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Movie theaters being converted into prayer rooms in Rio de Janeiro as well as in Berlin, Christian gospel within Nollywood Cinema, Islamic HipHop in Istanbul, Hindu ceremonies as mass spectacles in Mumbai: What is the influence of confessions of faith on the spatial organisation of big, highly dynamic metropolises? How do different religious movements adopt cities as stages? What kind of meaning do they establish, how do they transform urban cultures and, on the other hand, to which extent are religious movements informed by the urban environment?

„Faith is the Place“ offers a differentiated view on the connections between urban cultures and religious practices, between the promise of salvation and social liberation.

Based on close cooperation between artistic and scientific researchers „Faith is the Place“ explores how the new policies, economies, and cultures of faith in urban spaces are operating. It also highlights the pictures and sounds, spaces, and practices created by the religious in the light of globalisation.

The publication „Faith is the Place“ has emerged out of the traveling exhibition „the Urban Cultures of Global Prayers“, creating knowledge and experiences of religious movements in urban space and generated with the means of artistic research. Within „Faith is the Place“, the contributions presented in the exhibition by artists from eleven countries are complimented with further research results and alternate with essays on city and religion, on art and science.

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Faith is the Place the Urban Cultures of Global Prayers

metroZones (Hg.)

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The Sound of Global Prayers

Approaches to Religious Urban Soundscapes

KATHRIN WILDNER

Preliminary sounds

Beirut, Bourj Hammoud. A walk through the city. Strolling the streets of this unfamiliar neighbourhood and walking through narrow alleys and crowded streets full of traffic. Behind an open gate, I find the forecourt of a church that is surrounded by multi-story apartment buildings. The walls of the churchyard are draped with paintings of modern interpretations of Christian motifs; Jesus and the Apostles.

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The slightly curbed noise of cars, the sound of clattering dishes emanating from somewhere in the surrounding buildings; a radio, children's laughter, and inside the open church door, voices, singing. Twenty women of various ages sit closely next to each other in the first rows of the right side-aisle of the church. They pray the rosary. I do not understand the words, but listening to the length and sequence of sentences, the in-unison of the accentuation, the repetition of the surging undertone and the rhythm between the prayer leader and the choir, I recognise the litany of the rosary prayer. Afterwards, I listen to my field recordings and hear a mobile phone, a screeching saw, the hollow noises from the street. The prayer continues, uninterrupted by the sounds from the outside. The prayer leader's voice and the answer of many; call and response. Towards the end, everyone is talking at the same time. The voices grow louder and stronger, they seem to reinforce each other, they fill the space of the church, drown the sounds of the city. The rhythm of the prayer, the speaking-together creates a community. *Communitas*.

What did you hear? Research on urban soundscapes

The description of the sound of the rosary prayer points to an acoustic perspective with which I aim to capture the research and exhibition project *Global Prayers*. *Global Prayers* explores the manifestation of religion in urban space; it asks how new religious movements change the city, and how urban everyday practices influence religion.

The starting point for both, my own research as an urban ethnographer as well as for this text is the question how urban space is produced. Or more specific, I am interested in the material structures and physical conditions, social actors,

discourses and images that produce a city. I understand the city as a condensed and complex space, which is continuously negotiated in and through cultural practices. In this text, I will focus in particular on the role of sound in the city as a collectivity of soundscapes; music, tones, sounds and noises.

Even though cities are strongly characterized and shaped by their sounds, there are not many studies exploring the acoustic environment of cities. R. Murray Schafer states that every space has a specific soundscape. Soundscapes are sonic manifestations that should be understood and analyzed comprehensively through physical, musical and sociological perspectives. A soundscape can be a musical composition, a radio programme, or an acoustic environment (Schafer 1988). Through their practices, urban actors produce the acoustic characteristics of a place. At the same time, the sonic environment created through social practices can be considered an indicator for social conditions (Schafer 1977). The sonic allows the individual to perceive space, to locate the self. In this text, I will argue that the perception of urban space is influenced and shaped by the sounds of a city. The meaning of a place and its soundscape emerges from a reciprocal relationship between the subject and its environment (Röhm 2011). Following Brandon LaBelle (2010b), sound can be considered as a 'hinge', a tool, an intermediary, or a link. Sound connects the corporal with the social, and the community with its environment.

Cities are junctions of global networks, communication hubs, and nodes of movements. They are places that bring together people from various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Even though global media, traffic and new technological devices increasingly shape urban soundscapes in similar ways, every city still maintains its own and unique acoustic characteristic: a mix of everyday sounds, street noises, music styles and their urban resonances. The new religious urban movements studied by the *Global Prayers* project deploy a wide array of different sounds in their daily practices and are hence particularly interesting to look at from a sonic perspective. Here, religion is conveyed through singing, noises and sounds. A variety of these religious practices relies on using the voice, or the production of sounds – be it through the bodily activity of the individual prayer; the community-building practice of a group; or, the sonic expansion in public space. Informing and acting takes place through the production of sound. Church bells, the Muezzin's call to prayer, megaphones and enormous speaker towers for street-based missionary campaigns do not only create a visual and medial presence of religion in urban space. Moreover, these elements of sound are a vehicle for the amplification and dissemination of the religious message. The religious is manifested through sound in space.

This raises the question of what is the spatiality of sound? More precisely: how is the relationship between body, architecture, social practice and power relations

1 The ideas, field notes and material that provide the basis for this text were collected during *Global Prayers* workshops, excursions, saloons and discussions with project participants and project fellows.

(re)produced in urban and local soundscapes? Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter refer to aural architectures and acoustic arenas (Bessler/Salter 2008) that are formed not only through the materiality of space, but also through the sound-event itself; the various overlappings of sound and its reverberation, and through the perception (and interpretation) of its participants.

Focussing on the acoustic arenas of a city, we can explore how conflicts and negotiations emerge in regard to the (sonic) presence of religion in a city. These are processes and practices that define, organise, control and create urban space through sound (Bessler/Salter 2008: 114). Likewise, sound can be used to transmit ideas, to create communities, to include and exclude people. Sound can be considered a religious practice, a mediator for religion and a marker of presence in public space. Sound is a means and a medium for urban religious movements.²

To explore questions concerning the role of sound in religious urban practice and to analyse how sound is deployed to produce specific urban spaces, I will develop three analytical levels: body/voice, community, public space. Even though the following analysis of urban phenomena and cultural practices treats these analytical moments as separate categories, they are, of course, closely intertwined, overlapping and blending into each other.

A further question in this text deals with the methodological approach of studying sound. More precisely, it asks how to study the phenomenon of religious movements in a city with the help of sound. Here, sound is considered a research tool that can be deployed to gain an understanding of the relationship between religious everyday practices and the production of urban space. As sound studies are not yet considered a distinct research discipline, they draw on a range of methodological techniques and analytical approaches from music-theory, sound engineering, sociology, ethnography, media and art.

R. Murray Schafer's "Vancouver Sound Project" is one pivotal study in sound research. Since the 1970s, the artist developed methods to understand the soundscape of a city (Schafer 1977). *Listening during a 'soundwalk'* (at first, without a microphone) is an initial practice of 'ear cleaning' - to focus ones attention on this

2 While this text has a different focus, it should be pointed out that the cultural production of music and musical productions play a central role for the *Sound of Global Prayers*. This includes campaigning and agitating with the help of certain music styles, borrowing elements from pop culture, the production of mass media, tapes, or organising event-like concerts. Global Prayers follows Thomas Burkhalter, Adé Bantu and Martijn Oosterbaan explore these phenomena in their research and artistic productions referring to the (global) production of religious music, its dissemination and its reception ([www.globalprayers.info/sound/bantu](http://www.globalprayers.info/research/topics/sounds), www.globalprayers.info/sound/burkhalter2).

often neglected, but dominant sense.³ Doing the soundwalk, the researcher walks within a zoned geographical space and listens to the sounds of the environment. The soundwalk is an empirical method, which serves the function of collecting and presenting events and soundscapes that are specific to a given place.⁴

Field recordings are another methodological tool for studying sound: an analysis via field recording enables the researcher to record the complexities of a city, its rhythms and resonances. In field recordings, the visual, spatial, and architectural divides of a place are suspended. For example, an open architectural structure throws sound back differently than a voluminous, massive wall; these reverberations reveal the substance and surface of an environment. The condition of surfaces influence how sound is broken, the denseness of the materials affect the level of absorption or permeability of sound in space. The acoustic wave transgresses these spatial divisions. The sound that reaches the ear reflects the physical environment. With every encounter, the sonic wave is charged and absorbed, not only through ones ears, but with the full body of the listener (cf. Röhme 2009).⁵

The question "What did you hear?" is the basic principle for the research approach of the activist artist group *Ultra Red*. Their studies take sound as a starting point for engaging in political interventions. During their workshops, participants listen to field recordings of specific urban sounds and then try to describe and discuss them. Taking the recorded sounds as their foundation, workshop participants jointly analyse social spaces and conflicts.⁶ *Ultra Red* refers to the works of Pierre Schaefer, who differentiates between various modes of listening, that is, the translation from listening to speaking: Causal listening identifies the source of a sound and localises it in space. Associative listening links what has been heard to memories and images; semantic listening interprets the meaning of sound and speech. And, finally, reduced listening concentrates on the characteristic of the sound itself, it is not interested in the origin or meaning of a particular sound (cf. Chion 1994). For example, the chime of a church bell (source) can evoke the memory of visiting an apartment that lies opposite the church

3 Cf. Max Neuhäus: "Lisken," the artist Max Neuhäus printed the word 'listen' on the hands of his audience and guided them via listening through New York (cf. Wildner/Röhme 2009).

4 Soundscapes are considered in three categories: The 'keytone', the general tone of the environment is consistent and predictable. 'Figure Sounds' are in the foreground of attention, they can be surprising, sudden, or disturbing. 'Soundmarks' are sounds that define the identity of a place, such as a particular sound of a churchbell (Schafer 1977: 1993).

5 See www.stadt-koeln.de/mediaasset/content/pdf-rat-gremien/kunstbeirat/drei-planetzr.pdf.

6 The sound-activist-collective *Ultra Red* works at the interface of art and politics. It uses sound as a tool for their 'Militant Sound Investigations': to make acoustic mappings to initiate discussions and to use sound to interact in public space. To find out more about *Ultra Red's* projects and texts, go to www.ultrared.org.

(association). Or, one can listen to the chime as a melodic sequence of the hollow tones of this heavy, but vibrant metal (reduction). What did you hear? What is the Sound of Global Prayers?

Body/Voice

The origin of every sound-perception is listening. In the Islamic religion, reciting the Qur'an is an act of worship in itself. The practice consists of reciting and listening. In a recent interview with Thomas Burkhalter, Kristina Nelson, the author of a ground-breaking book on the art of recital (1995), states:

To recite the Qur'an correctly, the reciter follows very specific rules. The first thing is the exact accentuation of syllables, the timbre: for example, it matters whether the sound originates from the chest or from the nose. It is also about pauses. When is the best time make a pause without interfering with the meaning of the text? If you need to cough, for example, you will have to start the phrase again from the beginning. All of this is very complex and has exactly specified rules. Muslims believe that Mohammed, the prophet, heard the Qur'an. He did not write it down, he recited the Qur'an.⁷

Hearing and listening also belongs to the voice. In ancient Egypt, hearing and listening was a means for people to experience the presence of God. The voice, on the other hand, helped to stay in contact with God (Meyer-Dietrich 2011: 10). The theologian Ahmed Hakki Turabi emphasises the crucial meaning of (beautiful) voices for the religious experience. He states: "If the muezzin is in excellent command of the melody and has a beautiful and clear articulation, he influences the sermon. Then, believers actually sense that they are closer to God during the prayer."⁸ In the study "A Voice and Nothing more", Malden Dolar describes how the sound of the voice itself – rather than its words – becomes a carrier of meaning. The voice elevates above worldly concerns and ascends into the divine. "The voice appears to be the locus of true expression, the place where what cannot be said can nevertheless be conveyed" (Dolar 2006: 31).

This form of contacting God through the (heard) prayer, and especially through the voice as a medium to invoke God can also be observed in the religious practice of "speaking in tongues". In charismatic Pentecostal churches speaking in tongues is an essential part of the dramaturgy of a religious ceremony. "Speaking in unknown languages", glossolalia, is a form of individual prayer, in which Gods

⁷ This interview is part of the podcast "Islam and Music in Cairo", conducted by Thomas Burkhalter for Global Prayers (www.globalprayers.info/sound/burkhalter3).

⁸ Detail of an interview conducted by Charalambis Ganotis in the context of his Global Prayers research project on negotiations of religious sound in public space of Istanbul (www.globalprayers.info/sound/ganotis).

immediacy is experienced – either by praying to God or by speaking in tongues. The latter is interpreted as Gods prophecy or, as mercy of the Holy Ghost, in which the believer delivers the message on behalf of God. On the one hand, the personal prayer appears as a way to judge oneself, an attempt to contact a higher power, on the other hand, it is as if the Holy Ghost, God's voice, speaks through ones body.

During a Global Prayers workshop in Lagos in December 2010, we visited the Holy Ghost Congress. It is the annual event of the Redeemed Church of Christian God, which motivates several hundred thousand believers to come to the "City of God" every year. Approximately forty kilometres outside of Lagos city centre, following the highway to Ibadan, we find the RCCG Camp – a city with approximately 40.000 inhabitants, its own university, banks, an electric power station and the fathomless church building that provides place for up to one million people. The church is located in the centre of the RCCG Camp; it is constructed of several open and adjoining industrial halls. There are simple wooden banks standing on the tamped bottom in the outer area of the huge church hall, but the closer you get to the altar, the more solid becomes furniture; the floor is made of stones and the plastic chairs are aligned in accurate lines, the front row chairs even covered with fabric. Some people seem to have set up small compounds to stay for several days. Chairs and benches are arranged in such a way that they form small rooms within the giant hall, they are furnished with mattresses and mosquito nets. The daily ceremony of the congress calmly begins at dusk.

The activities on stage alternate between greetings, sermons, and singing. The attendees are focused, they read in the bible, they take notes on what is being said on stage, they exclaim their amen and *hallelujahs*. In a certain moment, the priest instructs the crowd to pray, to communicate with God: "Now speak in tongues". The people around me slowly gather momentum; it begins with a gentle murmuring, steadily grows into a humming sound, and then turns more and more into a surging sound of individual voices diffused into a seemingly ceaseless sonic space. The man next to me walks thoughtfully but determined up and down the aisles, he talks to himself.⁹ It appears as if every person in this room is absorbed; acting as an individual, while simultaneously being an integral part of the ceremony. Just as there is a physical place for everyone, marked by a plastic chair, an individual placement; there is also a space for each of the individual voices of every single person. An undisputed place for each individual within the crowd, within the community.

⁹ In one part of Jens Wenke's documentary about the Holy Ghost Congress of the Redeemed Church of Christian God (RCCG) in Lagos, the audience finds itself (through the perspective of the camera) in the middle of a group of praying people. They each move in their own rhythms, they talk to God, to themselves, they speak in tongues. It is as if the cinematographer (and the audience) is carried and directed through the crowd with the help of the sound of the individual prayers and invocations of the surging noise of many individual voices of the people around him. These are rhythmic movements through the sonic arena.

Here, the voice is the medium of communicating with God: at the same time, the voice is the embodiment of Gods own voice. The voice binds the self and its environment into a paradox: "The voice both gives presence to an individual body, figuring as an identifiable sound of personhood, while at the very same instant, it leaves the body behind, separating from its origin to ultimately circulate outside the self" (LaBelle 2010b). Proceeding from the individual, the very personal and intimate prayer, it emerges an all-embracing sound of the community. The sound in the massive church hall is an assembly of the simultaneity of many individual voices, a composition of countless soli. Individual voices form a collective noise; the room seems to vibrate, it feels like an energetic materialisation of this acoustic event.¹⁰ "Vibration brings things together, giving us an experience of communality, vibration creates links and bonds, togetherness" (LaBelle 2010b).

The example of the Pentecostal ceremony demonstrates how the sound of many voices becomes part of the experienced (and observed) setting: voice, body, and space seem inseparably conjoined in a moment of commonality. As Birgit Meyer describes this moment of the emergence of an aesthetic formation, the voice denotes a "particular technique of the self and the body that modulate persons into a socio-religious formation" (Meyer 2009:11). A shared room of religious practice emerges from the individual listening and the embodiment of the individual voices, many individual voices.

Communitas

Back to the rosary prayer at the small church in Bourj Hammoud, Beirut. Bourj Hammoud is located North-east of the city between the exits to Tripoli. The neighbourhood was founded by Armenian refugees, who managed to escape the Turkish genocide in the beginning of the twentieth century. Except for a few simple dwellings from the early times of the camp, the large multi-story residential and business buildings from the 1950s characterise this densely built neighbourhood. Today, it forms a multi-ethnic community of Armenians and migrant labourers, who arrived in more recent immigration waves from Indonesia, Philippines and North Africa. The heterogeneity of Bourj Hammoud becomes apparent in the multilingual street and shop signs (Armenian, Arabic and English), while explicitly Christian coded visual signs dominate the public space: Armenian-Apostolic community posters, Christian graffiti and crosses that hang above the streets. The Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) left no great impact on the neighbourhood; it was located outside the Demarcation Lines, which had divided Beirut into various contested zones. In Bourj Hammoud, it was still possible to shop and meet (intellectual artist) friends from various neighbourhoods in the small

10 Listen to Gilles Aubry's composition on the Holy Ghost: [Congress www.globepriayers.info/sound/aubry](http://Congress.www.globepriayers.info/sound/aubry)

Armenian restaurants during the times of war. Until today, the neighbourhood has remained a popular and lively shopping area offering leather goods, textiles, jewellery, stationary, and furniture. A number of tiny stores sell DVDs with the latest blockbusters, selected music CDs, as well as the political-religious speeches of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. People come from all over Beirut to shop in Bourj Hammoud. Here, it is still possible to buy cheap everyday necessities that can no longer be purchased at the former Bazaar in the historic centre since the *Solidere* corporation transformed it into a huge shopping mall for members of the wealthy, cosmopolitan service class of Beirut.¹¹ The small church with the women praying the rosary on a Friday afternoon lies in the centre of this lively and dense urban setting; it is only one of the many different groups forming the vivid church life of this neighbourhood that is advertised on large posters all over the place - in schools, churches and community centres.

Praying the rosary is a vital part of this community practice. Praying together creates a sound that becomes an expression of the religious community. The familiar litany of the prayer, the repetitions, and the rhythm are assembled into a choir of voices. The choir, a sound system of a variety of voices saying the same, reverberates through the church room, which is amplified and fills the whole space. This space-filling sound creates a social-sonic field (LaBelle 2010b); an acoustic arena that produces and expresses belonging and membership. It is a joint experience as *communitas*.¹²

Even though only a small group of people participate in the joint prayer of this Beirut church, it can still be compared to the mega event of the evangelical church in Lagos described earlier. Here, the community produces a common sound environment through the mutuality of multiple voices, while this practice simultaneously creates the community. The religious ceremony alternates between individual prayers 'called' by the priest and a choir of responses and collective chants. It is the collective hallelujah or the various forms of silence that fill the room - the individuals create a communal body that is amplified by sounds and silences.

11 During the Civil War, the city centre of Beirut, especially around the Place de Martyrs and the Souks, was largely destroyed. With the objective of fast and modern reconstruction, the remaining buildings were torn down and a completely new city centre was planned. The master blueprint for the city centre was based on a tabula rasa conception and carried out by the state-owned stock company *Solidere* as well as the construction company of the former head of government Henri. It was implemented despite sharp criticisms of citizens' initiatives, urban planners and scholars.

12 See the art project 'Raumtausch' by Magdalena Kallenberger/Dorothea Nold (in this volume). The artists observe different religious communities in Berlin while they appropriate everyday secular spaces and transform them into temporary religious spaces of worship. Making music together plays an important role in the spatial transformation as in the creation of the community.

The architecture of space, its materiality, its echo, the symbolic meaning of the place, as well as the ritual performance and individual bodily sensation shape the acoustic room, which manifests a social environment (cf. Meyer 2009:5). In this sense, social space can be understood as an acoustic arena in which participants act and communicate (Blesser/Salter 2008). Sound is an element of religious practices, which bundles collective emotions and communicates religious dogma. It is a social process: Sound as an instrument for the creation, celebration and manifestation of *communitas* (see Larkin 2008: 242).

Public Space

A further attribute of religious sound is how it is diffused and disseminated within the public space of the city. Church bells, or the muezzin prayer call structure urban daily life. The speeches and agitations of the Islamic Friday prayer sound through the speakers throughout the neighbourhood. As the sound of music, sermon tapes, and religious recitation is diffused through the speakers standing on roofs or hanging in the streets, through TVs or stereo players, it creates an ambient soundscape that shapes the specific urban environment (Larkin 2008: 4).¹³ In Rio de Janeiro, massive walls of loudspeakers (those usually found at rock concerts) are blocking public streets for missionary "crusades", so-called *crucades*.¹⁴ The sound systems mark urban territories and zones (Oosterbaan 2008). The inside of churches and mosques turn into acoustic vessels, whereas the buildings' outside architecture of church towers, mosques and minarets become physical landmarks that display the holy centre of the community within a particular urban space. In this sense, the call to prayer can be interpreted as a "soundmark" that regulates the daily life of people beyond the physical borders of urban spaces (cf. Lee 1999). When religious groups step out of their (protected) sacral spaces for processions or missionary campaigns, their physical presence and the materiality of the technical equipment advances their visibility. Yet, sound is the key element that dominates the dramaturgy of performative rituals in public space.¹⁵ Even though sound appears as a fleeting and temporary moment, the sonic interventions in public space manifest territorial claims and symbolic positioning.

Once more back to Beirut: At the six-lane Damascus Road that separated Christian and Muslim neighbourhoods as part of the cities demarcation line.

13 Brian Larkin describes the history of the use of technology and media in public space in Nigeria. These technologies were always considered anti-Islamic and associated with Christian communities and colonial rules. Therefore, they created a highly contested social field (Larkin 2008: 11).

14 See Lanz in this volume.

15 See the sound project by Gilles Aubry about a missionary campaign on the streets of Kinshasa. In his composition of field recordings, Gilles Aubry focuses on the characteristics of different urban spaces (street, church, radio station, apartment), in which the particular acoustic arenas are overlapping (www.globalprayers.info/sound/aubry/).

Standing in the middle of the street, I make a sound recording: a steady traffic noise, snippets of words and sentences of fomenting speech in the distance. Coming from a loudspeaker, they appear slightly distorted. Despite the distance – there is no mosque in sight – and through the permanent cacophony of car horns, crackling motorbikes and trucks, the rhetorical rhythm of the Muslim Friday prayer reaches me. Its intensity swells with the squalls and, like a sound cloud, it hangs inescapably over the city. Ostentatiously sound marks and amplifies the presence of religious groups beyond territorial borders in the urban space of Beirut.

When religious practices create, occupy and compete for urban space, sound is often the source of conflict (de Witte 2008). On the example of the growing and increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-religious metropolis Singapore, Tong Son Lee describes how the *Azan* (*adhān*) [in Turkey and Bosnia: *Ezan*], the Islamic call to prayer, sparked an urban conflict over sonic and social space until the municipality prohibited the loud prayer call in an anti-noise pollution campaign. As a reaction, the Islamic community increased their use of modern media technology: today, they use pre-produced versions of the call to prayer and send it through the radio on a regular basis. Diverting the religious soundscapes from the daily and active manifestation in the public space of the city to the mediated private space of the house, helped to mitigate the urban conflict between the different religious communities. At the same time, it was an act that shifted the public presence of religious practices from the urban public space into private homes and created a spatial separation between the different ethnic groups (Lee 1999).

Whereas in this case, the conflict leads to a sonic secularization of public space, another example shows how "sonic sacralisation of urban space" takes place in the multicultural city of Accra (de Witte 2008). In this Ghanaian metropolis, Pentecostal churches and their religious practices compete with the ethnic group Ga for the soundscape of the city. The 'month of silence' is part of the Ga religious calendar during which drumming and any other practices of noise-making are prohibited. Every year, the non-observance of this religious bearing by the Pentecostal churches creates acoustic clashes in urban space. The followers of the charismatic Pentecostal churches insist on their right to worship, which is particularly expressed through vocal practices of amplified music, sermons and prayers that reverberate out of the open church buildings into the public space. In contrast, the religious practices of the Ga differ starkly as they place their gods and ancestors in concrete (urban) places that are worshipped as holy places in a series of ceremonial rules, such as 30 days of silencing the drums. These conflicting religious soundscapes in the multicultural city negotiate the respective rights of practicing religion in public space and raise questions on the presence and representation of religion through sonic manifestations in urban space (de Witte 2008).

Such disputes and conflicts over acoustic manifestations occur frequently in multi-religious urban settings. Following the conflicts (Marcus 1995) with the help of sound, one can study the "acoustic politics of space" (LaBelle 2010a) to analyse the spatial and temporal effects of religious movements on the public sphere of the city. The acoustic everyday practices can be read as strategies of place-making (Massey 2005), in which religious groups articulate and manifest their presence.

Listen!

Sound cannot be fixed or retained within spatial borders. Sound is ephemeral and temporary. Yet, sound appears to be a central moment for the production of space and community. The religious movements studied in the research project *Global Prayers* deploy a variety of different (technically mediated) practices that act and agitate via sound. Through manifold expressions and appearances sound becomes the carrier of the religious. The communal experience of singing and praying as part of the religious practices and ceremonies builds a community that is manifested in the joint production of sound.

In this essay, I developed three analytical levels to approach the religious sound of the city: body/voice, community, public space. At the first level, the bodily experience, sound is a medium of perception and experience. Using our sense of hearing, we perceive the space around us and localise ourselves within it. Via our voice, we establish contact and communicate with the world (or with God). The voice is a means for communication, the link between the subject and its environment. A second level of analysis comprehends sound as a collective event of the community. Many individual voices are assembled into a space-filling sound. During the joint singing, speaking and praying and from the corporal listening experience of the individual emerges a collectivity of multiple voices. The many-voiced rhythm and its resonance in the material place create a joint space of religious practice. And finally, the transmission of sound in public space: Beyond the space of the voice and the acoustic vessel of the temple, the sound is transferred from one place to another (La Belle 2010b). The urban landscape is shaped by sonic religious expressions and manifestations. Acting and agitating occurs through sound. The acoustic irradiation of a space marks territories and zones. New urban spaces emerge that are full of contradictions, transformations, and dislocations of power relations and processes of negotiation. Studying sound, the moments and levels of its presence and its effects on the city provides us with the potential to understand and experience the urban spaces of the religious. Listen to the Sound of Global Prayers!

TRANSLATED BY BIRKE OTTC

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