

## Chapter 45

# On the Intersection Between Speaker Installations and Urban Environments: A Soundscape Design Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

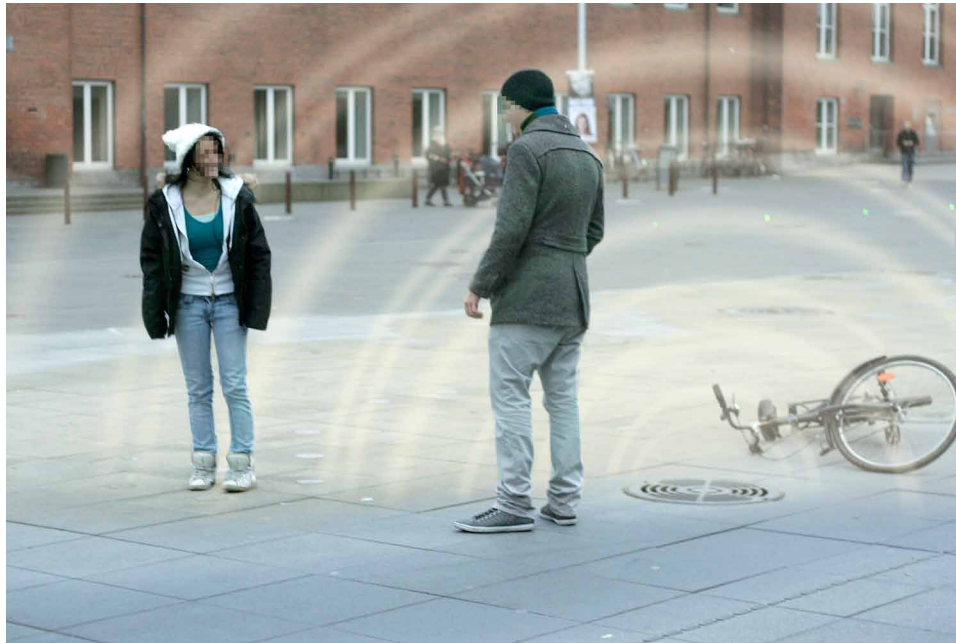
*This chapter deals with speaker installations and the potential to use such installations for designing soundscapes in cities. Through employment of a designer's perspective, eight intersections between speaker sounds and the environment in which they are installed are brought forward and discussed. The intersections were originally deduced by the author theoretically but have subsequently also been examined in relation to existing speaker installations. This chapter describes and exemplifies each of the eight intersections, which have been denoted as sound sculpture, sound space, atmospheric design, sound and light, sound binocular, sound postcard, interactive event, and retuning of soundscape. Discussions in the chapter cover the role of speaker-induced sound in relation to the notion of acoustics as well as urban design.*

### INTRODUCTION

It has become increasingly popular in recent years to incorporate speaker sounds as part of landscape architecture projects, particularly in urban public space (See Figure 1). The development can be seen as part of an increased interest in architectural disciplines for the sound environment, along with technological developments in speaker systems for outdoor use. *Speaker installations* can potentially improve *everyday soundscapes*, as well as stimulating social interaction and visitors' exploration in sound. The present chapter discusses the implementation of speaker installations in public space through a *soundscape design* perspective.

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*Figure 1. Speaker installations are increasingly used in landscape architecture projects. The speakers in this installation at Solbjerg Plads in Copenhagen, are located in wells, from which varying sounds of nature play back at different intervals during the day. The installation was conceived by Danish architecture firm SLA Landscape. Photo/Illustration by the author. Sound: (<https://vimeo.com/10976378>)*



It has been argued previously that, particularly during the modernistic era, consideration for sound was a somewhat neglected area in urban planning and design (Hedfors, 2003; Jakobsson, 2009; Pallasmaa, 2012, [1996]), and that focus was instead mostly on visual aspects. In a broader sense, this visual focus or *ocularcentrism* is a question that has been discussed also in connection with the western society as a whole (see e.g. Levin, 1993). Within this philosophical discourse, the historical role and position of the visual and the other senses are analyzed, and modernity has been raised as a potential catalyst for ocularcentrism. In the development of the modern western world, visual information was especially fitting, because the visual could be easily structured, overviewed and reasoned around, while aural and other sensual stimuli lack this clarity.

In landscape architecture, visual representations are dominating. Ideas are developed, communicated and presented predominantly through documents containing plans, drawings, sections and the like. The experience through other senses can be described in text. Other techniques, like video or *auralization*, can represent the sound environment directly, but these are not yet established in the field. This situation is likely to have an effect on where the focus is directed in design proposals (c.f. Corner, 1992; Olwig, 2004), as visual representations are more likely to stimulate discussions around visual cues.

The situation is problematic, given the fact that sound has been shown to influence health (Annerstedt et al., 2013; Basner et al., 2014), behavior (Aletta, Lepore, Kostara-Konstantinou, Kang, & Astolfi, 2016; Cohen & Spacapan, 1984; Meng & Kang, 2016) as well as appreciation of landscapes (Anderson, Mulligan, Goodman, & Regen, 1983; Carles, Barrio, & de Lucio, 1999; Preis, Kociński, Hafke-Dys, & Wrzosek, 2015).

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