



# ACOUSTICS 2012

## The sonic atmosphere as a historical object?

O. Balay

CRESSON, Ecole Nationale d'Architecture de Grenoble, 60 av. de Constantine, 38036  
Grenoble, France  
olivier.balay@lyon.archi.fr

There would be an absence, a gap in the description of the living environment of the past. How can we manufacture the history of the spread and production of an atmosphere, its materiality? The man, who is never passive in his world, can identify his landmarks and create his own arrangements with architectural forms, machines and techniques he meets. He is sensitive to the atmosphere surrounding him and that he makes back, to the modes of communication that are invented, to exchanges, frictions and chills that are emerging. Now the making of the "atmosphere" escapes to the historical strategies and resists to the getting caught of the rules of the description, or even to the approach of the perceptions *in situ*, those that are corresponding to the heart of the experience. To pass the level we propose three ideas.

1 / To find how an atmosphere is recognized by those who make it, we question the volume of air spaces, their luminous, auditory, olfactory and airflow matters; then we explain how those streams flow through the air; at last we ask how they spread and are received. Those informations exist in the archives, although they are few, even if we look for them carefully.

2 / Studying the historical peculiarities of an atmosphere is not only giving interest to the sensitive transmitters of the time (sound, smell, light sources...) it is also looking deeply where and how the sensible experiences in one "existing" are received as unique. This is an attempt to answer this question: what users remember of the place?

3 / Last idea: behind the ambiance as a historical object we look for the atmosphere that form "ordinary heritage". For the developer concerned by the existing environment who wants to start a project approach built on it, the question isn't: what are the issuers of the historic ambiance to be remembered? It is not: where does the memory of the ambiances come from? The question is: what a real social situation will be realized today in the place through the atmosphere at work in a building or a space that have been constructed, whose roots are in the sources of the past? It is also to wonder how the memory of a sensitive experience of the past could be appropriated again as a nowadays social experience.

## References

- [1] O. Balaÿ, L'espace sonore de la ville au XIXème siècle, Collection Ambiances, Ambiance, Edition A la Croisée, Bernin, Grenoble, Février 2033.