

Role of soundscape in experiencing heritage sites

Heritage sites are of high value as mediators of history. Many sites undergo preservation in order to protect against modern transformations. In visiting such sites, one will expect to experience a sense of the past and learn about its historical context. Berlin has many historic sites, from individual structures like the Berlin Wall memorial or Glienicker Brücke, to larger districts such as Museumsinsel.

According to the ISO/TS 12913-2, the affective quality of soundscapes can be determined by judging a few attributes using simple ordinal scales. However, it remains uncertain whether those attributes sufficiently capture the meaning of sound in heritage sites specifically. Preliminary research has indicated that attributes focusing on the sonic experience of the historical past need to be added to the established questionnaires using multiple rating scales addressing a set of affective qualities. Moreover, it remains vague how a visitor's avoidance of modern sounds or even an artificial playback of historic sounds can be supportive to the experience of history and ultimately contribute to the preservation of place. For investigating the role of soundscape in heritage site experience, field research must be conducted using in-situ acoustic measurements and interviews (questionnaires).

What do Berlin residents identify generally as historically defining sounds for their urban soundscape and what may be the effect of silence as an intentional element in memorial spaces?

The thesis will focus on the specific perception of heritage sites in Berlin and the role of sound at those sites. Is it possible that observations and analysis results may contribute to devising guidelines and acoustic requirements for the maintenance of heritage sites and their specific sonic environments.

The research will be supported by Pamela Jordan (University of Amsterdam), a licensed architect and heritage specialist who works on soundscape aspects in cultural and historic sites. The thesis can be written in German or English.

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