THE URBAN SOUNDSCAPE AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Places, inhabited or uninhabited, always have a sound memory whose contents may or may not persist in time.

Recording and understanding the maintenance and sound alterations in a given territory not only constitutes an individual memory, but above all, a collective one.
“The sonic environment. Technically, any portion of the sonic environment regarded as a field of study. The term may refer to actual environments, or to abstract constructions such as musical compositions and tape montages, particularly when considered as an environment”. (R. Murray Schaffer)
In 1878, Thomas Edison was hired to study the objectionable noise produced by the Metropolitan Elevated Railroad in New York City.
Historical Recordings

- Relatively small amount of early recordings exist.
- Often limited frequency response and dynamic range.
- From the 1930s: urban soundscapes recordings in film soundtracks and radio plays.
- Soundscapes captured as part of other historical recordings.
Staged Historical Soundscapes
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Soundscapes created to imitate historical soundscapes

Historical recordings maybe used if available.

Essential part of the sound design for period film and games.

Varying levels of “authenticity” depending on context.
Sound and Image

- Can an audience identify where and when a soundscape is captured, without an associated image?

- How does our interpretation of a soundscape change without the context of image?

- How does are interpretation of an image change with the presence of the soundscape?
Soundscape and Image
Without Soundmark
Soundmark
Urban Soundscape as Cultural Heritage?

- UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage?
- Historical artifact
- Cultural object
- Acoustic Ecology
Accessing Soundscape Recordings
Archives

- Library of Congress
- British Library
- Europeana Sounds
Sound maps: Lisbon Sound Map
Accessing Soundscapes: Metadata!

- Standard conventions should be followed:
  - GPS co-ordinates.
  - Recording sample rate and bit depth.
  - Naming conventions for sound.
The Future

- Secure Digital Archives
- Automatic Metadata creation
- New Interface design