



# Imagine IC series

on Theory and Practice  
of Intangible Cultural Heritage

## Event #2: Shared Sounds, 26 November 2013

In September 2012, State Secretary Halbe Zijlstra ratified UNESCO's 'Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage' on behalf of the Netherlands. Since then, a national inventory is being created and intangible cultural heritage has become the subject of strongly increased attention in the Netherlands. In response to this development, Imagine IC and the Reinwardt Academy established the series Intangible Heritage with 'Pop'. This series explores concept and methodology of intangible cultural heritage in the Netherlands, from the perspective of a super-diverse, urban society. The second event of the series, entitled **Shared Sounds**, was scheduled on 26 November 2013. The theme of Shared Sounds was sound and intangible cultural heritage.

Shared Sounds took place in and around Imagine IC's exhibition space, in the Amsterdam Southeast borough. Within hearing distance of the ArenA stadium, several hours before Ajax was to beat FC Barcelona and the sound of cheering would fill the entire district, **Paul Moore** from Northern Ireland shared his view on sound and intangible cultural heritage. Moore is Head of School of Creative Arts and Technologies at the University of Ulster. Besides taking an academic interest in sound, he has a record as a sound art developer for museums all over the world. Moore's axiom is: 'You are what you hear'. He elaborated on this axiom in his argument.

But before it came to that, there was listening. Two different traditions, which both form part of contemporary urban life, were presented as practical cases and discussed with regard to their sounds. For the first case, **street football** icons Edward van Gils and Bouchra AitL'hou demonstrated the auditory dimension of street football and the importance they attach to that. The second case, presented by Boudewijn Zwart, was about the sound of **carillon music**. Zwart is the city carillonneur of cities like Amsterdam and Maastricht. He is also the president of the international society of carillonneurs, Eurocarillon. At Shared Sounds, he showed his skills on his mobile carillon.

**Jordi Halfman**, an anthropologist using the skill of listening as a research method, hosted the programme. **Dr Hester Dibbits** (Professor of Cultural Heritage at the Reinwardt Academy) and **Annemarie de Wildt** (curator at the Amsterdam Museum) were invited to respond to the sound cases, using their expertise in the field of cultural heritage. Their annotations gave rise to the first questions for Paul Moore. Other questions and remarks came from the audience, which consisted of a mix of approximately sixty researchers, professionals and students of (intangible) cultural heritage and sound.

# The programme

## 1. The introductions

Shared Sounds took off in the exhibition space of Imagine IC, then featuring (in sight and sound) the exhibition Panna's and Akka's, about the trends and codes of street football. Marlous Willemsen (director of Imagine IC) welcomed the participants and kicked off by referring to the news report that announced the inclusion of psalm-singing with 'bovenstem' (a particular higher-pitched second voice) in UNESCO's national inventory of intangible cultural heritage in the Netherlands. Bearing in mind Moore's axiom of being what one hears, she stated: 'This is not me.' Willemsen explained that the sounds of street football, like those in the exhibition, appealed to her more strongly than the specific type of choir singing that is characteristic of the Dutch province of Overijssel and the city of Genemuiden in particular. What does this say about the significance of the national inventory? Or does it perhaps say more about Willemsen? These questions served as the first incentives for an exchange of ideas about sound and intangible cultural heritage.

Psalm-singing may carry different overtones for chair Jordi Halfman, in view of the fact that she has been active as a singer in a choir for several years. But the sounds of street football are not new to her either. On behalf of Imagine IC, she researched the sound of street football and supplied some recordings of street football sounds, which could be heard in Panna's and Akka's. She knows like no other that sound should not only be discussed, but first and foremost be experienced. For this reason, Halfman concluded the introduction of the programme by directly inviting the participants to step outside, onto the asphalt of the parking level, between the office blocks of the Amsterdamse Poort, to listen to the sounds of street football and the bells of the carillon.



## 2. The sound cases

Out in the open air, Edward van Gils and Bouchra AitL'hou discussed the role of sound in street football. 'You can hear where your opponents are, and where the ball is, often before you actually see it', AitL'hou explained. The 'ball wizards' demonstrated how several different tricks can create several different sounds, even though many a member in the audience might have thought they sounded suspiciously alike. Most people present did however immediately recognize the sound of the ball getting kicked against the fence. Van Gils then showed some impressive tricks that had ensured his status as a pioneer of street football. In doing so, he encouraged the audience to cheer, this being an essential part of street football. 'You spend hundreds of hours perfecting a trick meant to humiliate an opponent with your moves, for the entire audience to see. Their outburst of enthusiasm is the ultimate reward.' As a wrap-up, Van Gils and AitL'hou played a one-to-one game, accompanied by the boombox. For hip-hop is an essential part of the soundscape of street football as well.

Then it was time for Boudewijn Zwart to mount his mobile carillon. The word 'mobile' should not be taken too literally, though. The impressive instrument consists of fifty bells and weighs well over 6000 pounds. In the spring of 2013, on 30 April, the mobile carillon played a part in the official boat trip of the Dutch royal couple that has become known by the name 'Koningsvaart'. At the celebration of the just-crowned king, the carillonneur played old Dutch (children's) songs on a boat that featured all sorts of typically Dutch phenomena, such as tulips, mills and herring fishermen. 'Carillon-playing has been part of Dutch culture since the fifteenth century', Zwart informed us. By playing fragments of songs, he demonstrated the evolution of carillon-playing, from mechanically-sounding tunes to the great variety of songs that are now played in the bell towers. 'You can play anything these days', said Zwart. This also becomes clear from his repertoire, which ranges from Bach to Metellica, and from the Japanese anthem to the famous stadium song 'You'll Never Walk Alone'.



The crowd moved back inside. The rest of the programme took place in the OBA (public library), one floor down from Imagine IC. Under the guidance of chair Halfman, Van Gils, AitL'hou and Zwart started discussing the role of sound in their activities.

**Boudewijn Zwart** 'Every carillon player creates his own sound, since a lot depends on how you strike the bell. When I strike a key too loudly, for instance, I adjust the rest of the composition to cover that up. I could imagine football players doing the same thing, responding directly to the sounds they hear.'

**Edward van Gils** 'That's right. For instance when Bouchra has the ball, but I can't properly see this because there is a defender in the way, I respond to the sound. The scraping of the ball and of Bouchra's shoes along the pitch tell me which trick she is doing. And since I know her tricks, I'll also know where the ball is going to by the time she has finished making her move. To be honest, I was never really aware of the role of sound in street football, until I joined this project and started thinking about it. I then realized how often I respond to sounds when I'm playing.'

**Boudewijn Zwart** 'That's why you're a musician to me.' By drawing this conclusion, the carillonneur underlined an unexpected similarity between street football and carillon-playing. But there are differences too. Carillonneurs are used to sitting alone in a tower, without being able to see their audience. 'When you're in the tower, you know there are people listening, but you don't know who they are and if they actually want to hear you. But for all that, I try to connect with them, through the dynamism and conviction I put into the music. The biggest compliment I can get is when I walk past an outdoor café afterwards and hear somebody whistle a tune I have just played.'

In street football, the relationship with the audience is more direct. 'I just love the attention', Van Gils remarked with a wink. 'I do not play for myself; I play to see the response of the people. The bigger the response from the audience, the better I play. I can't imagine sitting alone in a tower, without being in direct contact with an audience. It would be pretty useless for me to play at all then.'

### 3. Annemarie de Wildt on presenting sounds

The first speaker who had been invited to respond to the sound cases was Annemarie de Wildt. De Wildt is curator at the Amsterdam Museum. In this capacity, she has been involved in several projects that included exhibitions with historical and/or contemporary sounds, like for instance the recently developed installation *The Sound of Amsterdam*. With regard to *Shared Sounds*, she was asked what would be the best way to present sounds in a museum – the sounds of street football and carillon-playing in particular.

'Museums are institutions with a visual bias' were here first words. 'We go to museums to look, not to listen. In addition, museums tend to be places where silence is required. This is because they spring from a time – the nineteenth century – when sight was considered important, whereas hearing and smell were regarded as unreliable. For this reason, we were very happy that the Amsterdam Museum was allowed to participate in the project *The Sound of Amsterdam*, which involved the reconstruction of historical soundscapes of Dam Square. For this project, Maastricht University carried out research into the changes of sounds through the ages while we reconstructed or re-recorded the sounds of all sorts of objects – one of the problems with sound being that it is usually not preserved. If there are any recordings at all, these are mostly of bad quality. The soundscapes of the square can be heard in an interactive installation linked to a painting by George Hendrik Breitner, entitled *Dam Square (1898)*.'

'On the whole, sound plays a secondary role in museums. Audio tours with commentaries on the primary objects are usually available, and occasionally there is classical music to be heard in the background, but you hardly ever see such a thing as sounds getting a stage of their own.' In De Wildt's view, sound is something museums have only just started to discover. 'The question to me

was if sounds should be shown as objects or as experiences. My answer is: 'both'. The best way to present sounds in a museum is by letting the visitors make their own sounds. We did this with special church bells. Another way would be by presenting objects that produce sounds, as in the case of the installation *Man Walks by the Window*. In the museum, we are learning to incorporate sound into our exhibitions. The exhibition about football rituals we are working on now, for example, is to be the first one partly dedicated to sound.'

'We also try to interpret sounds in the museum. We explain the meaning of sounds that have been lost. I would also encourage everybody to go out into the city and become more aware of sound, to consciously experience sounds. For as it happens, sounds lose their original context and consequently a considerable part of their meaning as soon as they are located in a museum. This holds more for sound than for objects. So by all means, join Boudewijn Zwart in the tower to experience it there. A nice example of an old sound in the city can be found at the Beurs van Berlage (the Amsterdam commodities exchange building). The bell that traditionally marked the beginning of the working day was lost. So instead, they now play a recording of that sound every day to keep the tradition alive.'

## 4. Hester Dibbits on safeguarding sounds

Dr Hester Dibbits, Professor of Cultural Heritage at the Reinwardt Academy, had been invited to respond to the sound cases in the light of the recent UNESCO projects. 'How are we to go about if we intend to recognize the sounds of street football and carillon-playing as cultural heritage?' she wondered. Before addressing this question, Dibbits stated the following: 'In both street football and carillon-playing, the sounds are the result of the physical skills of the practitioners. There is a difference, though. For carillonneurs, producing a pleasant sound is the goal. The sounds of street football, on the other hand, are a by-product. The goal of street football is humiliation, victory, getting respect. So there is a difference in the role of sound.'

'We could register the sounds of street football and carillon-playing on sound carriers and store them in an archive or play them in a museum without worrying too much about the abovementioned difference. But what if we want to keep them 'alive', if we want to keep hearing the sounds, not through a sound carrier, but as part of a practice? This is where UNESCO comes into the picture, with its convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Countries that signed this convention are expected to develop policies that help safeguard the rich variety of traditions and rituals in the world. Documentation alone does not suffice. It is all about passing on. Not the passing on of one aspect of a tradition or a ritual – in this case sound – but all of it, so including unique skills, the skills that go with the sound.'

'However, practices that some people would find worth cherishing could be regarded as annoying by others. There already is such a thing as silent bells for carillonneurs to practise on. In the case of street football, there are now playing fields that do not produce sounds. I have been informed that the street football players aren't happy with that. How do street football players deal with this? Do they look for new places to play? What would change in the experience of street football if the sound were to change?'

'This brings us to the question if there is something like the 'essence' of street football or carillon-playing. Who are they anyway, these street football players and these carillonneurs? I heard Edward say in an interview that street football brings forth three generations of players every fifteen years. So there is a high-paced flow of participants. And how about the street football players of thirty, forty years back? What were their repertoires?'

'We could document the sounds of the present day and the skills that go with them, and try and preserve them by keeping them alive, by acquainting new generations with street football and carillon-playing, with or without a UNESCO label. But the more exciting thing would be to see what

would happen with our feelings and emotions if we took them out of their context and listened to them, watched them and discussed them in a mixed, super-diverse company. What would happen then? What experience did we have just now when we were outside, listening to the sounds of street football and carillon-playing? More in general, shouldn't we also think about a way to document experiences – not just old ones, but also new, shared experiences?'

## 5. Paul Moore on sound and intangible cultural heritage

Paul Moore has been Head of School of Creative Arts at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland since 2008. In 2009, he was appointed as Professor of Creative Technology at the Magee campus. In his inaugural lecture, he argued that the role of sound in society has remained underexposed for too long in academic research. In the past, Moore conducted research into the role of sound in the construction of sectarian cultures in Northern Ireland. He also developed sound art for museums in for instance Namibia and his native city Derry.

'The question what sound means to us is a difficult one. To me, sound is who I am. Physically, hearing is the first sense we acquire when we are growing in the womb and the last sense we lose when we die. So our preference for the visual strikes me greatly. I think it has something to do with scientific developments. The scientific approach is characterized by a detached, rational observation of the object in question, and based on a sharp distinction between subject (i.e. us as researchers) and object. Sound has an effect that thwarts this distinction: it is about emotions, about what we feel, about the things sound makes us feel. That is why the emphasis has shifted away from sound. Language makes this clear as well. I myself, for instance, often say to my students: 'Do you see what I mean?' I couldn't imagine myself saying 'Do you hear what I mean', even though that is the very thing I should be saying. After all, I am usually telling them something. In the same way, people say they have a 'point of view', never a 'point of hearing'. The reason for this is that we are fully immersed in sound.



There is no escaping it. We cannot close our ears the way we would do with our eyes, because we have no earlids.'

'I used to buy records with very obscure sounds, like the sound of motorbikes racing, which rather puzzled my mother. Looking back, I realize I was building an archive, an archive I still use today to find sounds for my work. The concept of constructing archives interests me. As I imagine it, people like Edward van Gils archive themselves these days, since the new digital space gives us the possibilities to do so. Some 18 million images are being uploaded to Youtube, Instagram and Facebook every day. That's an activity of archiving: we are archiving of ourselves. What influence this has on the traditional role of the museum, I cannot say. An important part of archiving is the story we tell about the objects, the sounds we make about them. The cultural heritage is the *story*, not the archive itself, nor the object in the museum. What are we going to do with the objects in museums when everybody has a 3D printer at home? I don't know. For if we can print as many objects as we want, the whole concept of authenticity will change. This will not be so for the stories, though. Authenticity will remain with the person telling the story and with the person listening. This is why sound will gain importance in the domain of archiving – in an intangible sense, of course. The stories we tell in relation to tangible matters will be the new 'objects' to be archived. This is what intangible archiving is to me: collecting the stories we tell about ourselves and about our culture'

'My definition of culture is: the experience of everyday life. Not the special experiences, but the things we normally do in our daily live and how we recount these experiences. The way in which we tell these stories has a lot to do with the bits and pieces that we gather in and put together. In that sense, 'the mix' is the cultural form of the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, two other people had that thought before me, but I have convinced myself that they must be right. The first is Paul Miller (1970), an American scientist also known by the name of DJ Spookey. As a DJ, he looks for archive materials he can use as a basis for his electronic music compositions. In doing so, he makes a connection between the space of the twenty-first century and the space of the past. He calls this 'rhythm science'. The second is Kodwo Eshun (1967), author of the book *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (London, 1998). He argues that the art of the twenty-first century is not to be found in museums, galleries, bookstores or theatres, but on the street. And everyone who has just been outside watching Edward and Bouchra will know that this is the case. In addition, the art of the twenty-first century is auditory. Sound, rather than the visual, is what it is all about.'

### Soundscapes and imagined foleys

'I loved to hear somebody in the audience talk about the memories evoked by the sound of street football. When you hear a sound, you never hear just that sound. You always add the cultural resonance the sound has for you. This is why, when Boudewijn Zwart played the Japanese anthem, it was clear to all of us that we were listening to the Japanese anthem, for we all associate such tunes with Japan. It would be impossible to break that connection. The man who tried to do this anyway was a musician from the fifties named Pierre Schaeffer (1910-1995), who spent his entire life looking for sounds that had no cultural resonance. Shortly before he died, he said: 'It cost me forty years to discover that all there is is *do re mi*. I wasted my life.' This is sad news for him, but good news for us, since he has made it unnecessary for us to even consider these issues anymore. Sound is always a cultural utterance.'

'I will play you an audio clip that proves it. Some people asked me to make a sound installation for Derry, the city I grew up in. Derry's most important topographical feature is a river that runs through the city. I got some of my inspiration for the piece from a book by Allen Weiss (1959), who argues that 'all sound and all music mimics nature'. So according to Weiss, when we make sounds, we always try to make sounds of which we think they sound like nature. The best example of this is Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons'. I was wondering if we could make nature sound like people, to reverse the process. To try this, we put microphones in the river, to record not just the sound, but also the vibrations of the water. We processed those sounds in such a way that the river began to sing. We then had someone sing back to the river, because singing is an important part of the Irish psyche.



Alcohol or no alcohol, sing we shall. It's one of the things we do. The idea of singing back has also been suggested by theorists. According to the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Félix Guattari (1930-1992), we get to know our place in society by means of the reprises passed on to us by that same society – many of which are embedded in songs. Again, auditory, not visual. So we wanted a person to sing back, but we did not want any gender connection. So we chose a countertenor, an almost gender-neutral voice singing back to the river.'

'The cultural resonance we intended to evoke was that of the Banshee, a mythical figure that is part of the Irish imagined landscape. The Banshee is a woman wandering across the rooftops of houses shortly before someone dies. No one has ever seen one, and I suspect she doesn't really exist – which I would never say if I was in Ireland, though. Nevertheless, we all think we know what she sounds like. When I played the audio clip, everybody in the room said it was the Banshee, whereas no one knew what she would actually sound like. **[Audio clip: The River Sings]** Afterwards, I saw an old couple sitting in a corner. The woman was crying. I went up to them to apologize in case the sound had distressed her. It turned out that her daughter had committed suicide in the river and that she thought she could hear her singing in the clip. The term 'imagined soundscapes' points to the importance of the auditory aspect of 'imagined communities'. For communal, made-up sounds, like the sounds of the Banshee, provide people with a sense of connection. Even people living more than five miles apart will think: 'If they hear what we hear, we must be connected in some way or another.' Recently, I took to calling such sounds 'imagined foleys', because they resemble the foleys we know from the cinema: sounds we think exist, but they don't, they are invented. Nevertheless, we hand them down from generation to generation, as intangible cultural heritage. And they affect the shaping of identities.'

### Sound and the body

'A subject that has caught my interest recently is the relationship between sound and the body. Therefore it fascinated me to see this relationship reflected in both the game of street football and the playing of the carillon. The connection between sound and the body is evident, but as a field of research, it is underexposed. Sorry to say, this connection is sometimes sinister, because too many regimes have realized the possibility of torturing people by the use of sound. White noise, for example, can make people physically ill. What interests me is that we are beginning to understand that emotions and the body are also connected. In carillon-playing, it's not just about striking the bells, but also about the way in which they are struck. In Boudewijn's case, you could see how he started playing passionately only after he had forgotten about our presence. At that moment, he became one with his instrument. As soon as the sound made a connection between Boudewijn's body and the bells, he ceased to exist. What did exist was a sonic space in which man and bell became one. This also holds for the ball and the street football player, and it has something to do with hitting the object instead of seeing it.'

'The famous anthropologist Steven Feld (1949) did a lot of research into indigenous communities in Papua New Guinea. It appeared that these groups of people do not regard the visual as superior, like we do. They prefer the auditive. So when you give them an object, the first thing they do is knock on its surface, to listen if it sounds real. I wouldn't wish to overstretch the metaphor, but Edward said earlier that he feels 'real' only when he plays football. This has something to do with the contact with the ball, with the pitch, and with the people around him: the auditory contact is what makes us feel real. We feel 'real' when we hear, not when we see. We make the connection with reality when we hear it, not when we feel it. And anyone who has ever been to a rock concert and stood too close to the speakers will know there is a physical connection, because you can feel it in your stomach.'

'In Northern Ireland, this has a specific resonance, in drumming. Drumming is one of the methods used by the two traditional communities to try and frighten each other. This practice has become known by the name 'Blood and thunder bands'. The louder the large central drum is hit, the higher the heroic status of the player in the community will be. When the bands pass you by, you can feel the resonance of the drums in your house. You can even feel the ground shake. They made gigantic drums, called 'Lambeg drums', which they play from early morning to late at night, until their hands

are bleeding, to terrorize the other community. The bands approach the borders of their community, which are marked by flags or painted paving stones. There they stop, but the sound doesn't stop. They do this to make it known that this is their land, which they have and will hold on to. The other side responds to this. At the peak of the conflict, whenever the nationalists thought the army was about to enter an area, the women went outside carrying the lids of rubbish bins, which they hit against the ground. This sounded almost the same as the drums. In this way, both sides produced nearly the same sound. They imitated each other, and threatened each other.' [Audio clips: [Blood and thunder bands](#)]

'The sound of the carillon bells is a so-called soundmark, which you can find in many countries, all over the world. If Belgium nominated carillon-playing at UNESCO, all places with carillon bells ought to do the same thing, for all bells are unique. In a sense, all places have unique soundmarks. Some years ago, I was asked to set up an exhibition in Namibia. This is an African state that went straight from an agricultural society to a post-digital society. The middle stage – industrialisation – is missing. I said this in a speech I gave in South Africa. The curator of the national museum then asked if I could make a piece of sound art that proved this. I looked at Namibia as a country. The indigenous tribes live in the north. Sound dominates their lives, since they all have windup radios they carry around wherever they go. They wind them up and listen to all that goes on. This way, they know what time it is, for instance. The south of the country is desert, and both sides never get in touch with each other. I made a soundscape of the desert, on the basis of the stories people told me. Some local residents told me such a story, about singing stones in the desert. These stones make noises because of the wind and contact with other stones. When you knock the stones together, they sound like carillon bells. They also told me you could hear conversations from the telephone lines running through the desert.'

'I included these sounds in the soundscape, which I played to an audience in an old granary with mats on the floor. But the people didn't sit on the mats. They lay down on the speakers instead, because they didn't just want to hear the sound, but also physically feel it. Eventually, the National Museum added the installation to their permanent collection, because in their view, it was the first digital piece that reflected the genuine sound of the Namibian desert. It is one example of how sound makes people understand their culture, in a way unlike that of the visual. Because people living in the south have no idea what the north looks like from a visual point of view, but they do know now what it sounds like and what it feels like.' [Audio clip: [Namibian desert soundscape](#)]

### **The grain of the voice**

'The last thing I would like to talk about is the voice. My most recent work deals with the sound of the voice. Not as a means to convey semantic meanings, but as an instrument articulating our cultural influences. Many of you may have understood only half of what I said this afternoon, because of my accent. My accent gives me away as an Irishman, even to those who do not understand me. Yesterday, when we were taking a walk here in Southeast, there were two young women talking to a man. It was clear that the women were dominant and that they were teasing the man. There was no need for me to know the language to understand this. By listening to their voices, I could get some insight into their mutual relations. The great semiotics expert, the Frenchman Roland Barthes (1915-1980), called this 'the grain of the voice'. He demonstrated that a person's voice can give us a lot of information, even when we don't understand what is being said.'

'I was doing a project in Coventry, with some elderly people who used to frequent the local cinema during the fifties. This cinema has been demolished, except for the front, which is now part of the university building. By means of a newspaper ad, I could localize and interview a couple of the cinema's former visitors. The problem was that I didn't want to edit the interviews. Because if I were to edit them – like I did with the soundscape, for example – they would not be their voices anymore, but mine. This is one of the difficulties with the archiving of voices. I tried to avoid the problem by having a computer programme select and play back random bits, of various durations, from the interviews. The entire reservoir, consisting of twenty hours of recording sessions, now gives you a random selection of clips that is never the same. The special thing is that it doesn't matter how random the mix is. The emotions get conveyed at all times, because of the grain of the voice.' [Audio clip: [Coventry Cinema](#)]

### Jimmy Porter's Bloody Sunday tapes

'I would like to conclude with a clip that makes clear, sadly, that sound can be sinister too. And that sound plays a crucial role in politics. Bloody Sunday is possibly the most influential event in the history of Northern Ireland, and I had the honour of meeting the man who may have been associated most often with Bloody Sunday, even though nobody has ever heard of him. Jimmy Porter was the owner of an electronics store as well as a radio hobbyist. Every Sunday, he presented the radio programme 'News of the World'. So everybody knew him only by voice. He also was a tutor at the local university, where he taught young soldiers, among others. On the Friday before Bloody Sunday, these soldiers told him he had better avoid the Bogside estate that weekend, because they were about to do a 'job' there. When Porter heard this, he installed recording equipment to capture the conversations between the police and the army.'

'The day after Bloody Sunday, Porter realized the enormous value of the recordings and took them straight to the government of Northern Ireland in Dublin. The British government requested him to hand over the recordings, which he refused to do. Two years later, his wife went out to get the post and was killed, his electronics store burned down to the ground under mysterious circumstances and he lost his job at the university without reason given. The first tribunal, led by Lord Widgery, summoned Porter and told him he would be made a nonperson if he did not hand over the tapes. Subsequently, the British army paid him a visit every Thursday morning to search his house for the recordings. He told me that he and the local commander used to listen to opera while the soldiers were getting the floorboards up.'

'Porter handed over the tapes years later at the second tribunal, known as the Saville Inquiry. The tapes played a key role in the report that led the Prime Minister to apologize to the people of Derry in 2010. Porter gave me the recordings shortly before his death. I have no idea what to do with them. I should disclose them to a large audience, but I'm not yet sure how to incorporate them into an exhibition in a way that would do justice to the history of Jimmy Porter, the importance of sound and its political significance. All the same, I would like you to hear some excerpts from the recordings, which are now about to be played in public for the first time in history.'

**[Audio clip: [Jimmy Porter's Bloody Sunday tapes](#)]**

'No matter how many times I listen to the tapes, they always move me. Just to be clear, I am from a Protestant community. The things that were done were done to the nationalist i.e. Catholic community. But I was always told that they had never happened. For me to realize now that they did happen is a highly emotional experience. What you hear is the commander saying: 'Have you got something you can fire at these chaps? Rubber bullets or gas or something?' Which always kind of makes me laugh. The soldier then says there is nothing left. The commander replies: 'Are you sure it is the nail bomber?' 'We think so', the soldier says. Later on, it was proved that there never were any nail bombers at that time. 'Shoot to kill. Shoot to skill', are the commander's final instructions. Before the Saville Inquiry, the British government had always maintained that the army had fired no shots that day. Although we have seen so many photos and so many film fragments of Bloody Sunday, there is nothing that makes me shiver more than the words of that commander: 'Shoot to kill. Shoot to kill'. A human being, using his voice in an auditory way, to take the lives of other people. In my view, no image could convey that same message. I started out by saying that I cannot detach myself from the sounds that I am. I have been using them for the past thirty minutes, and I can only hope they weren't too boring for you. Thank you.'

## 6. Questions

The applause for Moore was followed by a moment of silence in the room. Presumably, people needed some time to allow the impressive ending of the presentation to sink in. In the meantime, the other speakers and performers of Shared Sounds were asked to join Moore on the stage. During the rest of the event, honorary chair Halfman led a group talk that included the active participation of the audience.

**Hester Dibbits** 'This neighbourhood is witnessing the rise of new accents, a new language in the mixture of cultures. What does this mean for our relationship with identity?'

**Paul Moore** 'In the twenty-first century, nobody has a uniform identity. We are all different people in different places and in different contexts. And we behave differently in different contexts. We have a context in which we feel relaxed, which gives us a sense of belonging. My guess is that someone like Edward and his friends use a language that I wouldn't understand. But if I were present when they used this language, I wouldn't feel threatened, because the grain of the voice would give me an impression of their intentions. In the twenty-first century, we are a mixture of a variety of identities. Different elements of those identities are disclosed by us at different times.'

**Hester Dibbits** 'Is this something optional? Can we play with it?'

**Paul Moore** 'Absolutely. It's not optional to have a mixture of identities, but using them the way we want to is. Besides sound, I have a passion for motorbikes. When I am with some of my biker friends, I tend to swear a lot, which I never do with my other friends. With others, I talk about technical subjects, with yet others about design. I am of a generation that still had subcultures, which have now disappeared. Nobody knows what they are anymore, because young people mix everything. Sometimes without being aware of it. But I think Edward is very aware of it, because when he was playing football, he took a great effort to keep his shoes clean.'



**Edward van Gils** 'True, I am aware of it. This is also because of the things I have experienced in my life. You grow older and get to deal with different influences. When hip-hop came up, in the eighties and nineties, it interested me, and I started to behave and dress in accordance with it. People used to look at me thinking: 'Is he trying to be someone else or something?' But it was my personal journey, to discover who I am. After some time, I thought: 'This is not about me'. I heard Public Enemy shout things like 'black power' and I asked myself where my place in that story was. And now I mix everything: rock style, skater style, urban style. And I'm still looking for what I am. But I'm getting closer and closer. I don't know when I'll find out what I am, but that doesn't matter as long as I'm happy. Making the journey is just as interesting as arriving at your destination. That's how I see it.'

**Paul Moore** 'That is an example of archiving your life. Edward has archived his life.'

**Annemarie de Wildt** 'I like the idea of archiving your own experiences and the stories that go with it. What Hester Dibbits was talking about refers to the other side of it: the need to 'read', understand and make sense of it too. Things that are obvious to you are not necessarily obvious to someone else. And also, these self-made archives are located somewhere. On the Internet or on somebody's iPod, for example. But the stories and the archives are not always linked. And it will be hard to get access to them for someone who is on the outside rather than the inside.'

**Paul Moore** 'In that case I think the 'reading' will become something of ours, the property of nice middle-class people like us who go to museums. I think it has nothing to do with people like Edward. It has to do with us, creating our identity. And that is kind of dangerous, for what could happen is us ending up stealing his identity and commodifying it. We'll sell it in classy streets, thereby destroying it completely. This has a lot to do with classes and groups in society. It is the only way for us to get access to that space, by reading it, appropriating it, and shaping it in a formal setting.'

**Annemarie De Wildt** 'Does 'reading' always automatically imply appropriating? Couldn't it also be harmless curiosity, or academic research?'

**Paul Moore** 'It is also curiosity, but my fear is always – and I realize this may sound ridiculous coming from someone who works at a university – that by 'reading' it, we appropriate it, and by doing so, we pull it out of the space it belongs in. We are taking it someplace else. The clever thing about Panna's and Akka's, upstairs from here, is that it bridges the gap between 'reading' and practising, in its own space, by involving the players. I see this as an example of proper archiving. It would be bad archiving if we were to appropriate the space of the players and steal it from them.'

**Jordi Halfman** 'Edward, do you agree with this? In your view, is the exhibition an accurate rendering? And does it make you feel as if street football still belongs to you?'

**Edward van Gils** 'Yes, definitely. Otherwise I would not have been as involved as I am now. Without the right feeling, I would have dropped it immediately. When I first came here, when I walked down the corridor and saw all those pictures of children playing football, I knew it was OK. Because street football is not about Bouchra and me. We may be the pioneers, but it is all about the joy in the street that is being shared by everybody, young and old.

I have a question too, by the way. Someone here has said that you cannot stop sound, but the way I feel it, I can seclude myself from the sounds around me. When I play football, and I am being challenged by the audience or my opponents, I can fully seclude myself from that. I've got the same thing with crying babies nowadays. When I had my first child, I woke up at every sound she made in the night. But then my wife said I should let it go. And then I got used to it. With my second and third child, I slept the whole night through, without hearing anything. That's why I have the feeling that we hear things alright, but that our experiences with these sounds determine the way we deal with them. Sounds can be archived, but shouldn't they first be experienced to grasp the meaning of them? And it may then turn out that my perception of those sounds is different from that of someone else.'

**Paul Moore** 'This is what I'm worrying about with regards to the archiving of sound. We can record sounds and make them accessible in archives and museums, but all people experience those sounds in a different way. This is why I try to edit sounds, to evoke certain emotions. This is very difficult and it doesn't always work, but I am trying it all the same. It is not just about the sound itself. It is about the link between the sound and the brains. That is what I am trying to connect to.'

**Jordi Halfman** 'Would you say there is no difference between sound art and the installation at the Amsterdam Museum? Or do they have different objectives?'

**Paul Moore** 'That's one of the major discussion points about soundscapes. According to some, soundscapes should only be archived. Indeed, archiving is important. But I think you could appeal to people emotionally when you do something new, when you place these soundscapes in specific contexts, where they acquire new meanings.'

**Hester Dibbits** 'This afternoon, we put two kinds of sound side by side, the sound of street football and of the sound of carillon-playing, which we confronted with one another. I was wondering if something new has come up, as a result of that confrontation.'

**Paul Moore** 'As an outsider, I found it interesting to see that there was no conflict between the sound of street football and that of carillon-playing. None whatsoever. After all, they are both forms of street sound, and you might argue that there was a clash between what is sometimes categorised as 'high culture' on the one hand and 'street culture' on the other. But there was no tension. So maybe we did indeed create something new. And everybody who was listening to it did so in the same space.'

**Francio Guadeloupe** 'Thank you all for your wonderful presentations. I have a question in relation to 'touch'. I have heard a lot about sound and the visual today, but not much about touching. Now I've got an idea that I'd gladly hear your thoughts about. It is my feeling that sound is the forbidden touch, and that that is the very essence of life. Marlous Willemsen told me that the focus of Imagine IC is 'remaking life as life is being made, at this moment in time'. So Imagine IC is about life, and life is about touching, in a particular way. I was wondering how you feel about Imagine IC's attempts in doing that. As a new way of archiving.'

**Paul Moore** 'I think this corresponds with my definition of culture: 'everyday-lived experience'. Not the special things, but simply the things we do on a daily basis. I find the notion of sound as forbidden touch very interesting, because we touch people with our voices without asking. They must then decide whether to respond or walk away from it. It is a very interesting concept, and I'll tell you here and now that I'm going to steal it, for that is what academics do. I think it should be developed in a local context, because when I was walking outside yesterday, people were constantly being touched in a forbidden way. And again, the dominance of female voices is very striking in this part of the city. I haven't seen much of that before. The new form of archiving applied by Imagine IC goes back to a movement from the seventies, known as the Birmingham School. Raymond Williams (1921-1988) was the first to present a definition of culture as 'everyday-lived experience'. Afterwards it went out of vogue. Institutions like Imagine IC are reviving it, and reintroduce it as a means allowing us to think about our culture, which is very important.'

**Someone in the audience** 'If you want to archive the sound of street football, you will have to know its meaning – like Edward said – or have enough experience with street football to be able to understand it. How does this compare to the example of the cinema, with the random editing of voices?'

**Paul Moore** 'Sounds evoke emotions, albeit different emotions with different people. In the case of street football sounds, your emotional response may differ from Edward's, but that is irrelevant. You see the exact same thing with the other example. You try to find out which emotions are present in the voices, even though you might not understand the language. That is what I meant when I said that sound differs from sight, in the sense that it is always visceral. All that matters is our emotional

response. Even though Edward might say that his response to the sounds is 'real', and yours is not. And yet, your response is 'real' too, because nobody has a monopoly on reality. Edward's reality is different from yours, that is all. Sound is highly personal. It's what makes us into individuals.'

**Mila Ernst** 'A question for Annemarie: how does this work with historical sounds? These are unknown to most people. Does the audience show any emotional response when they hear them?'

**Annemarie de Wildt** 'The sounds we selected for the sound installation are other types of sound: they are ambient sounds like the sounds of traffic, cycling, etc. These carry a different level of emotion than for instance street football. I'm not sure if people would find it interesting to sort of get access to the past by playing with sounds and feelings, to place themselves in a historical period. They are not the sort of sounds that have already been processed by the body, that have already been experienced.'

**Mila Ernst** 'So it's like with the sounds of the desert: you've never been there before, but you're trying to picture the place on the basis of the sounds you hear.'

**Paul Moore** 'It's what I call 'imagined foleys'. We all think we know what something sounds like without ever having heard it. In all likelihood, it will sound totally different from what we thought. It can then be interesting to actually hear the real thing and compare the two.'

**Annemarie de Wildt** 'Is the sound of a church bell, for example, an imagined foley to you too? Are there any city sounds you would describe as such?'

**Paul Moore** 'Definitely. I grew up in Belfast, next to the shipyard. I love industrial sounds. I love the sounds of the city. Others may despise them, but I love them.'

**Jordi Halfman** (while a mobile phone starts ringing in the background) 'And there's another one. I think we should take this as a sign to end our session. We have shared sounds and we have also shared the knowledge that sharing the meaning of sound as a physical experience is complicated.' With these words, the chair rounded off the plenary programme. Drinks and snacks were served, while the cacophony of the participants chatting in the exhibition space grew louder and louder.

## Looking back

When we look back on Shared Sounds, it becomes clear to us that the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and sound is not univocal. There is such a thing as sound as intangible cultural heritage on the one hand, and sound in intangible cultural heritage on the other. By the first category I mean sounds that play a primary role in traditions that have been acknowledged as cultural heritage, like psalm-singing with 'bovenstem' from Genemuiden or 'mindwinterhoornblazen' (the traditional blowing of large horns at midwinter) – also from the province of Overijssel – which have both been included in UNESCO's national inventory of the Netherlands. Or carillon-playing, of course, which can be found on the national inventory of Belgium. These traditions have in common that their objective is the production of specific sounds, by means of certain techniques. In the case of sound as intangible cultural heritage, the focus obviously lies on the sounds as such.

And then there is also sound *in* intangible cultural heritage. In this category, the production of sound is not the objective, but there is a distinctive auditory dimension all right, which is of importance to participants and onlookers. Such is the case with street football, but also, for instance, with the flower parade of The Hague (included in the Dutch inventory). According to Moore, sound plays an essential role in the experience of cultural expressions: sound evokes emotions, it can arouse a sense of authenticity and connection and, in the case of voice, it might exhibit cultural influences. In the matter of (the safeguarding of) intangible cultural heritage, sound cannot be ignored; not even when, at first sight, it does not seem to take a prominent place.

'How can we present these sounds in a museum?' Such was the question Annemarie de Wildt wished to address. Moore replied that one has to be very careful here, since by moving cultural expressions to a museum, you might risk their very destruction. 'How could we keep the sounds of intangible cultural heritage 'alive'?' Hester Dibbits wondered. Moore: 'This had best be done by the practitioners themselves, in the way they are already documenting and archiving themselves.' In saying this, the professor from Northern Ireland argued in favour of a *laissez-faire* attitude in regard to intangible cultural heritage. 'Whoever wishes to archive or exhibit 'living heritage' anyhow should let the practitioners speak for themselves. Allow them to share their personal experiences and let that story be the archival or exhibition object', said Moore.

One of the complicated aspects of sound is its highly subjective nature. Sound is always connected to a person's individual experiences and their cultural point of view. Hence it is difficult to archive or exhibit sound, since the heart of the matter is not the sound as such, but people's perception of it. For this reason, it is important to involve the practitioners and to focus attention on their stories. With regard to this point, Moore seems to endorse UNESCO's procedure as to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. As it happens, the international organization attaches great importance to the involvement of 'communities of practitioners' in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The Netherlands has entered the phase where a national inventory is being constructed. Communities such as mentioned above are entitled to nominate their intangible cultural heritage for inclusion on the list.

From another angle, one might say that Moore's view clashes with UNESCO's procedure, for not only does he present a plea in favour of a *laissez-faire* attitude, but he also asserts that 'the mix' is the cultural form of the twenty-first century. This would imply that old traditions and rituals will merge and transform into new variants in the present day. According to the Greek scholar Marilena Alivizatou, this is not sufficiently recognized in the UNESCO treaty. The treaty identifies the effects of modernization and globalization as the greatest threats to intangible cultural heritage, which the cultural practices should be safeguarded from. In Alivizatou's view, this will lead to a preference for premodern, 'authentic' forms of intangible cultural heritage. Or, to put it another way, traditions that will not find their way into the contemporary mix are bound to make a quicker entry on the UNESCO lists.



Moreover, we can ask ourselves to what extent one could still speak of clearly defined communities in a time that has left subcultures behind and in which each individual harbours a mix of identities, which manifest themselves in different contexts and in different manners. In view of this assumption, Birgit Meyer proposed to use the term 'formations' instead of 'communities', and Hester Dibbits suggested we speak of 'networks'. Terms like 'formations' and 'networks' acknowledge the liquidity, the temporariness and the openness that characterize these groups of people nowadays, including heritage practitioners. This became apparent, for instance, when the Panna's and Akka's exhibition was being developed. It turned out that street football players have very little contact outside of the football squares, and fill the rest of their lives in a diversity of ways. Also, the composition of the teams is highly variable. Street football creates weak ties, but it does not define its practitioners as a community.

And finally, we have become more aware of the auditory dimension of culture. Sounds can give people a sense of connection, even when those sounds are made up. Such imagined foleys are a particular form of intangible cultural heritage, since they are ideas about sounds that have been handed down from generation to generation. All in all, Shared Sounds has taught us to listen more closely to our cultural heritage and to culture in general, instead of just look at it. Doing so will deepen our understanding of it, because it will not only make us see, but also feel – even in cases where we do not speak the language. And the best auditorium is not to be found in the archives, museums or digital spaces, but in situ, on the street, where the intangible cultural heritage of our time resides, until all that will be left of it are the stories, the interpretations, the recordings and the reconstructions.

**Report, photo's and film and audio recordings** © Imagine IC

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2. Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003, p. 1.

3. Birgit Meyer (ed.), *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Hester Dibbits, 'De ontwikkeling van een gevoel voor tijd. Over netwerken, makelaars en de overheid', in: *Boekman 96. Tijdschrift voor kunst, cultuur en beleid. Erfgoed: van wie?, voor wie?*, vol. 25 (Autumn 2013) pp. 74-79.