

RIGHT TO QUIET SOCIETY
for Soundscape Awareness and Protection

NOISE LETTER

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Fall 2016

Why quiet is becoming the ultimate luxury

By Laura Freeman

Privacy and space are beyond the reach of my generation. So we'll pay almost anything for a bit more peace. The new consumer obsession of my generation isn't white goods, trainers or designer labels. It is — whisper it — quiet. We, the under-30s, are almost allergic to noise, so much so that many of us would happily pay extra to sit in a quiet carriage, or in the café seat furthest from the speakers, or drink in an upholstered alcove in a bar.

Two of the three things — privacy, space, quiet — that our parents wanted when they bought houses with gardens in leafy streets and town suburbs are lost to us. We've been invading our own privacy on social media since school, and now in our late twenties, we despair of ever getting out of chicken-coop flats and into detached (we'd settle for semi-detached) houses with gardens and garages to keep

the neighbours at bay. So it is quiet we want, and quiet we'll pay silent spondoolicks to get. Call us the Murmuring Millennials, or Generation Shhhh. What we want more than anything is refuge from a phone-bleeping, car-honking, fridge-alarm world.



Noise hurts!

Enough. Dyson is leading the charge with ever-quieter fans, hoovers, and hair-dryers. Others must follow. I've seen friends' relationships falter when, on first moving into studio flats, they discover their partner has a roaring morning routine of electric razor, hairdryer, Nespresso machine and Nutri-Bullet. These must get quieter. Manufacturers will no longer promise bouncing curls or maxi fruit-mashing, but noiseless settings, whispering smoothie blades and silent spin cycles.

I've heard the future, and it's quiet. Technology firms have long realised that bleeping and ringing are on the way out. Wearable technology — watches, bracelets, necklaces — vibrates against the skin to alert you to messages and phone calls. Wearable tech firms like the London start-up Vinaya already design minimalist rings, bracelets and pendants which connect to your smartphone and vibrate when you have a message. They can be programmed to alert you only to phone calls, freeing you from the tyrannous ping of messages and e-mails.

The demand for hush will bring about a quiet revolution in housing, too. Our Scandi-worship, which started with noir television and now embraces fashion, food and such lifestyle trends as the Danish 'hygge' — enjoying life's cosier, simpler pleasures, then smarming about them on Instagram — is going to change the way we build. The Swedish construction mega-firm Skanska is already building houses here that are insulated as if against Nordic winters. The firm's first UK housing scheme, Seven Acres, is in Cambridge, city of freezing Fenland winds. The houses are airtight and triple-glazed. No chill breeze nor wail of car alarm gets in.

Skanska build on 'Passivhaus' principles. This method, developed in the early 1990s by Professors Bo Adamson of Sweden and Wolfgang Feist of Germany, insulates houses so effectively that they stay warm without any — or with very little — conventional gas or electric heating. The Passivhaus Trust campaigns for the method in the UK, pointing out that their houses or flats consume 75 per cent less heating fuel than a standard UK new build. Lower gas bills, better for the environment, and never a peep or bleep from your upstairs, downstairs or sideways neighbours.

I predict a low-decibel boom in the leisure market, too — in mindfulness weekends, yoga breaks and silent retreats. Holiday cot-

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tages on Hebridean islands without phone signal or Wi-Fi will double their rates. Cities, too, will be quieter. Dogs will not bark in the night-time. Anti-bark collars, already available, will become more sophisticated. Electric cars will purr through the streets. Driverless cars will not honk their horns because they are in a rage, or because the lights have changed, or because they've spotted their sister on the pavement.

Train delay announcements won't come over the Tannoy, but straight to our phones — or wristwatches. Already you see it. When trains are delayed, passengers check rail-line apps and Twitter feeds for updates. We will miss the camaraderie of the collective groan at the announcement of the signal failure at Didcot, but not the old, intrusive announcements about buffet cars and unattended luggage.

On a night bus this summer, coming home from south London, a gang of boys came swaggering on to the top deck. The other passengers braced themselves. But the six boys sat down and took out their phones. Each sat scrolling through his social media feeds. From time to time, one of them would see something funny and laugh. And another, not looking up, would say: 'Send it, bruv.' And the first boy would send it to the other five on WhatsApp or Snapchat or ClapTrap or whatever it was, and they'd all see it arrive on their screens, and laugh, and fall silent, and go back to scrolling.

No fighting, no swearing, no shankster-rap music played through speakers. Now, I know this raises worrying questions about the splintering of society and the atomisation of youth and so on — but at least they were quiet.

http://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/09/why-quiet-is-becoming-the-ultimate-luxury/?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20160917_Weekly_Highlights_37_NON-SUBS

Editor's note: this article sounds like utopia that I haven't experienced yet; an incredible dream.

Using gliders to listen for whales 24/7

Over the past few years, researchers have developed an increasingly diverse set of platforms for listening in on the world beneath the ocean's waves. Now, in addition to recorders deployed in key areas for months at a time and temporary suction-cup acoustic tags on individual whales, a long-anticipated mobile option is moving into more widespread use. Autonomous gliders offer an enticing combination of attributes: they can operate for weeks or months at a time, exploring a region rather than staying in one place; they can be outfitted with a range of sampling capabilities; and they are relatively inexpensive to build and deploy. Sub-sea gliders can dive to 200 metres deep and re-surface periodically to transmit data to data centres on shore; they've been used for physical sampling of oceanographic data (temperature, salinity, etc.) for many years, but it's only more recently that acoustic sampling has become common.

The most exciting thing about putting recorders on gliders is that they can operate around the clock, monitoring for whales even in bad weather and at night, when ship-based researchers cannot. Plus, the cost of operating research ships means that field studies are short and targeted to areas already known to be hot spots for whale activity, while gliders can be used to explore regions that we know less about. In particular, we know that whales tend to move around season-to-season in search of the best feed-

ing opportunities; on the Scotian Shelf in the Canadian Atlantic, some areas that are protected feeding habitat have been largely abandoned in recent years due to lack of prey. Gliders can help identify where the alternative feeding grounds may be, so they, too, can be protected.

This spring the Canadian WHaLE project (Whales, Habitat, and Listening Experiment) is expanding to the west coast. For three weeks, a six-foot glider will explore waters off Vancouver Island . "Ocean gliders are a new technique for gaining insights into whale ecology on Canada's West Coast," says David Duffus, who leads the west coast project. "Many species of concern under Canada's Species at Risk Act are termed 'data deficient.' We need more information on whale habitats and whale feeding 'hot spots' so we can put in protective measures, such as real time whale-alerts for shipping traffic."

In addition to the longer-term goal of increasing our understanding of changing habitat-use patterns, the gliders could also help reduce ship strikes. There is hope that in some especially busy shipping lanes, gliders may offer a new way to let ship captains know when whales are nearby; this is especially important for the critically-endangered North Atlantic right whale.

<http://aeinews.org/> Apr. 13, 2016

EEA Report No 14/2016

Noise pollution is a major problem for Europe's environment. Transport and industry are the main sources of concern and prolonged exposure can damage human health and adversely affect ecosystems. European legislation aims to reduce noise pollution and also highlights the need to preserve areas that are currently unaffected. These so called quiet areas are an important component of the European soundscape and may offer havens away from noise pollution. This report sets out to identify where these potential quiet areas might be and offers an insight into how they could benefit the human and wildlife populations that inhabit or benefit from the rural European soundscape that is currently unaffected by noise pollution.

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/quiet-areas-in-europe>

Health effects of noise

According to the findings of the World Health Organisation (WHO), noise is the second largest environmental cause of health problems, just after the impact of air quality (particulate matter).

The World Health Organization's Night Noise Guidelines for Europe present evidence of the health damage of night-time noise exposure and recommend threshold values above which adverse effects on human health are observed. An annual average night exposure not exceeding 40 decibel (dB) has been recommended in the Guidelines. Sleepers that are exposed to night noise levels above 40dB on average throughout the year can suffer health effects like sleep disturbance and awakenings. Above 55dB long-term average exposure, noise can trigger elevated blood pressure and lead to ischaemic heart disease.

A study commissioned by DG Environment on the health implication of road, railway and aircraft noise in the European Union found that exposure to noise in Europe contributes to:
about 910 thousand additional prevalent cases of hypertension,

43 thousand hospital admissions per year, and at least 10 thousand premature deaths per year related to coronary heart disease and stroke.

Since this study was based on partial data on noise exposure, the overall health effects in the entire EU are likely to be even higher than currently estimated.

The WHO is currently working on revised Community Noise Guidelines for Europe, which are expected to present state-of-the-art evidence on the health effects of noise and updated recommendations on acceptable exposure levels. The WHO defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Therefore, a high level of annoyance caused by environmental noise is considered as one of the environmental health burdens, and thus taken into account when estimating the health effects of noise.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/health_effects_en.htm

Train service in Europe

By Karl Raab

Compared to service in North America, travel by rail in Europe is a marvel. Trains go almost everywhere. The famous French TGV (train à grande vitesse) and the German ICE (Intercity-Express) serve most of Western Europe. Getting some rest when surrounded by mobile phone callers can be a challenge, so trains offer so-called quiet zones (q-z).

German train personnel often have no interest in the purpose of the Ruhebereich (q-z). The tiny "Psst" icons posted along the walls of the ICE are barely noticeable - unless you're looking for one. Deutsche Bahn timidly designates phone calls, bells, loud music (including headphones) and other noisy activities as "not welcome." The results can be,

to put it politely, disappointing. In France, not surprisingly, it's complicated. SNCF offers seats in 1st Class on certain routes at certain times in an Espace Calme. On other trains one can choose an area where loud conversation, playing music and pet animals are discouraged. Results are uneven.

Recently, we reserved seats in the "coche en silencio" of the Spanish AVE (bird) train from Madrid to Seville. Upon boarding, we each received a small set of headphones. Each seat was supplied with a clear message: no phoning, no music and no eating. What a joy! Everyone was quiet. We felt guilty whispering to each other. The only sound was the whoosh of our train rolling south at 295 km/h. Now that's Spanish hospitality.

Vermont church 'bells' take their toll on neighbours

When Christ the King church replaced its bells with an outdoor sound system last summer, neighbours in the city of Burlington, Vermont, immediately deemed it an unholy noise. Katie Berk, a psychologist who works from home, is part of a community group of about 30 people demanding that the church's electronic noise cease. "I don't particularly like the chime sound," Berk tells As It Happens host Carol Off. "I don't like that it's music and I don't like that it's hymns and religious music. If it was a next door neighbour who put speakers on their house and [they were] playing music that I liked, say jazz or something, I would still have a problem with that."

The church's carillon system rings three times a day — at noon, 2:45 p.m. and 6 p.m. — and also following funerals

and weddings. Berk says she's adjusted her schedule at her psychology practice to avoid hearing the church's noise during her break. She lives about a block away. "We'd like them to either stop playing or we'd like them to move their speakers so that they are played within the boundaries of their own property or within their church," she says. "They can enjoy their system, while the rest of us can enjoy what originally had been complete silence. Berk says that the noise is illegal under Burlington's noise ordinance bylaw, but the city insists the parties participate in mediation before escalating the neighbours' complaint.

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-tuesday-edition-1.3061865/vermont-church-bells-take-their-toll-on-neighbours-1.3062246>

NO NOISE IS GOOD NOISE

Tiger moths use ultrasonic signals to warn bats: toxic not tasty

by Bonnie Davis | davisbl@wfu.edu | 336.758.5390

Acoustic warning signals emitted by tiger moths to deter bats – a behaviour previously proven only in the laboratory – actually occur in nature and are used as a defence mechanism, according to new research from Wake Forest University.

Field research of free-flying bats conducted in their natural habitats by biology graduate student Nick Dowdy and colleagues shows that tiger moths produce ultrasonic signals to warn bats they don't taste good. This behaviour – called acoustic aposematism – was previously proven in the laboratory by biology professor Bill Conner and Jesse Barber, who earned his doctorate at Wake Forest in 2007.

Birds and other mammals use visual aposematic signals like bright or highly contrasting patterns to advertise their toxicity. But, bats – the main predators for moths – don't rely on vision at night; they rely on sound. So, the moths developed an acoustic signal to deter the bats. "The signals are, in essence, a warning to the bats that the moth is unpalatable and potentially harmful if ingested by the bats," Dowdy said.

The research, published in PLOS ONE, furthers the understanding of the evolution of animal behaviour in the bat vs. moth arms race. Dowdy, who works in Conner's lab, said

this is the first time the researchers have been able to show that this phenomenon, acoustic aposematism, actually occurs in nature. Dowdy specifically studied two types of tiger moths, the *Pygarcia roseicapitis* and the *Cisthene martini*.

Dowdy said he was also able to show evidence for what he calls a "nonchalance continuum" seen in multiple species. This means they don't always dive out of the way when bats approach. He said most moths enact evasive dives and spiralling flight when a bat is about to capture them, "presumably at a cost to the moth as it can be energetically costly to do these manoeuvres. We've found that this is only sometimes true in tiger moths and different species appear to use these behaviours at different rates."

The implication is that certain species may have evolved to rely on their warning sounds instead of the evasive manoeuvres common to most eared moths. Dowdy said the results suggest that acoustic aposematism is likely to be the ancestral function of sound production in tiger moths. "This means that in evolutionary history these moths first evolved these sounds for use in warning bats of their toxicity and then sometime later, these sounds grew in complexity in certain species to perform a sonar jamming function," he said.

Woodpecker drumming signals wimp or warrior

By Bonnie Davis

Animal behaviour researchers at Wake Forest University have found that the highly territorial downy woodpecker interprets drumming intensity from adversaries to figure out who is or isn't a threat.

Instead of a distinctive song, woodpeckers bang on trees with their bills to create a sound called drumming. The birds use it to communicate when they want to attract a mate or defend a territory. Wake Forest assistant professor of biology Matthew Fuxjager and his research team tested how woodpecker pairs perceived the drumming, to see how it influenced territorial interaction and coordination of defensive behaviour. Graduate student Eric Schupee and juniors Johnny Petersen and Ashton Caudle participated in the research.

"Partners will actually coordinate or cooperate with how they fight, depending on who they are fighting. They size up their opponent and decide whether they need to work together," Fuxjager said. "In short, it means an intruder woodpecker with a short drum is perceived as wimpier, while a long drum signifies a tough guy intruder."

The team conducted behavioural experiments by recording drumming sounds from males and then playing them back, manipulating them to territory holders, to see what

kind of behavioural response that would elicit, said Fuxjager, who studies physiological and behavioural mechanisms of social biology, particularly in bird species. The research was conducted in the woods on the Wake Forest campus and in the surrounding Winston-Salem community.

"When you walk through the woods and you hear a woodpecker, most people think they are looking for food, but that's actually a social signal they use."

What they found is that if you present a breeding pair of woodpeckers with a longer drum from a more aggressive intruder, the pair begins to coordinate their territorial defence behaviour and coordinate how they attack the intruder; whereas, a shorter drum from a weaker intruder meant that the resident pair didn't bother to coordinate a response.

Overall, Fuxjager said these findings, recently published in the journal *Behavioural Ecology and Sociobiology*, provide insight into aggressive behaviour in birds in general and how individuals coordinate behaviour to accomplish shared goals or tasks.

<http://news.wfu.edu/2016/03/04/woodpecker-drumming-signals-wimp-or-warrior>

Amateur photographer captures moment of shooting, The Vancouver Sun, A9, Saturday, May 28, 2016

Vancouver Police officer downed man charging her with knife. Said Bill Whatcott: "I've been shooting guns for 15 years but it still shocked me when she discharged her firearm, just how loud it was."

Noise pollution in Tokyo

By Rochelle Kopp, Managing Principal, Japan Intercultural Consulting

I need it. RIGHT AWAY. Rummaging through my handbag. Where is it when I need it!?! Then I find it, the familiar little plastic case. Thank goodness. My new best friend and constant companion, yes it's there. Ah, relief is on its way. Has Rochelle become an addict? Yes, but not to a drug. The indispensable contents of the little plastic case lurking at the bottom of my purse is a pair of ear plugs! My key to survival when visiting Tokyo.

Masses of people are everywhere in Japan, and even though the Japanese tend to be quieter than Americans, when you get a lot of them together it can't help but get noisy. Plus, Japan is the land of announcement by sound. For example, when I take the JR train, my journey starts with an announcement on the platform "On track 1, a train bound for Shibuya is coming. Please wait behind the dotted line." When it arrives, another voice declares that "This is Shinagawa. Please watch your step." Then, just before the doors are set to close, a warning melody about ten seconds long plays. (In the past, this function was performed by a loud whistle, but JR decided to replace it with a melody in order to help reduce the stress on riders. The melody is slightly better sounding, but because it's played so loudly it's not that big of a reduction in stress if you ask me.) After the melody stops, another announcement warns "The doors are closing. Dashing to get into the train car at the last minute is dangerous, so please don't do it." (Of course, as this announcement is playing, at least half a dozen people are dashing to get into the train car, often including yours truly).

With a train arriving every few minutes on each of the platforms, at larger stations with multiple platforms such as Shinjuku, Shinagawa, and Tokyo, the overlapping sets of announcements get to be pretty loud. To help riders distinguish the different sounds, some platforms have a female announcement voice and some have a male announcement voice, and a different door closing melody is played on each platform. Given that trains are constantly coming and going, the result is a kind of announcement opera, albeit non-harmonious, and, at least in my case, a giant headache in a matter of minutes if I don't have my ear-plugs firmly in place.

I asked a friend who is a longtime Tokyo resident about this subject of noise pollution in Tokyo. He shared with me his current pet peeve, the health club he belongs to. Evidently, exercisers are treated to a constant barrage of announcements. I asked, what kind of announcements? First of all, periodically the health club users are exhorted that if they don't feel well while exercising, they should let somebody know. Every time there is a class about to begin, it is announced along with a detailed description that is repeated not once but twice. And there are also frequent announcements of special bargains on supplements and other products in the club's store. He says that it interferes with his being able to relax and enjoy his exercising, and contrasts considerably with the quiet workout time he enjoyed at a health club in the U.S. while visiting there re-

cently. And come to think of it, I don't think I've ever heard an announcement made at the health club I use in the U.S., just music.

I asked him why he thought they made all those announcements, and he replied: "It's part of the Confucian mind set that things are run by smart people, and everyone else is stupid and thus has to be exhorted to behave properly by mottoes and oral reminders." This comment immediately reminded me of the Dutch commentator Karel van Wolferen, one of my favorites, who in his book *The Enigma of Japanese Power* likened the ever-present recorded reminders in public places in Japan to a "nursemaid" that makes people feel "like potentially naughty children."

Indeed, he and Mr. van Wolferen have a point – many announcements one hears in Japan are rather condescending and quite unnecessary in a land where the average person is well-educated and conscientious. For example, when I was in a Japanese department store recently, at every escalator there was a recorded announcement running on a loop, asking people to please hold onto the handrail, and for those with children or senior citizens with them, to please hold hands with them when getting on the escalator. I don't happen to have children, but I imagine that if I did I wouldn't need a recorded voice to tell me that I needed to hold their hands on an escalator. And if I were a senior citizen, I would want to make my own choice about whether I thought I needed to have my hand held, and I would probably be offended if someone decided to take my hand just because it had been suggested by a recorded voice.

Verbal messages also seem to derive from a sense of service beyond what non-Japanese would consider to be necessary. One obvious example of this is the high-pitched sing-song recital of the contents of the floors by uniform-clad female elevator operators in Japanese department stores (which seem to be fewer and farther between nowadays, a happy casualty of the continuing weakness of the Japanese economy I suppose). As they push the buttons (of the completely automatic elevators), they recite what is on each floor, despite the fact that this information is usually displayed not only on a sign outside the elevators, but also on a sign over the inside of the elevator door. One only has to read to get the same information, but somehow delivering it verbally before a customer would have to ask for it is considered to be *omoiyari* (anticipating needs before they are stated).

One time I was the only person in the elevator in a store in Tokyo, and the voice of the elevator operator was really grating on my nerves. I wished that she would just shut up. I really just wanted to tell her "I don't want to hear your recital, just give me a moment of quiet please!" But I knew it was useless, because she was doing her job, which she had to do, and thus could not obey my request even if she wanted to, for fear of reprimand if anyone should find out. I was also reluctant to hurt her feelings and take away any pride that she might have in her work. Come to think about

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Notice of Annual General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2016 **Time:** 2:30 p.m. **Location:** 2305 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver, Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Roof Garden Room (north-west corner of W. 7th Ave. and Vine Street, 2 blocks north of Broadway or 3 blocks south of W. 4th Ave.)

Please note that this year we meet in the afternoon! Everyone with a genuine interest in our work is welcome.

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it, it must have taken a lot of work to memorize that spiel. I was sorely tempted though to ask her to give her poor vocal cords, and my ears, a rest. Too bad I didn't have my ear plugs with me.

This article originally appeared in Japan Close-Up Magazine

<http://www.japanintercultural.com/en/news/default.aspx?newsid=121>

Ultrasound used to teach Cantonese

Technology lets students see placement, shape of tongue

By Wanyee Li, Metro News Vancouver

Getting the pronunciation just right when learning a new language can be frustrating, but UBC researchers say they have come up with an innovative way to help people learn new tongues. UBC's speech research lab, eNunciate, is partnering with the new Cantonese-language programme to pilot a technique that combines ultrasound imagery with a series of follow-along video clips. The innovative technology allows students to see the placement and shape of the tongue during the pronunciation of different sounds. Researchers hope this will help students mimic the exact sounds themselves.

Some of the tones in Cantonese are very difficult to pronounce," said Holly Xing, a UBC student who is a native Mandarin speaker. She is one of the students in UBC's Cantonese programme who tried the learning tool for the first time. Linguists say one of the biggest challenges of learning a new language is pronunciation because people's tongues are not used to the different placements. "Ultrasound is a really good tool because it makes speech sounds visible," said Heather bliss, the research co-ordinator for the project.

This is the first time researchers have used this technology as a teaching tool. "(The technology) has been picked up in the research sense but not so much in the applied sense and that's where UBC has been quite ahead of the game - investing in this as a pedagogical tool," said Bryan Gick, director of the interdisciplinary speech research lab at UBC. Bliss and her team of researchers are also partnering with several First Nations in B.C. in hopes the technique can help language-revitalisation efforts.

UBC's linguistics team chose to pilot the technology using Cantonese because, while it is widely spoken in Vancouver's Chinese community, it is a language under threat. "There is a lot of pressure right now to not speak Cantonese in some areas of the world," said Gick, who is also head of UBC's Linguistics department. Since Hong Kong was given back to China in 1997, schools in the region are increasingly teaching Putonghua (Mandarin), China's official language, instead of Cantonese.

"If Cantonese is going to thrive, one of the places where it is likely to thrive is populations outside of China," said Gick. UBC started offering Cantonese-language classes in fall 2015, thanks to a \$2-million donation from brothers Alex and Chi Shum Watt, Canadian businessmen who are originally from Hong Kong.

Timely Response to New York Times article about disabilities

To the Editor: Three related auditory disabilities — partial hearing loss, tinnitus, and hyperacusis — require one simple disability accommodation: a quieter environment, especially in restaurants and retail stores, so we can understand speech and not have our tinnitus and hyperacusis worsened. Is it too much to ask for restaurants, retail stores and other public places to turn down the volume of the amplified sound?

Disability accommodations benefit everyone, not just those with disabilities. Just as the curb cuts, wheelchair ramps, and wider doorways and corridors mandated by the Americans With Disabilities Act benefited not just those in wheelchairs but parents pushing a stroller, delivery workers with packages on carts, and even those like me with creaky knees who find it easier to walk up a

ramp than a few stairs, a quieter environment will benefit parents trying to listen to their toddler, friends trying to catch up with each other without telling the whole world what's happening in their lives, and young lovers trying to whisper sweet nothings to each other. And turning down the volume of the rock-concert level amplified sound to background music levels won't cost a cent!

DANIEL FINK
Beverly Hills, California

The writer is on the board of the American Tinnitus Association.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/28/opinion/living-with-disability.html>