

collectifs – such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, gardens, stadiums – on which urban development was based in the seventies, have lost their centrality in the new town. Instead, they have been replaced by a kind of ‘sanctuarised’ space, which predominantly consists of middle-class residences, a concentration of corporations and, more generally speaking, the privatisation of urban space. Of course, not all of the ‘traditional’ equipments (such as big sanitary stacks or green spaces) have disappeared. New *equipements collectifs* (such as shopping centres or communication infrastructures) are also emerging. But it seems quite clear, for instance, that transport *equipements* are no longer the most crucial. This is due to the nature of the social and productive composition of new towns, which are especially made – as in the case of Rajarhat – for those who work in IT/ITES industries and who enjoy high salaries or those in the Indian diaspora who are willing to invest in their own country.

Deleuze and Guattari’s observations can be extended by trying to create a cartography of new forms of *equipements collectifs* in the era of so-called neoliberalism. This is the only way to test their fundamental idea that every new step in the development of *equipements collectifs* creates an ambiguous and divided subjectivation. In a discussion with CERFI, Foucault outlined a genealogy of the contradictory social figures engendered by the development of the road as a crucial *equipement collectif*:

- 1) The tax collector and the bandit, who are engendered by the first function of the road, which is to enable production (circulation of commodities and workforces, the collect of taxes, and so on);
- 2) The customs officer and the smuggler, who are engendered by the second function of the road, which consists of producing demand (constitution of local markets, decision of which kind of merchandise has to be taxed, etc.);
- 3) The civil engineer and the vagabond, who are engendered by the third fundamental function of the road, which is ‘to normalize, to adjust the production of production with the production’s demand’ (town planning, development of transport’s infrastructures, urban policy, etc.). In this last case, the qualified subject of normalization finds his opposite figure in the simpleton (*demeuré*) who never moves out of his village, or in the vagabond, who inhabits space in an un-economic way.

If we follow Foucault’s view of *equipements collectifs*

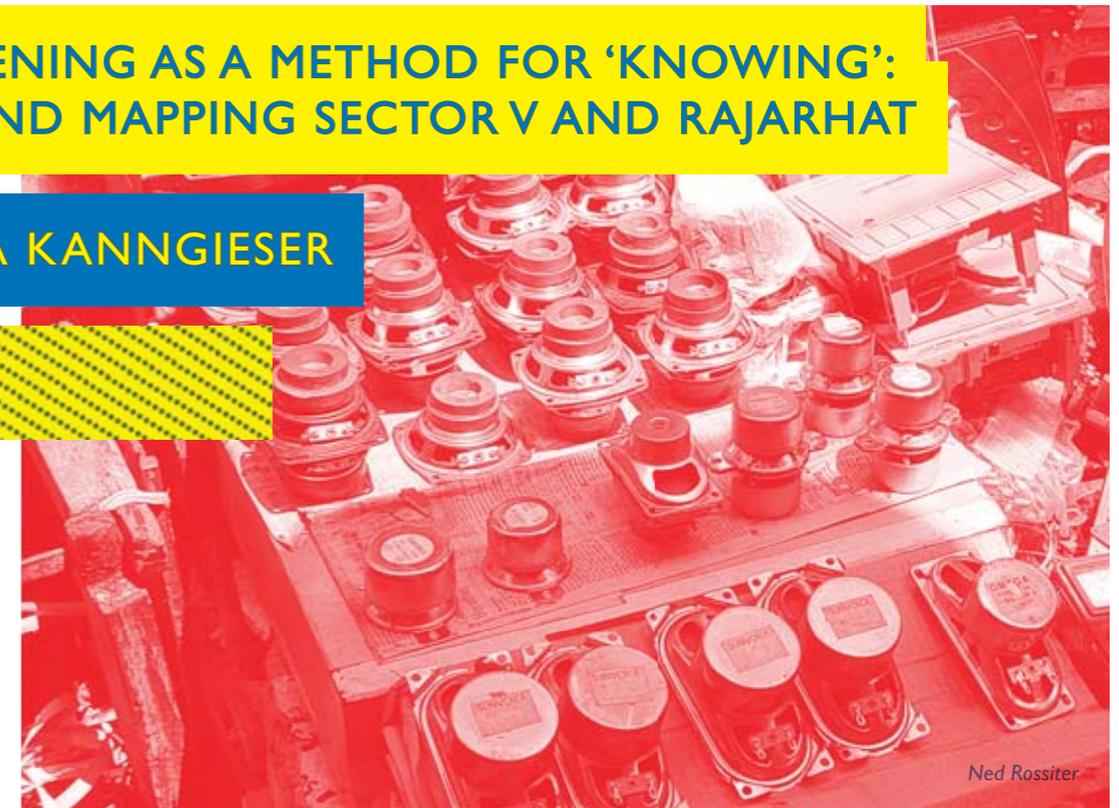
as machines for producing ambiguous forms of social subjectivity, we must try to describe the new forms of ambiguity that emerge in the new towns and SEZs. Let me risk some hypotheses: one the one hand, the high-end consumption (shopping centres, all kind of facilities) creates a kind of resident-consumer, while on the other, a new service class emerges from the villagers who have lost their land in the construction of the city; the ‘sancturisation’ of space (which, in the words of Samaddar, involves the wall as an apparatus) creates a contradiction between the isolation and self-reference of urban space, and the connection/ identification of the classes that inhabit it with a global space (linked up electronically and creating forms of proximity with other SEZs in competition to attract capital and workforces). Finally, in moving from the problem of production (consumption vs. care work) and the question of space (sancturisation vs globalisation) to one of subjectivation, one can easily observe how the virtually globalized middle-class living in contemporary New Towns does not become a cosmopolitical class but rather becomes a fertile ground for new liberal-nationalist movements. Any political invention or proposition adequate to the development of the new town must be able to negotiate such ambiguities, to think through the internal division of these new social subjectivities, and to force their logic by opening onto other spaces of subjectivation.

[HTTP://WWW.TRANSITLABOUR.ASIA/BLOGS/COLLECTIVEEQUIPMENTS](http://www.transitlabour.asia/blogs/collectiveequipments)



LISTENING AS A METHOD FOR ‘KNOWING’: SOUND MAPPING SECTOR V AND RAJARHAT

ANJA KANNGIESER



The sounds of a place reveal much of its conditions. By listening to a place we get a sense of the complex and shifting terrains that make up its unfoldings, the sudden flashes of activity, the lulls, the transversals of animate and inanimate beings. Listening closely allows us to hear for its topologies – those continuous tones and harmonics that hum throughout moments, events and passages as they articulate themselves. Through concerted listening we are able to encounter sound as a way of ‘knowing’, as an acoustemology.

A method of sound mapping can be used to trace out sounds in-situ and in-transit. Sound mapping is a means for registering the unseen or the difficult to see because we hear the resonance, dimension, depth, and porosity of space. While it has conventionally been an aesthetic practice linked to acoustic ecology, policy makers and institutions have also recently deployed it to help understand and measure the effects of noise levels on human and natural habitation. Sound mapping involves listening carefully to a space for a defined period of time. In most instances there is audio documentation, which may be accompanied by written notation and observations of ones surroundings. This can then be translated into a sonic or visual/ graphical cartography.

During the Transit Labour project in Kolkata, Sophea Lerner, Katie Hepworth and I undertook a project of

sonically (and visually) recording some of the spaces in Rajarhat and Sector V, Kolkata. We visited six locations within these areas on the edge of the old city of Kolkata: a bus depot, three building sites, a waterways and wetlands area, and food markets. The sounds were documented using a combination of binaural and directed microphones in order to better capture both the general atmosphere as well as specific sound zones.

Sound maps underscore the highly textured topographies of a space. The sites we visited were in the process of construction and/or transition. These were predominantly areas with recent histories of conflict – the eviction of agricultural communities from their land to make way for commercial and housing infrastructure. The signs of displacement were still quite apparent; alongside the frames of business centres and apartment buildings were farmers tending to small plots of land and moving rubble.

The three building sites were in various stages of development, all at once. What impressed me across all three were the jarring intervals and pockets oscillating noise and silence. The sound-scapes at these sites were not smooth; bursts of commotion that were isolated to very specific locales syncopated the ambient drone. Moving through these spaces I felt a sense of vastness, the long tracts of concrete lying inert, clanging heard



only through far off echoes. This was in acute contrast to the encounters of labour elsewhere on site: a room full of workers arc welding and sawing metal, children pushing wheelbarrows and throwing bricks, a security guard singing through a half-erected, underground car-park approaching me where I hid on a stairwell, the splashing and thudding as a group of men heaved mud onto the bank of a lake, dozens of cows lowing and grazing in the background only a few miles away from corporate IT parks and SEZs.

The transversal between noise and silence on re-listening highlights the many layers and concatenations of activity and stillness within these geographies. We sense physics of depth and size, the resonances of rooms, steel and concrete frames, the clatters of tightly packed food stalls, the frenetic passing of traffic. Kolkata is a sonically dense city. In these outskirts one starkly hears the different permutations of transition and the daily labour of its momentum. By mapping these sounds we can discern the rhythms and cadences of construction and demolition, literally and figuratively, as they happened on one day for a discrete period of time. We can discern social relations, camaraderie and antagonism through the tenors of voice. We hear the contrasting speeds of building, the specific directions of a workers attention and a foreman's instruction. We also hear ourselves, female artist-researchers from the

'global north'; we hear our lack of relevant language skills and our sometimes failed, sometimes successful attempts at negotiating entryways and borders in a city that we are but moving through.

To be sure, to usefully employ a method of acoustemology we need to go beyond description into analysis and we need to understand that such maps provide just a snapshot of an environment. If we are to approach sound as a way of knowing we need to reflect on what it reveals about the conditions and stakes of our hearing. We have to ask: what does it mean to listen, to be a listener, and to produce knowledge? How do we recognise the moment of recording for what it is, one moment in a world of many, affected by the technologies of capture, digitisation, interpretation, editing? And if we acknowledge this, how can we discover and unravel the different threads of what we are hearing while we translate them? If we keep such questions in mind, sound mapping may be a method for experiencing and engaging the dynamic topographies of a megacity like Kolkata, where our ears are fully saturated with the velocity of its inhabitants and its industries.

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