



The workshop “Worship Sound Spaces” in the musée du quai Branly (on the right the organizer team) was successful as it gathered about 100 persons during two days. That was the first time in France that such a multidisciplinary workshop was organised with both anthropological and acoustic approaches.



After a keynote given by Marc Asselineau on the “Characterization of acoustics of worship spaces: to believe or not in acoustic indicators”, the workshop was structured around three issues:



The first one was devoted to “sensory experience”, the second to “limits and boundaries” and the last part was devoted to the “theories of sound between past and present”. The three themes have been addressed by complementary approaches involving human sciences and engineering sciences.

Lecturers came from all over the world, focusing on Christian churches, Ottoman mosques, Mughal tombs, Hindu temples and Nepalese rituals.



We learned a lot about different cross-cutting issues, among others...

- the status of bells in catholic religion as “person” or the status of conchs/drums/flutes as divine attributes in Hindu religion;
- the priority given to loud sound in particular Hindu ritual actions and by contrast, the taste for silence in ordinary atmosphere in Christian worships.
- The use of acoustic pots (Helmholtz resonators) used in churches during the Middle Age have been installed for acoustical reasons as well as in Ottoman mosques.
- The spatial continuity (or discontinuity) that are shaped through the broadcasting of religious sound, both in private and public space.

The end of the workshop was dedicated to the first and second year Master students' final work from the Nantes Graduate School of Architecture on Cistercian abbeys, as part of the 900th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey of Clairvaux. Three teams of three or four students presented their audio visual poetic reconstitutions and simulations of the ambiance in such heritage buildings. In contrast with the questions to the lecturers which concerned the scientific issues of the presentations, the questions which have been addressed to the students were related to the emotions suggested by the multimedia presentations.

A round table animated by Jean Paul Thibaud from CRESSON/CNRS concluded the two working days. He has reminded the challenges of the meeting, bringing together different scientific disciplines, terminologies and concepts, and empirical researches dealing with spirituality, faith and religiosity. He proposed to focus on the conditions that enhance the experience of "holyness", as well as on the affective tonality of the "spiritual atmosphere". He suggested to continue to work on specific topics such as "reverberance" and "resonance" and to explore other parameters such as filtering and mask. He pointed out the strong interaction between "hearing" and "sounding", underlying the power of sound that have the capacity to transform the "space". Space should be indeed considered in two ways as a characterized one and as a produced one. The study of practical actions and local terminologies remain crucial. What a huge program!



It is planned now to collect all the proceedings and gather the papers in a book on worship sound spaces. In the meantime, the visual presentations will be loaded on the web site of the workshop.

<https://intranet.sfa.asso.fr/archives/w-soundspaces/>

The success of the workshop was also due to Frederick Keck (co-organizer with Christine Guillebaud from CNRS/CREM and Catherine Lavandier from UCP/MRTE) from the musée du quai Branly who welcomed the workshop with great care for chairs, lecturers and participants.