

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



I HEAR YOU: SOUNDWALKING IN TARLABAŞI

GRADUATE THESIS

MEHTAP ÇAĞLAR

July, 2013

I HEAR YOU: SOUNDWALKING IN TARLABAŐI

MEHTAP AĐLAR

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APPROVED BY:

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Murat Akser

APPROVAL DATE:

“I, Mehtap aęlar, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.”

MEHTAP AęLAR

ABSTRACT

I HEAR YOU: SOUNDWALKING IN TARLABAŐI

Mehtap aęlar

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Murat Akser

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This thesis focuses on urban areas in the realm of sound studies, and explores ways of knowing the city, Tarlabası in particular, through its sounds using the soundwalking methodology. First chapter consists of the reviews of the sound studies literature and shows the literature gap. The second chapter focuses on the soundwalking methodology and its various uses. The third chapter presents the results from application of soundwalking into Tarlabası neighborhood. In conclusion, I evaluate the results of the soundwalks and comment on the sound studies for further research intentions.

Keywords: Sound studies, soundwalking, urban areas, Tarlabası

ÖZET

I HEAR YOU: SOUNDWALKING IN TARLABAŞI

Mehtap Çağlar

İletişim Bilimleri, Yüksek Lisans

Danışman: Doç. Dr. Murat Akser

Temmuz, 2013

Bu tez, ses çalışmaları kapsamında şehirleşmiş alanları odağına alır, soundwalking yöntemiyle ve şehrin kendi seslerini dinlemek marifetiyle Tarlabası örneği üzerinden şehirleri anlamlandırmanın yöntemlerini keşfetmeye çalışır. İlk bölüm literatur taraması ve bu alandaki boşluğun tanımlanmasından oluşur. İkinci bölüm soundwalking metodunu ve farklı kullanımlarını inceler. Üçüncü bölümse, metodun Tarlabası'nda uygulamasının sonuçlarını sunar. Sonuç bölümünde ise, metod ve sonuçlar değerlendirilerek, ilerideki ses çalışmaları üzerine yorumlar yer alır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sound studies, soundwalking, urban areas, Tarlabası

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INTRODUCTION

I had never been in Tarlabası district before I ended up homeless and broke, even though I had been living in Istanbul for six years during my academic studies. Quite frankly, it was not a charming neighborhood to take a walk on a sunny Saturday or to go to a market for groceries. At least that was the impression for me due to what I saw and heard referring to Tarlabası so far by both media and some friends' and acquaintances' individual experiences. Although it is just across to the Istiklal Avenue which attracts countless people with many events and venues to go there everyday; on the contrary, Tarlabası gives a strong feeling that an outsider cannot – and even better should not – set foot in this enclosed area. Due to the high crime rates and both internal and international migrant residents, it is mostly seen as a threat for the city dwellers and wanderers. Nonetheless, in consequence of the inexpensive prices for rental apartments, I got in the area for the first time. While I was wandering around in the neighborhood and looking for the apartment I saw online, I then realized that there is nothing to be afraid of. Moreover, there were some signs of a small town where everybody knows each other, children play on the street freely, and neighbors chat in front of their houses. Also, there were laundry hanging down between opposed buildings along the streets, and so many languages on the air, Kurdish, French, Romanian, English, and different African languages. Tarlabası, somehow, captured me with these features that I was strange to in Istanbul. Thus, I rented the apartment and immediately settled down there.

The very first thing I noticed after moving in my apartment was the incredible noise coming from the outside despite the closed windows. At first, I thought that something must be going wrong because of these noises and the high volume, yet later, I understood that there was not any problem. It was only an everyday conversation from one window to the other between my neighbors who live in separate buildings, in addition to the shouting street hawkers and playing children at the background. I thought that sleeping was not possible for me anymore, because all of these noises were as if in my apartment during the day and night, non-stop.

As time passed by listening to the neighborhood, I figured that Tarlabası was like a huge mansion where an extended family lives. Each house in the district was like a room of that huge mansion, and each street was a corridor of this mansion. Thus, people easily act and move around among the streets and the houses like in their home, and one can witness everything they do via their voices, such as their shopping from the local market, daily conversations, problems at home, music, their rituals, celebrations, and so on. For instance, one can easily hear complaints of women about their sexual life while they are talking, and at the same time hanging their laundered underwear out through windows in a casual way. In this way, I have started listening to Tarlabası more carefully, and then these noises became the *sound* of Tarlabası, they were not *noise* anymore. As John Cage describes, “Wherever we are, whatever we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating” (1961: 3). I found the sound of the neighborhood fascinating and started thinking about sound in a way I never thought before.

I knew that a sound-related subject should be my research topic while I was seeking for studies about sound in any possible perspective. There were many academic and artistic works approaching to the concept of sound in various manners

and purposes, such as ecological, acoustical, or historical studies. Since sound glimpsed and impressed me as an issue in Tarlabası, relationship between sound and urban places was my main concern to meditate upon. After research process, I concluded that sound, substantially, is a crucial component to be able to perceive places, because it helps us to orient physical space around us or to visualize places using it as a source. Thus, sound provides implicit information when it is regarded in relation to the spatial data. Sonic input of a certain place, for instance, may present evidence on boundaries of interior and exterior or familiar and public places, practices of everyday life, architectural structures, or ecological environment. As a consequence, thinking environment, sociocultural structures and relationships in the urban life by using a sonic point of view assigned me brand new tools to analyze the world around me. Nonetheless, these tools were not easy to apply as methodological purposes for my research. There were debates going on about methodological aspects of sound studies in terms of efficiency and convenience. This is why most of the scholars describe sound studies as an emerging field.

Taking the points I mentioned above into consideration, the purpose of this thesis is to place city at the center of the emerging field of sound studies, and to change the perception of city sounds from being “noise” to valuable source of information for qualitative studies. My suggestion to shift this paradigm is to adopt soundwalking method from quantitative and/or ecological approaches in sound studies, and apply it to the urban places. Therefore, I have performed several soundwalks in Tarlabası and meditated upon the qualitative aspects of information that acquired through city sounds.

This thesis consists of three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter explores the emerging field of sound studies in general, and moves on to the specific

literature on urban related sound studies. Debates, main approaches, and examples from three journals and two compilation books on sound studies to support the thesis argument take place in this section. The second chapter focuses on the soundwalking methodology and the listening exercises for developing clairaudience (clear listening) to practice soundwalks sufficiently. Also, examples from different uses of soundwalking method show the potential of the method to use in qualitative researches. The final chapter provides the results of the soundwalks in Tarlabası and evaluates on the quality of data and possible interpretations acquired via city sounds. Then, finally, the thesis concludes with the summary of the thesis purpose, thoughts on results of soundwalks in Tarlabası, and the suggestions for further research on the field of sound studies.

CHAPTER I

Sound Studies in General

Sound studies consist 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, sound studies field's literature brings an overarching framework. While a scholar studies function of ears focusing on “ways of listening and modes of being” (Vickers 2012), one studies sound of media, such in television sound (St. Clair 2012), and another put sound at the center of a historical context, as in sonic expressions of post-9/11 (Vayo 2011). In short, any kind of research related to sound is considered in the field of sound studies whether it has medical, technological, or musical approach.

Nevertheless, even the field has a comprehensive characteristic that including the established disciplines, sound studies seem to be accepted as an emerging field even after thirty-six years, since the first contribution of R. Murray Schafer's *Tuning of the World* (1977). There are two main and interrelating reasons for this description: The first is that the world we perceive is mostly vision oriented, and so are the research disciplines. Journals, universities, call for contributions to academic and/or artistic works mostly focused on visual perspectives. If one scholar is not interested in sound particularly, then the field of sound studies almost invisible to her.

The second is the methodological approaches and concerns in sound studies. Michele Hilmes, a sound scholar, in particular radio as her main work medium,

addresses these two crucial questions about the field in her article entitled “Is There a Field Called Sound Culture Studies? And Does it Matter?” (2005). The title of the article is salient not just because of 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 (*implies 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).

As Hilmes draws attention that hearing is seen as an unreliable and lower sense rather 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 compare to the established disciplines. Richard M. Carp states in his study on the senses, *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 “seeing is believing,” or enlightenment. Framing and choosing what we see requires a conscious process at an

intellectual level in our brains. Thus, what we “see” become 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: 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 putting the sound and hearing at their central source of information considered as experimental, or rather 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 cross 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 and Daro 2008: 27).

Even though the existence of the sound studies field and of new methodologies is partly accepted today; due to the same reasons from the past, it is seen as an emerging field today. However, considering the rising interest through new journal publications, books, blogs, and conferences focusing on sound in various ways and forms, this emerging field may be emerged and join to the established disciplines' club soon.

Previous Work on Sound and Space Relationships

R. Murray Schafer and his colleagues in Simon Fraser University, Canada were first to realize that hearing and sound - is not related 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 which were noise pollution and ecological degradations. Jets, airports, factories, cars, constructions, and even rock music 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 vanishing because of this 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: 10).

Schafer and his group's approach to the sound and environment were dichotomous, and this was the foundation of their researches: 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 of these pollutions. 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 in relate to the 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 try to discover the 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 before their attempts; however, these were traditional fields of academia such as history of music, ethnomusicology, or sociology of music. It is accepted sound and music as an inseparable whole and treated that way, therefore, sound itself was not the subject of social sciences in a qualitative way. Schafer and his research group liberated the sound from burden of music and gave credit to the sound in an epistemological way.

John Cage's experiments on sound in the 1950s, even though they were in compositional contexts, have affected the early sound studies later on in the '60s. 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). As it is traced, 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 still in the use of sound studies literature; thus, most of the studies either focuses 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 literature had quite an impact on the ways of understanding our environments. Scholar from wide-ranging disciplines began to consider sound from fresh perspectives. The most visual

tool for description and the interpretation of the data, mapping has applied to the sounds and the places. Thinking various places through sound brought the soundmarks to the literature instead of the help of landmarks (Mott and Sosnin 1997). Sound in film, television and/or radio has 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 mattered for the 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. The value and impacts of Gramophone, or the street cries on a certain period of time (Thompson 2002; Picker 2003).

Literature Gap

While the knowledge on sound cumulating in almost every discipline of the sciences, a very basic method for many of these studies systematized by Hildegard Westerkamp. Soundwalking was fundamental of the sound and space related studies. Soundwalking examples can vary from medicine to architecture, from physics to contemporary art, and such. However, there is a lack of use this method in urban areas to evaluate cities and their residents' relationships. Literature gap that I want to emphasize lies in the qualitative studies on urban sounds and soundwalking method use.

Sound can be used as a tool to understand city's dynamics, perceptions, and sociopolitical characteristics. Sound has ability to make the invisible visible and the intangible accessible when it is took as the main source to listen and to study. When one hears a place, she hears certain interactions between places, people, and maybe

machines as well as what she cannot see. “...Sound places me in the midst of a world” (Ong 2012). Therefore, sounds of the cities may present great amount of data for researchers to comprehend social structures, inhabitants' fashions, ways of placemaking, identities, institutions, and so on for qualitative studies. However, sound may be a precarious informant due to its inherent property in related to silence. As John Cage stated after his performance of *4'33"* on the absence of silence, “they missed the point. There’s no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence, because they didn’t know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds” (Kostelanetz 2003).

In a silence-proof world where sound overflow continuously, how the researcher extract what she needs from the sound jungle becomes problematic 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 if it is not an ecological area within the city. Thus, walking and listening, that is soundwalking, at the streets full of sounds are mostly applied for the quantitative studies focusing 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 performs their walks in mostly rural areas, or natural places in the city such as botanical parks and zoos. Scholars 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. Regarding to the wide-range realm of the sound studies, to be able to detect the relationship between soundwalking method and the qualitative urban sound studies, I limit literature to sound specific journals and books. These are *Journal of Sonic Studies*, *SoundEffects*, *Soundscape*, *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* and *Sound Studies Reader*.

Journals

Journal of Sonic Studies, *SoundEffects*, and *Soundscape* are three main publication of the Sound Studies field. Even though sound related articles can take part in many journals due to their subject such as film, geography, and/or architecture, these three journal put together all of the studies that define themselves in the realm of Sound Studies.

Journal of Sonic Studies (JSS) is an online, international, and peer-reviewed journal that published three issues so far. It is now open to contributions for the fourth issue, volume four. The journal is founded by Marcel Cobussen and Vincent Meelberg, philosophers and musicians from the Netherlands, Leiden University and Roadbud University, in 2011. Main purpose of the journal is to understand impacts and significance of sound on various levels. They define themselves on their journal website like this:

JSS advocates multidisciplinary research and is open for knowledge from various fields of study; from history to philosophy, sociology and anthropology; from medical studies to architecture, legal and technical sciences; from ecology to sound art, performance and media studies; etc.¹

¹ <http://sonicstudies.org/about>

Therefore, it includes broad spectrum of subjects from sonic weapons in warzones to the sonic design of cities, from deafness to sound art installations, from background music in shopping malls to public space noise.

SoundEffects, An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience, is published by Aarhus University, Denmark, in 2011. It is an open access, international, and peer-reviewed journal that has three issues for now. The journal is open to participatory for its fourth issue, volume three. *SoundEffects*, too, emphasizes interdisciplinary characteristics of sound studies field. They define themselves on their journal website as follows:

The journal primarily addresses disciplines within media and communication studies, aesthetics, musicology, comparative literature, cultural studies, and sociology. In order to push the border of interdisciplinary sound studies into new areas, we also encourage contributions from disciplines such as psychology, health care, architecture, and sound design.²

Thus, their subjects vary from cinematic soundscapes to audiobooks, from street cries to bodily sounds, and from sound of science to radio.

Soundscape, The Journal of Acoustic Ecology, is the publication of World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE) since 2000. WFAE has evolved from R. Murray Schafer's World Soundscape Project in Canada. The Journal is published as paper copy; however, WFAE website provides each issue online after 6-12 months of the printed publication. It is an international, peer-reviewed journal that has sixteen issues in eleven volumes. The journal is currently open to contributions for its eighteenth issue (seventeenth is soon to be published). The journal is open to subjects that study acoustic environments. They define themselves as: "We see this journal as

² <http://www.soundeffects.dk/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope>

a place of dialogue and debate and invite your comments, questions and critical voices.”³

Even though the *Soundscape* has a long publishing life than the other two journals, subjects are not as diverse as the others. Environmental concerns, music oriented studies, and rural area soundscapes are the most frequent subjects in the volumes. Their approach to the sound mostly represents the traditional dichotomous point of views of R. Murray Schafer.

Books

As an emerging and rather young field, sound studies have two compilation books under its name: *The Sound Studies Reader* (2012) edited by Jonathan Sterne and *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012) edited by Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld. Both of the books try to comprehend wide range of subjects of the sound studies. There are few single-authored books belong to the field, however, I choose these two readers in order to capture a broad perspective on current studies both in the field and the field itself.

Edited books, *Reader* and the *Handbook*, categorize its articles under different titles, yet they use same approaches to sound while doing it. Therefore, it can be said that both of the books look at concepts of listening, noise and silence; disability; reproducibility and media; space, acoustics and architecture; culture and power. Even though they have common themes they look into, the articles in both books have different point of views and results besides of a couple of intersections.

³ <http://wfae.proscenia.net/journal/>

The Sound Studies Reader consists of six parts: (1) hearing, listening deafness, (2) spaces, sites, scapes, (3) transduce and record, (4) collectivities and couplings, (5) the sonic arts: aesthetics, experience, interpretation, (6) voices.

The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies divides articles into seven sections: (1) reworking machine sound: shop floors and test sites, (2) staging sound for science and art: the field, (3) staging sound for science and art: the lab, (4) speaking for the body: the clinic, (5) editing sound: the design studio, (6) consuming sound and music: the home and beyond, (7) moving sound and music: digital storage.

Studies on sound in these journals and books can be classified as follows: Sound art, sound in media (film, video, games, radio), architecture, acoustics, and 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 pile. However, it should be noted that these categories are inclusive to each other sometimes, and one study may have characteristics of more than one category. Thus, firstly, I search for articles focusing on sound in urban areas in any perspective. Then, the second, I pick the ones thinking about urban space and its interpretation through the sounds of the city itself. I exclude the produced and processed sound samples from city sounds as in sound art projects. In that way, soundwalking and urban areas relationship on the studies become visible.

After the literature review, it can be said that sound studies focusing on urban areas do not include soundwalking method in relate to the city sounds. The studies on the journals and the books about urban sounds mostly focus on urban noise,

historical soundmarks, perceptions of noise, or soundmapping in the city. For instance, in *Journal of Sonic Studies*, Michael V. Butera in his article, Music City Excesses, explores the regulations of noise around the cultural and musical background of Nashville. His approach on the subject is 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 1929 to 1935. He looks at urban sounds as source of information in the context of the everyday life (Kreutzfeldt 2012). In the *Sound Studies Reader*, John Picker's *The Soundproof Study* 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 of the Era's London through sounds of horse carriages, wild animals, and street musicians (Picker 2012).

In the *Soundscape, Journal of Acoustic Ecology*, Olivier Balay's study on city sounds 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 of these examples point out that scholars seem convinced that sound can be used as the source of information on urban sounds. However, the use of it still repeats the conventional ways to look for data in the realm of qualitative methods. Therefore, to be able to take advantage of the sound and its possibilities well,

soundwalking method in urban areas in relate to its sounds seem to be fertile and promising.

CHAPTER II

Soundwalking Methodology

Soundwalking is a participant form of researching soundscapes from the inside. World Soundscape Project members used the term first while they were listening, walking, and recording in several fields around Canada, Sweden, Finland, Germany, and Italy. However, it is conceptualized by Hildegard Westerkamp through her studies on Queen Elizabeth Park, Vancouver. She says:

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: 262). Even though types of soundwalks may vary, the essential purposes of the practice stay the same: listening acoustic environments carefully, approaching sonic data critically, and being aware of the soundwalker's contribution to that soundscape.

A soundwalk can be designed in many ways by the researcher. 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 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.

Ear Cleaning and Clairaudience

World Soundscape Project and its followers were trying to capture natural sounds and quietness in rural areas. Thus, soundwalking method is mostly used in such locations, villages in Europe, parks in Vancouver, zoos, oceans, and so on. Whether in ecological areas or in urban areas, to be able to practice soundwalking method successfully for any type of research, 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 entitled *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).

Therefore, listening requires certain level of concentration and engagement with the environment to be able to perceive surround sounds with clear hearing; and ear cleaning exercises provide this clairaudience 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 onomatopoeic 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 of the listening and ear cleaning exercises lead performers to meditate on the sounds regarding both physical and intellectual aspects. Here are basic exercises currently used by sound researchers as a gateway to their main methodology since R. Murray Schafer's inventions:

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.

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.

The Earplug Exercise: This exercise requires earplugs to put on for performing the essential part of it. Wearing earplugs to perceive sounds more clear 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 easefully. 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 immediate soundscape.

Aural Perspective: 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.

In the examples below are the primary categories that researchers and listeners can advance and diversify these exercises using them as starting points. 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.

Take them; they're yours. Adapt them as necessary to your own situation and add others as they occur to you. There is no end to this project, just the continuous struggle to beautify the world in whatever ways people with good ears can imagine (Schafer 1992).

Soundwalking and ear cleaning 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 methodologies put valuable contributions to this emerging field, and carry

it onward. In this study, I do not get into the debate on soundwalking methodology in theoretical aspects. I focus on the function of soundwalking as a promising method for the qualitative studies on urban sound, and I apply it to Tarlabası neighborhood as an example. Before moving on any further, I elaborate on some examples of soundwalking uses in various forms to be able to display method's potential on gathering information through sound.

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 and Paquette 2012).

Ian Rawes of *The London Sound Survey* website⁴ 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 in the website as a sound archive of London. Even though he does not practice soundwalks for any kind

⁴ <http://www.soundsurvey.org.uk/>

of scientific research, he is very aware of his function in recording these city sounds.

He shows his awareness 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 make-up 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 researches. 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's always the same, but if you listen to traffic, it's always different" (*John Cage about silence* 2007).

CHAPTER III

Soundwalks in Tarlabası

Soundwalks I performed in Tarlabası was an adventure each and every time. Even while I was sitting at home in the neighborhood and listen to the sounds from streets with clean ears, adventure was resuming. Once listening and sounds take place in one's live and mind, aural skills and sounds become tangible due to the perceptual selectivity. Once sounds become tangible, they take their places in the social narratives of our lives, in the puzzle that we interpret and contemplate through theories, studies, and tools of knowledge. Thus, sounds create new playgrounds for new adventurers in the game of social sciences. As Bishop Berkeley notes that “sounds are as close to us as our thoughts and by listening we may be able to perceive the relationship between subject and objects, inside and outside, and public and private altogether differently” (quoted in Helmreich 2007).

To be able to apply soundwalking method in a qualitative fashion, I took multiple walks on different locations in and around the neighborhood many times on different dates. For example, I walked one route both day and night to compare the acoustic environments. Before the walks, each time, I practiced some of the ear cleaning exercises to develop a clairaudience. For the evaluation of the method's limits, I focused on different sounds, sources, or concepts during both exercises and the walks. For instance, one walk I took was from center of the neighborhood to the edges of Tarlabası that is the Tarlabası-Taksim axis. On another day, I took a walk on the Taksim-Tarlabası axis, from edges to the deep center of Tarlabası. I did not

use a microphone or any kind of equipment to record my walks but pen and paper; because involvement recordings of the environmental sounds with technological devices create altered data to be accounted for. This may be helpful for further studies on urban sonic ambiances; however, the scope of this research focuses on the soundwalking method's possibilities and potential for the urban sounds, not the application types of the method itself. Thus, I only wrote down what I heard during those walks.

Since I lived in the neighborhood, sometimes I did not have to design the walks, they just happened in the hook of particular sounds, as in the following of some music band on the street headed to a wedding. I was always alerted, ready for the soundwalks. To put it correctly, I had the hammer, and I found nails everywhere.

In terms of collecting useful data to study, it seems there was not any particular and standardized strategy for it. 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 from another person's description” (De Caro and 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 researches 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 partiality can be source of representational tact (Clifford 1986).

Taking Clifford's argument on partial truths and John Cage's on absence of silence into consideration, I took soundwalks on the constant flux of sounds in Tarlabası. Just like Heraclitus's river, each walk, even in the same route, was different. Adopting from Cage yet again, "there is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear" (1961). Especially in Tarlabası, there was always something to hear, because the neighborhood never sleeps. Therefore, flux of sounds is much more distinguishable in here comparing to the mass housing projects, or gated communities that live by the clock. This is why many arguments can be built upon the sounds of the neighborhood using different perspectives. I will summarize some of them as the results of my soundwalks to be able to contribute the qualitative knowledge through sound.

Variety of Sounds and Information

Soundwalking in the city provides meditation on spatial perceptions in terms of uses of places. Public and private, interior and exterior borders and its practices can be observed through the city's sounds. In the case of Tarlabaşı, while soundwalking in all of the streets, blurring lines between public and private welcomes the listener. Chats through windows on personal affairs, gatherings in front of the apartments with foods and/or laundries, bargains between drug dealers and the customers, or even bargains between prostitutes and the customers, chants of the drunk lovers, mourns of the sexual encounters, and child disciplining with shouts and beating bundles the soundwalker up. Even though pavements, streets, and exterior doors are the indicators of outdoors, most of the time, sounds cause a bit uncomfortable feeling as if the listener is a trespasser in people's private spaces. In Tarlabaşı, when the listener harkens the sounds of the streets, she hears speeches of the places about the lives of its habitants. Therefore, sounds draw a virtual map in the listener's mind where streets are the continuations of the hallways within the houses.

Sounds of the cities present their identity politics throughout the streets. Languages spoken, accents, political meetings, voices of women and/or transgender people, and their existence and audibility in the streets are the evidences for types of societal organizations. In Tarlabaşı, soundwalks give the sensation to the listener of a somewhat enclosed community. When the listener enters the borders of the Tarlabaşı from Taksim entrance, sounds and the senses of the neighborhood change entirely. Children plays, sirens of the police, and the women voices are first to hear in there. The second is Kurdish, African, and Romanian languages are captured by the ear, and the migration politics, identity politics, political economy issues come to the mind of the listener.

As if all of the "others" of the society have found their voices in there, and their everyday life sounds tell their stories without noticing it. However, the enclosed community feeling and its distinctive sounds covering all others are interrupted by the governing state through the gentrification processes in the neighborhood. Construction machines, destruction of the buildings, and the people moving out echo among the streets, especially in the recent days. Some of the gentrified streets are quiet now due to the security guards in front of the newly built apartments and emptied buildings. This leads listener to the urban renewal policies of the state and their attitudes over the city rights of the citizens.

Social relationships in the neighborhood reveal themselves on the streets through their ordinary sounds. Women shouting to the grocers or to street hawkers with their baskets hanging down from the windows are one the most frequent soundmark of the Tarlabası. Even if the shop is on the next street, women keep shouting until they have heard by the salespersons. Also women, sometimes, send children from street shopping, and the children want to buy chocolates or chips besides the shopping list to compensate their efforts. Another soundmark of Tarlabası is the fight sounds. As well as people help each other out, they fight a lot too. Even guns sometimes get involved into these quarrels. However, during the soundwalks at night, the shouts mostly increase between lovers or between customers and the prostitutes.

Weddings, farewell parties to the new soldiers, break dance battles on the streets, and the music or TV sounds from the windows are important sonic parts of the acoustic environment of Tarlabası. Music holds a significant place in the neighborhood and night or day welcomes the listener, most of the times loudly. Besides the weddings and farewell gatherings, music that coming out of the houses

or little crafts ateliers is mostly arabesque and/or protest. Even the youngsters who are into hip hop and break dance also sing and listen to arabesque versions of rap music. In addition, it is so common to hear those kids singing renowned Kurdish song "shoot guerilla, shoot / found the Kurdistan".⁵ Therefore, urban sounds help to detect cultural geography and its components along with the demography.

To sum up, acoustic environments of Tarlabaşı present great amount of information on spatial uses, identity politics, gender politics, social organization and human relationships, and cultural geography. According to those input from these various areas, Tarlabaşı can be described as a closed but somewhat autonomous community that includes outsiders and the oppressed. Transgender people, women, children, Kurdish, African, Romani migrants, homeless people, paper collectors, street hawkers, refugees, prostitutes, drug dealers, petty criminals, and any kind of poor people are the residents and also creators of Tarlabaşı sonic environments.

R. Murray Schafer and his group were trying to reach some "natural" soundscapes before they are lost due to the urbanization and industrialization, so, they went up to the rural places. Even though Tarlabaşı is not a "natural" place as in their terms, I managed to capture a brief summary of the soundscape before it is lost by the gentrification processes. One of the members of a protest music group, Bandista – who do not want to give out his name- says in an interview,

...this city is sounds. How they gentrify the city, in favor of the finance capital, how they buy the streets, how they gentrify them, how they transform them does not work for the sounds of the city. (Mutfak-3 2012)

Tarlabaşı may be lost entirely in couple of years, however, its history from today and past will echo among the gentrified version of it due to the documentations through sounds; and these will give us chances to indicate and deconstruct these

⁵ Vur gerilla vur / Kürdistan'ı kur. Anonymous Kurdish song.

processes in the future. Therefore, soundwalks and the sonic environments become secondary sources for further researches in the field of sound studies.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has explored how sound can be used as a source of information for qualitative studies on urban places in regarding to the soundwalking method. In order to do that, I have practiced several soundwalks and listen to the urban sounds of Tarlabası neighborhood in Beyoglu, Istanbul as a sample case for my argument. To be able to reach a clear listening – cliraudience– for a better perception of sonic environments, I have used R. Murray Schafer's ear cleaning exercises before the soundwalks.

In scope of this research, Tarlabası were significant for two reasons: The first, I was become aware of the sound both as a tool and a source for an urban study research when I have moved there. The second, urban sounds were in a constant flux in Tarlabası almost more than any neighborhood of Istanbul. While I was reviewing the literature on urban sounds and acoustic environments and trying to find proper methodology to use in my research, I found the gap in qualitative researches on city sounds. There were not studies on city sound using soundwalking method in a qualitative aspect. To be able to contribute to literature, I claimed that soundwalking method could be promising to be able to fill this gap.

After the reviews of the wide-range sound studies literature, soundwalks in Tarlabası, and evaluating the sounds of the neighborhood and their meanings, in conclusion, it can be conveniently said that urban sounds are valuable sources for the qualitative researches in sound studies field. Besides, soundwalking method is a proper and sufficient method to sense, feel, and interpret the sonic ambiances and

urban acoustics. Sound studies scholars should give enough credit, 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 covers 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 read 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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