

Sounding Out! Podcast Mini-Series (#17): Listening to The Tuned City of Brussels, Day 2: “Situational Listening”

Sounding Out! Authors

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Abstract

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In this series of podcasts, Felicity Ford (Great Britain) and Valeria Merlini (Italy) explore the sonorities of the city during the [Tuned City Brussels](#) festival. Please click [here for our podcast detailing the first night](#), [here for our podcast exploring Day 1, "Noise"](#) or [here for our podcast that focuses on Day 3, "Ephemeral Atmospheres."](#)

On Saturday, June 29th, the festival focused on sonic methods for the artistic exploration of urban space, concentrating on the physical and psychological influences that shape the way we hear. The program consists of an interconnected series of site-specific sound walks, interventions, performances, installations and lectures. Here, the public is invited to come prepared for a lengthy walk between South Station and the Cemetery of Ixelles. The goal of this walk is to help others discover and participate in the situations and incidental sounds of Brussels they experience along the way. This exercise evokes Guy Debord's model of the 'dérive' (a technique for exploring urban space by passing through it), due to its attention to the aural experience of urban situations.

The first Tuned City project was realised in Berlin in 2008, with subsequent editions in Tallinn and Nürnberg. For the current edition [Q-02](#) workspace for experimental music and sound art has invited Tuned City to collaboratively research the sounds of Brussels. Brussels is a dense multi-layered city characterised by abrupt shifts in urban structure, architecture and the social environment. This patchwork provides an urban modality that resists a general grasp of the city while still providing room for individual expression. The abundance these juxtapositions during the festival creates a productive resonance where the city is manifest to the passerby in its vibrant, open-ended, multiplicity. How does one grasp the nature of these oscillations and what modes of resonance give shape to the particular Brussels vibe?^[7]

Over the course of the four day festival, Tuned City Brussels probes these urban frequencies through concerts, walks, installations and interventions, while at the same time focusing the theoretical framework around three core notions: 'Relational Noise' (Day 1), 'Situational Listening' (Day 2), and 'Operative Ambience' (Day 3). A different theme will be explored each day in a corresponding 'zone' in the city, in which the festival relocates. Several lectures, artistic presentations, residencies and workshops have led up to this four day festival. Particularly important was a collaboration with the art schools [Sint Lucas Architectuur](#), [Erasmus Hogeschool RITS/Radio](#), [Sint Lukas Transmedia](#), [a.pass](#) and [La Cambre](#) (ENSAV) option Espace Urbain.

If you would like to learn more about the [Tuned City Brussels Festival](#), please check out [their program here](#).

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Felicity Ford (Great Britain) works across a wide variety of platforms in order to engage the public with new modes of listening. She celebrates everyday life by linking the sounds of material culture, documentary sound-recording processes and listening to their larger social contexts. Since completing her PhD in 2011 she has completed commissions on Sonic Wallpapers for the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, a film soundtrack for the Wellcome Library and the British Film Institute for a 1930s antenatal care film entitled “Bathing & Dressing,” Parts 1 & 2, and a knitted sound system with accompanying composition. She co-runs the website [Sound Diaries](#) with Valeria Merlini.

Valeria Merlini (Italy) is a Berlin based sound artist, turntablist, DJ and curator. After studying architecture in Florence, Italy, she obtained a Master’s degree in Sound Studies at The Berlin University of the Arts. Her work explores everyday sounds within an urban context through an interdisciplinary and critical approach. She is a co-founder of Studio Urban Resonance, a member of the Italian record label [Burp Enterprise](#) and co-runs [Staalplaat Radio](#). As a DJ she focuses on experimental electronic music, constantly extending the conventions of turntablism, musique concrète, free improvisation and composed music. She was the director of the 2012 [Museruole Festival](#) and has participated in numerous international events and exhibitions.