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LISTENING

COLLECTIVE LISTENING

Ludwig Berger

Sound plays a key role in the perception of spaces, yet it is addressed far too little in the teaching, design, and representation of landscapes and architecture. The sounds and acoustics of a place do not only give us orientation and a sense of space. Different types of acoustic niches, horizons, or barriers influence whether we feel involved or excluded, tranquil or anxious, intimate or alienated. The presence or absence of culturally significant sounds shapes our personal and collective identities. The spatial, dynamic, rhythmical, and tonal relationship between different sound sources—balanced, discordant or in conflict—impacts deeply how we

perceive the world and how we situate ourselves in it.

In many courses and seminar weeks in Zurich, the Alps, on Mediterranean islands, and in Japan, the AudioVisual Lab at the ETH Zurich Chair of Landscape Architecture of Christophe Girot practiced “sonic fieldwork” with students to study the sonic qualities of landscapes and train their aural perception. In longer or multiple stays at the same place, we unfolded the program collectively with listening exercises and experimental sound recording techniques using surround, contact, electromagnetic, and underwater microphones. By combining fieldwork on site with artistic production work in the AudioVisual Lab, we aimed to generate a deep, embodied, and active engagement with the sonic dimension of landscapes.

I asked five of our students from the past five years to listen to five selected field recordings from our course archive. Listening back to these recordings, the students shared their impressions through voice recordings in real time. They were not told the locations before listening. But each of the people was present at one of them.

► The audio piece with all five voices can be experienced through the following link.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM9-xVWMzRw>

Sonic Memories¹

- 1 Bastia, Corsica, 2017 (06:19)
- 2 Rurikoin, Kyoto, 2018 (07:08)
- 3 Morteratsch glacier, Grisons, 2016 (07:51)
- 4 Ova Spin power plant, Grisons, 2019 (04:24)
- 5 Cava di Nicolosi, Etna, Sicily, 2022 (07:48)

¹ Ludwig Berger, “Sonic Memories 1–5” with Sophia Garner, Joshua Guinness, Yufei He, Naoko Minami, and Lian Stähelin, WAV audio, ETH Zurich, <https://doi.10.3929/ethz-b-000600295>.