji, ses yürüyüşü, nitel araştırma.

Introduction

As a relatively novel area of research in social sciences, sound studies is an interdisciplinary field that consists of wide-ranging subjects related to sound from multiple disciplines. Urban planners, musicologists, anthropologists, media scholars, ecologists, and many more scholars study sound in diverse contexts, thus, the literature in sound studies involves a variety of approaches and a multiplicity of units of analysis. When a scholar studies the function of ears via focusing on "ways of listening and modes of being" (Vickers, 2012), she studies the sound of media, such in television sound (St. Clair, 2012), and while another puts sound at the center of a historical context, as in a study focusing on sonic expressions of post-9/11 (Vayo, 2011). In short, any kind of research related to sound is included in the field of sound studies, irrespective of whether it has a medical, technological, or musical approach. Nevertheless, even if the field has a comprehensive characteristic that includes the established disciplines, sound studies seem to be accepted merely as an emerging field even after at least four decades, since the first contribution made by R. Murray Schafer's Tuning of the World (1977). There are two main and interrelating reasons for this resistance to disciplinarization: The first is that the world we perceive is mostly vision-oriented, and the research disciplines follow this orientation as well. Academic journals, universities, call for contributions to academic and/or artistic works mostly focus on visual perspectives. If one scholar is not particularly interested in sound, then the field of sound studies is almost invisible to them.

The second reason, on the other hand, is associated with the methodological approaches and concerns in sound studies. Michele Hilmes, a sound scholar, whose main work medium is the radio, addresses these two crucial questions about the field in her article "Is There a Field Called Sound Culture Studies? And Does It Matter?" (2005). The title of the article is significant: not only due to the implication that there may not be such a field, but also as a direct evidence of the discussions about the field itself, even the denotation of it – Sound Culture Studies. She emphasizes the intricacy of the situation in her introduction:

> I pose the two questions above [implying title of the article] in the face of mounting evidence that the study of sound, hailed as an "emerging field" ...always emerging, never emerged. ... This would echo the position that most writers on the topic attribute to sound itself - constantly subjugated to the primacy of the visual, associated with emotion and subjectivity as against the objectivity and rationality of vision, seen as somehow more "natural" and less constructed as a mode of communication - in essence, fundamentally secondary to our relationship to the world and to dominant ways of understanding it (Hilmes, 2005).

Hilmes draws attention to that hearing is seen as an unreliable and lower sense than seeing; thus, the knowledge gained by hearing is accepted insignificant, and sound-centered methods are insufficient due to the lack of visual input in comparison to the established disciplines. Richard M. Carp states in his study on the senses titled *Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, Feeling, Seeing: The Role of the Arts in Making Sense Out of the Academy*, that sight seems prior to the other senses in the most of the western world:

> In the dominant culture of the cultures deriving from Europe, sight is the preferred and predominant sense. Our primary metaphors for truth and knowledge are visual metaphors – in fact 'vision' is itself a key metaphor for profound 'insight' - we are 'scopotrapic'-centered around the sense of sight (Carp, 1995).

Visual-oriented lives of scholars directly affect the academia and their world of research, linking sight with knowledge, as in the basic idea behind Enlightenment, that "seeing is believing". Framing and choosing what we see requires a conscious process at the intellectual level in our brains. Thus, what we "see" becomes the main reliable source of information. On the other hand, hearing and listening is considered as accidental since we do not have organic ear plugs on our body, as in the case of having eyelids. However, we have ear plugs in our minds. As Kendall Wrightson puts it "[i]n order to listen we need to stop or at least slow down – physically and psychologically, becoming a human being instead of a 'human doing'" (2000, p. 13). In this busy and visual-oriented world, people, generally, do not stop, or slow down to listen their acoustic environment unless there is a certain purpose. This is mostly why the methodologies which focus on sound and hearing as their central source of information are considered as experimental, or even nonexistent. R. Murray Schafer tells an anecdote on his sound related research experience in the academia:

> I remember when I was trying to get grants to study the soundscape, to go across Canada and to come to Europe for Five Village Soundscapes, always there was a jury and always the jury would say 'you don't have a methodology'. Yet no one can say today that there isn't a methodology (De Caro & Daro 2008, p. 27).

Even though the sound studies field and its novel methodologies are partly accepted in academia today; due to the same reasons from the past, it is still seen as an emerging field. However, considering the rising interest through new journals, books, associations, university programs, blogs, and conferences focusing on sound in various ways and forms, this emerging field may soon become fully visible and join to the established disciplines' club.

Laying the Field of Sound and Space Relations

Canadian researcher R. Murray Schafer and his colleagues were first to realize that hearing and sound –as opposed to music– can be utilized for the process of understanding the world we live in. It was late '60s, and people were realizing the outcome of the industrialization and urbanization processes such as noise pollution and ecological degradations. Jets, airports, factories, cars, constructions, and even rock music were considered as noise pollution by the Schafer and his group of colleagues.

Schafer himself was an ecological activist, and his main intention was to find quiet places and unique soundscapes that were becoming extinct due to industrialized noise pollution. Since the industrial revolution, however, an ever-increasing number of unique soundscapes have disappeared completely or submerged into the cloud of homogenised, anonymous noise that is the contemporary city soundscape, with its ubiquitous keynote –traffic. These technological developments affected our soundscape (Wrightson, 2000, p. 10).

Schafer and his group's approach to the sound and environment were dichotomous, and this was the foundation of their research: noise vs. quiet, city vs. countryside. Since there were not any authentic sounds of the nature

in the noise polluted cities, they could find the quietness in the nature, in the rural areas far from the cities. In addition, they thought that acoustically and environmentally aware people could be the solution for pollution. According to their plan, these enlightened and aware people could design noise-free cities for a better future or live more quietly without causing noise pollution. Their purpose was very didactic with respect to sound and hearing from the beginning; therefore, they went to countryside of Canada, and then Europe to collect sounds of nature and quietness and show people better sonic environments. Nevertheless, their attempts put sound, listening, and hearing concepts in a new context for the new studies. It was a benchmark in the literature; moreover, it was the beginning of the sound studies.

When R. Murray Schafer and his colleagues tried to rediscover sound in new contexts, they also brought up new approaches to the subject. They put sound and listening at the center of their studies and gathered their data from sounds of their natural environments. There were studies on sound which predated their attempts; however, these were traditional fields of academia such as history of music, ethnomusicology, or sociology of music. It was a given assumption for these disciplines that sound, and music form an inseparable whole and they should be treated as such, therefore, sound itself was not the subject of social sciences, particularly not the subject of studies with a qualitative design. Schafer and his research group liberated the sound from the burden of music and turned sound into an element of the epistemological universe of social sciences, albeit within quantitative designs.

John Cage's experiments on sound in the 1950s, even though they were in compositional contexts, have affected the early sound studies later in the

1960s. Cage's renowned piece of work entitled 4'33'' is performed by a mute orchestra whose musicians were just at the stage in the duration of the performance, in an absolute absence of deliberate sound from their instruments. The performance was based on Cage's idea that there is no silence in the world, and the whole world is a macrocomposition. His performances and thoughts on the world being a composition all by itself in silence shaped the soundscape concept and the sound studies (1961). Schafer states in his *The Tuning of The World* that the world is a huge composition where "we are simultaneously its audience, its performers and composers" (1977). Schafer and his colleagues believed that this composition was in the countryside, in nature, and the cities were polluted with unwanted noises. This dichotomous approach is still in the use of sound studies literature; thus, most of the studies either focus on natural soundscapes or on noise polluted cities to be reshaped for better acoustic environments.

Contributions of R. Murray Schafer and his group to the sound studies literature had quite an impact on the ways of understanding our environments acoustically. Scholars from a variety of disciplines began to consider sound from fresh perspectives. The method of mapping, which constitutes the most visual tool for description and the interpretation of the data, has been applied to the auditory universe in conjunction with the spatial universe. Thinking about various places through the medium of sound brought the concept of soundmarks into the literature, as a challenge to the concept of landmarks (Mott & Sosnin, 1997). Sound in film, television and/or radio has been evaluated in the light of the new perspectives. Instead of musical scores in these media, senses of places, perceptions of the audiences

through non-musical sounds, and technological use of the sound has become the focus of scholars (Hosokawa, 1984; Mowitt, 1987). In a musicological way, scholars have begun looking at the festivals, or musical identities of the cities (Tyler, 1997). Some scholars have focused on the historical aspect of the sound, such as the value and impact of gramophone, or the street calls in a certain period of time (Thompson, 2002; Picker, 2003).

The Gap in the Sound Studies Literature

As the knowledge and the debates on sound cumulated in almost every discipline of the sciences, a very basic method for many of these studies was systematized by Hildegard Westerkamp. This method, called soundwalking, was considered as fundamental for the sound and space related studies. The examples of studies carried on through the soundwalking method ranges from medicine to architecture, from physics to contemporary art and such. However, this method has been mostly neglected in the studies which focus on urban areas. Sound studies conducted in urban areas provide a ground for gaining insight into the repeating rhythm of everyday life in cities, with the purpose of evaluating the various kinds of relationships between cities and their residents. However, the auditory aspect of this everyday life rhythm is mostly restricted to the use of auditory products, such as music, radio, or television content. The actual sounds of everyday life become less visible within the analysis of intentionally produced auditory materials. Hence, a gap is formed in the analysis of the auditory construction of everyday life in cities, in which intentional use of sound is overemphasized and the unintentional, spontaneous auditory aspects of everyday life are

underemphasized. One way of bridging this gap in sound studies literature can be found through the qualitative studies on urban sounds which employ the soundwalking method.

Sound can be used as a tool to understand a city's dynamics, perceptions, and sociopolitical characteristics. Sound has the ability to make the invisible or inaccessible practices in everyday life in the city visible, and the intangible aspects more concrete when it is taken as the main source of the study and listened to accordingly. When one hears a place, she hears certain interactions between locations in that place, between people occupying that place, and even the action and impact of the machinery in that place. Among these sensory data, there is even information of what cannot be seen or cannot be accessed visually. In this sense, visual impairment becomes auditory ability: in the words of Ong, "...sound places me in the midst of a world" (Ong, 2012). Therefore, sounds of the cities may present a great amount of data for researchers to comprehend social structures, inhabitants' fashions, ways of placemaking, identities, institutions, and so on in qualitative studies. However, sound may be a precarious informant due to its inherent property of always being considered in opposition to silence. As John Cage stated after his performance of 4'33" on the absence of silence, "they missed the point. There is no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence, because they did not know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds" (Kostelanetz, 2003). Hence, while there is always an auditory side to any moment of everyday life, it is quite easy to overlook –and/or overhear, as a matter of fact– this aspect as these sounds do not become integrated into our

consciousness for most of the time. Learning how to hear and listen to these mundane, everyday sounds is a skill that needs to be developed consciously.

In a silence-proof world where sound overflows continuously, it is quite problematic for the researcher to extract what she needs from the sound jungle for a study on urban sounds. Moreover, urban areas have various stimuli to distract the researcher in addition to diversity and levels of sounds, such as crowd, traffic, or security preventions. Due to these problems and the traditional approach inherited from Schafer and his group that city sounds being noises, researchers tend to stay away sounds of the cities –with the exception of those studies that focus on ecological areas within the city. Thus, walking and listening at the streets full of sounds, which lies at the heart of the method of soundwalking, are mostly applied for the quantitative studies focusing only on the physical characteristics of sound.

Soundwalking is mostly preferred by the urban planners, designers, architects, acoustic engineers; in addition to them, scholars and artists studying sound perform their walks in mostly rural areas, or natural places in the city such as botanical parks and zoos. Scholars who conduct quantitative studies on sounds in urban areas tend to take sound as a source of noise to be prevented in city jungles. As in R. Murray Schafer and his group's approach, these studies try to find quietness in the cities through architectural point of views, interventions, or new designs. In addition, there are studies on urban sounds that are not quantitative; however, these studies either have a historical approach, or musical contexts without involvement of soundwalking. Considering the diversity in the wide-range realm of the sound studies, a review of the specific journals and handbooks with a focus

on sound studies can help us to detect the relationship between soundwalking method and the qualitative urban sound studies.

The reviewed publications are *Journal of Sonic Studies*, *SoundEffects*, *Soundscape*, *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012) and *Sound Studies Reader* (2012).[3] Studies on sound in these journals and books can be classified as follows: Sound art, sound in media (film, video, games, radio), architecture, acoustics, urban planning, perceptions of sound, rural/ecological soundscapes, urban soundscapes, physics of sound (measurements, vibrations, reactions in relate to materials), health (hearing losses, effects of noise), history of sound, sound technologies, ethnomusicology, cultural geography. Having the studies classified is an efficient way to be able to detect frequency of the urban related articles among the plethora of various kinds of sound related studies. However, it should be noted that these categories are sometimes inclusive to each other, and one study may have characteristics of more than one category. Thus, in order to restrict the review of literature to urban studies that can be broadened through the method of soundwalking, my categorization first delineated articles focusing on sound in urban areas irrespective of their perspective. Then, the studies that focus on urban space and its interpretation through the sounds of the city itself has been selected. I have excluded the studies focusing on the produced and processed sound samples from city sounds –as in sound art projects– from the review as they included an intentional and focused process of listening and hearing, rather than the sounds embedded in everyday life. Through this

[3] These journals and handbooks were the only resources available directly focusing on sound studies at the time of this research during 2012-2013. There is some new literature on the subject, however, they have same tendencies regarding the soundwalking use for the studies.

selection and elimination, I have aimed at clarifying the methodological merits of employing the soundwalking method in the auditory analysis of urban areas.

After reviewing the selected articles, it is possible to make the claim that sound studies focusing on urban areas neglect the method of soundwalking when analysing the sounds of city. The articles mostly focus on urban noise, historical soundmarks, perceptions of noise, or soundmapping in the city. For instance, Michael V. Butera, in his article "Music City Excesses" in the Journal of Sonic Studies, explores the regulations of noise around the cultural and musical background of Nashville. He approaches the subject by looking at the power and decision processes on the urban sound and the status of the listener as an individual in the city (Butera, 2011). Another example on urban sound is Jacob Kreutzfeldt's study on street cries "Street Cries and the Urban Refrain." Kreutzfeldt's historical approach focuses on the Copenhagen street cries in the years from 1929 to 1935. He looks at urban sounds as source of information in the context of the everyday life (Kreutzfeldt, 2012). John Picker's "The Soundproof Study" in the Sound Studies Reader is also an example of the historical approach on the urban sounds. He looks for the street sounds of London in the Victorian Era and tries to picture the London of that time through sounds of horse carriages, wild animals, and street musicians (Picker, 2012). Olivier Balay's study on city sounds in Soundscape, Journal of Acoustic Ecology, presents the inadequacy of quantitative approach of the sound measurements, acoustic maps in urban areas. Even though Balay and his article, "Discrete Mapping of Urban Soundscapes" refers to the need for qualitative approaches to the urban

sounds, he sticks with the traditional methods and suggests that recording urban sounds and conducting field surveys may be the solution for more descriptive maps (Balay, 2004).

All these examples point out that scholars seem convinced that sound can be used as a source of information for urban studies. However, the transformation of sound into data still seems to be following the conventional ways to look for data in the realm of qualitative methods. Therefore, to be able to do justice to the data provided by the sound and its possibilities, employing soundwalking method seems to be a fertile and promising way of gathering auditory data in urban areas and laying the ground for analysing sounds of cities. Soundwalking exercises are flexible and easy to apply to any type of research condition in any field. In one hand, this causes creativity and freedom in the field for the sound scholars. On the other hand, questions, and concerns on the methodologies of the studies arise. Nonetheless, questions and debates on methods put valuable contributions to this emerging field and carry it onward. In this study, I prefer to focus on the functions and possibilities of soundwalking as a promising method for the qualitative studies on urban sound.

Soundwalking as a Methodology Technique

Soundwalking is a form of research focusing on sounds and listening carefully as a way of understanding and analyzing spaces through their sonic environments. The term was first used by World Soundscape Project (WSP) members in a study during which they listened, walked, and recorded the sounds in several fields around Canada, Sweden, Finland, Germany, and

Italy. Though the WSP group were the initial coiners of the term, it was first conceptualized by Hildegard Westerkamp through her studies on Queen Elizabeth Park, Vancouver. In Westerkamp's words:

> "A soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are. We may be at home, we may be walking across a downtown street, through a park, along the beach; we may be sitting in a doctor's office..." (Westerkamp, 1974).

As Westerkamp's colleague and friend R. Murray Schafer states through the practice of soundwalking "...little by little, the muscles and the mind relax and the whole body opens out to become an ear" (Schafer, 1977, p. 262). Even though types and reasons of soundwalks may vary, I think the essential purposes of the practice stay the same: listening auditory environments carefully, approaching sonic data critically, and being aware of the participants' contribution to that soundscape.

Cleaning the Ears for Soundwalking

Founding group of the soundscape studies, World Soundscape Project, and its followers were trying to capture natural sounds and quietness in rural areas (Truax, 1978). Thus, soundwalking was mostly used in villages in Europe, parks in Vancouver, zoos, and natural habitats. Borrowing the term from R. Murray Schafer, to be able to practice soundwalking successfully for any type of research, whether in rural areas or in urban areas, I claim that there is one prerequisite exercise: "ear cleaning."

R. Murray Schafer, for the first time, used this term in his book, *Ear Cleaning: Notes for An Experimental Music Course* (1967), on music education

including rather new sets of exercises in contrast to the traditional music teaching with the chords, notations, and so on. These exercises examine listening; not only regarding to the musical elements but also the aural environments and any kind of sound as the subject matter. He, then, elaborated the exercises in his book *A Sound Education: 100 Exercises in Listening and Sound-Making* (1992), and meditated on sound in related to the places. After he becomes an activist against the ecological degradations and noise pollution, he taught these exercises not only to the music students but to everyone who was interested in listening to the environment. His seminars raised awareness on sound and listening, but noise in particular. With pollution in mind, many researchers started to study soundscapes all over the world. When the subject is to study on sounds, listening is the challenging part of the research design that is hard to accomplish. Schafer remarks on this delicate activity in his article "Open Ear", "We have no earlids. We are condemned to listen. But this does not mean our ears are always open" (Schafer, 2003).

Hearing is an automatic skill for most of the people except hearing impaired people; yet listening is an active and facultative process. Kendall Wrightson states on this active process: "Sound becomes something that the individual tries to block, rather than to hear; the lo-fi, low information soundscape has nothing to offer. As a result, many individuals try to shut it out through the use of double glazing or with acoustic perfume – music" (2000, p. 12). Therefore, listening requires certain level of concentration and engagement with the environment to be able to perceive surrounding sounds with clear hearing; and ear cleaning exercises provide this clairaudience (to be

able to hear clearly) for the researchers and listeners. Ear cleaning exercises focus on getting in contact with the aural environments and raising awareness to the elements of soundscapes for a better listening experience. The exercises include noticing sounds of certain places, making descriptions of sounds using onomatopeic words, paying close attention to sounds of the body, and concentrating on designated sounds, for example music from cars, or languages on the street. All the listening and ear cleaning exercises lead performers to meditate on the sounds regarding both physical and mental aspects.

The first of the basic ear cleaning exercises as a gateway to their soundwalks since R. Murray Schafer's invention is making lists. There are diverse exercises on making lists of possible sounds heard, such as indoor or outdoor sounds, moving sounds, loud sounds, or sounds can be defined as noise. Thus, categories may vary due to the purpose(s) of the research. However, these three exercises by Schafer are the first examples of its kind:

> "• Listing all the sounds one hears during the certain period of time, for example mornings on the way to school.
> • Listing five favorite sounds with explanations on their reasons and impacts.
> • Listing the least favorite five sounds with reasons and explanations on their unpleasantness and effects (1992)."

Schafer states on his book, *A Sound Education* (1992) that everyone gets different lists at the end of this exercise, because listening is a very personal activity; and though some lists may be longer or shorter than the others, all answers are correct eventually. Moreover, he suggests that these exercises can be performed several times in contrasting aural environments in order to gain listening as a habit.

Another ear cleaning exercise for gathering qualitative data from the sound milieu is the earplug exercise. This exercise requires earplugs to put on for performing the essential part of it. Wearing earplugs to perceive sounds clearer may seem controversial, however it is important to challenge ear by manipulating its hearing sensitivity level. While earplugs are on, at least for half an hour, it is mostly heard the bodily sounds of the performer, heartbeats, breathing, swallows. When the earplugs are out, aural awareness is shifted due to the adjustment of the hearing threshold. Thus, this experience brings clairaudience to reflect and detect taken-for-granted sounds easily. After this exercise, there are many options to develop the experience further; for instance, making lists about before and after sounds or concentrating on the aural limits of the immediate soundscape.

Another way of cleaning the ears is taking aural perspective into focus. Keynotes, soundmarks, sources of the sounds, actions of the sounds, and geographic identifiers are the main constituents of an aural perspective. Taking these items into consideration individually and/or in related to each other, deconstructing the aural space brings qualitative information to the researcher. As a consequence, researcher generates an ability to identify sounds and their relationship with the environment in its context. Aural perspective exercises can be applied as follows:

> "• Focusing on, alternately, keynotes and soundmarks which are predominant tonality and outstanding sounds of an aural space, at contrasting environments, such as public places versus private places.
> • Observing sources of the sounds with their geographic identifiers, distant, above, below, or nearby.

> • Searching for three-dimensional perception blindfolded in the aural space.
> • Shifting attention between sound figures and grounds, from dominant to less dominant deliberately (Schafer, 1992)."

In the examples above are the primary categories that researchers and listeners can advance and diversify using them as starting points for their ear clearing and soundwalking practices. Due to the changes of focus and scope in studies on sounds, there may be needed different and/or specific sound objects to evaluate. For instance, one research may require lists and analyzes on moving sound objects as in cars or public transportation. Hence, ear cleaning exercises can be designed to concentrate on moving sound listening activities. The methodological motto at this point is "Take them; they're yours" (Schafer, 1992, p. 12). The researcher adapts them as necessary to their own situation and may add others along the way. There is no end to these exercises, there is only more to them as long as people with intrigued ears can imagine.

Walking the Soundwalk

After cleaning the ears, soundwalk may start. A soundwalk can be designed in many ways by the researcher regarding their field of study and the aim of the project. It can be held by one soundwalker, or by a group of people. A soundwalk can be recorded, or not. It can take place in rural, urban, or hybrid areas. A soundwalk may require answering questionnaires before or after the walk. It can get involved with multiple media, such as smart phone applications, video recorders, or sound processors. A soundwalk can take place in the same locations for multiple times, or in different locations in

each time. It can be performed by researchers from wide range of fields, artists, tourists, city dwellers, political agencies, and so forth. Therefore, soundwalking is a versatile method for listening and understanding sonic environments.

Soundwalking has a dual role as a practice. It can be a tool both for artistic and for research purposes. It can be turned into many different shapes for various alterations. For instance, in the Fluxus movement, Adrian Piper performed recorded soundwalks in the streets of New York. Her work, Streetwork Streettracks I-II (1969), took place in the same streets in different times, while she was playing the earlier recordings of her at double speed. Technologies and the everyday life sounds of the city was the subject to her conceptualized sonic art (McCartney, 2010). As a research oriented soundwalking series, McCartney and Paquette's Soundwalking Interactions project were held by the scholars to be able to perceive communicational processes of participants and their environments during the walks. They designed their soundwalks using multiple techniques; they walk sometimes silently, sometimes using recorders, or sometimes they gave participants prepared questions to think about while they perform their walks (McCartney & Paquette, 2012). Ian Rawes of The London Sound Survey website[4] performs soundwalks in and around London and tries to capture London's urban soundscape. This is his hobby to listen and record sounds of the city, thus, his records cumulate on the website as a sound archive of London. Even though he does not practice soundwalks for any kind of scientific research, he is very aware of his function in recording these city sounds. He shows his awareness

[4] https://www.soundsurvey.org.uk.

in the website's about section like this: Amongst the daily urban hubbub there's information about who lives here, what they get up to, how they enjoy themselves and what they believe in. Sounds come in fashions from singing canaries and windchimes to car horns that play Old Dixie. They announce developments in technology, the city's growth, and social and demographic change. They tell us of shifts in the makeup and scattering of London's wildlife (Rawes, 2013). Soundwalking day and night, he creates sound maps in categories such as economic, political, and social, and even hunts for historical sounds of the city. He also enables downloading the sound files he records, and encourage people to create their own city sounds, or to do art with playing and mixing these sound files. These examples show that soundwalking has intrinsic value as a practice to be held in cities to collect data for qualitative research. Therefore, when soundwalking is applied in urban areas along with the ear cleaning exercises, scholars may comment on the urban issues with a fresh perspective, like John Cage's approach to the traffic sounds: "The sound experience which I prefer to all others, is the experience of silence. And this silence, almost everywhere in the world today, is traffic. If you listen Beethoven, it is always the same, but if you listen to traffic, it's always different" (John Cage about silence, 2007).

In terms of collecting useful data to study, it seems there is no particular and standardized strategy in soundwalking. This is the most frequent problem for scholars who work with the soundwalking method. However, when researcher/performer decides on their main issues, it is easy to create a research map in mind. In regarding to the use of tool, it is no different than neither participant observation nor interview with the

informants; just this time information lies in sounds. Edmund Carpenter writes in his Eskimo Realities: “I recall travelling in fog along a dangerous coastline. Visibility was zero, yet we neither delayed nor detoured. My companions listened to the surf and to the cries of birds nesting on promontaries... Loss of sight was not a serious handicap” (1973). As Carpenter puts it, the key point is to listen with clean ears for the information that sounds offering to the listeners. In their case, it was sounds of the sea and the birds; in a research case, it may be the sounds of languages, women, vehicles, street cries, music from shops, and so on. To put it short, listening certain places, ambiances, or sonic environments is the main practice to be able to do the research on urban sounds, because the information waits to be heard. When you hear a place, you hear a specific social organization of sound as well as the way in which people interact and relate to each other. Sound is both the expression and the medium of various modes of social existence; it is closely intertwined with the hurly-burly of social life, with the “multiple as such” (Serres, 1995). Listening process has its certain levels to be able to perceive and create the sonic environment at the same time since it is a conscious activity. Jean-Paul Thibaud summarizes the activity's course loosely in his article, A Sonic Paradigm of Urban Ambiances, in three steps: The first is “tuning into an ambiance”, sensing the acoustic environment and the harmony of the place rather than perceiving, and being in tune with them. At this first level, there is not any description, or interpretation of the sound and the place. It is all about feeling and relating to the world around us as a listening body. The second is “unfolding of an ambiance”, reaching the information of the urban places is at the core of its sounds, developing an

understanding and perception on the ambiance. Sounds of the ambiance unfold its intrinsic information to the listener. And the last is "situationing within an ambiance", and interpreting what listener hears in the ambiance. This is the part that listener spots the specific soundmarks in the sonic environment and pays attention to the relationships between sounds and the other components of the ambiance. Therefore, this configuration of the soundwalking practice turns the listener's body into a receiver for the research input (Thibaud, 2011). After and/or during this course of events, as Veit Erlmann states "the focus is not on the ear as an object, but in which the ear figures as a form of embodied knowledge, as something we think with" (Erlmann, 2010).

Soundwalking method frequently brings comments and arguments on subjectivity to the table of sound studies, because listening acoustic environments is a very personal activity. R. Murray Schafer comments on the matter as follows: "The soundscape is not a neutral thing that we all experience; the soundscape needs to be interpreted by the listener. It has to be described and one person's description will be very different form another person's description" (De Caro & Daro, 2008). However, at the end of the day, each study in the realm of social sciences can be defined as subjective. James Clifford suggests that the best way to deal with the multiple, incomplete, and partial truths that to accept this partiality, and build research on this fact. Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial –committed and incomplete. This point is now widely asserted –and resisted at strategic points by those who fear the collapse of clear standards of verification. But once accepted and

built into ethnographic art, a rigorous sense of paritality can be source of representational tact (Clifford, 1986).

Conclusion

This article has explored how sound can be used as a source of information for qualitative studies on urban places in regarding to the soundwalking method. It can be conveniently said that urban sounds are valuable resources for the qualitative research in sound studies field. Besides, soundwalking method is a sufficient tool to sense, feel, and interpret the sonic ambiances and urban acoustics in the field. Sound studies scholars should give enough credit to soundwalking methodology and start to pay attention to the city sounds without judging them as "noisy jungles". According to the annual report of Demographia World Urban Areas, urbanized places cover 53% of the world; and more importantly, the urbanization rate is also high. Thus, it is expected to increase urbanized areas up to 85% of the world by the 2050 due to the United Nations reports (Demographia 2013). The effects of the rapid urbanization, in an ecological aspect, probably would be harmful for our world and future. However, this does not change the fact that for most of the population of the world, urban places are their natural habitats where they are born into. The dichotomous views and approaches of R. Murray Schaefer and his group to the urban and rural places are not valid in today's world. Thus, in order to understand and hear correctly our world we live in, we should revisit and reshape the concepts of noise, sonic ambiance, acoustic environments, soundscapes, listening, sensory approaches, and urban-rural comparisons in the realm of qualitative studies. In a world that is widely

accepted as seeing is believing, I claim that listening is thinking; therefore, we need more and more listeners nowadays.

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