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## **Soundscape of Density. Architecture, Space and Sound in Sai Ying Pun**

### **Abstract**

Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated cities on earth. With its unique architecture of crowded pencil towers (Christ/Gantenbein 2012) the one square kilometre small district Sai Ying Pun is inhabited by approx. 90'000 people. This is possible through vertical expansion, creating new spaces and sound in the third dimension. The reduction of the examination field to a geographically small but super dense living area of high complexity and diversity allows multiple perspectives to the question: How does this city sound like?

As a perfect example of gentrification with local dried food stores, garages and family businesses being displaced by hip restaurants, bars and towers with luxurious flats, it is an interesting case from a sociological point of view.

Since Raymond Murray Schafer in the late 1960s conceived the idea of *soundscape*, the field of study is developing. Useful concepts for this project can be found in Stephen Feld's acoustemology, Emily Thompson's aural history, sound studies (Pinch/Bijsterveld/Schulze), theory of programmed background music (Lonza/Sterne), but also in philosophy such as Hegel's concept of music as architecture of time, Kant's aesthetics of the sublime or Heidegger's ontology.

This research project has two main goals. First to create a comprehensive catalogue of sounds in Sai Ying Pun with consideration to its vertical building structure. Second to examine these sounds and discuss them with reference to aesthetics, philosophy, musicology, sociology, economics and history. This transdisciplinary approach seems unavoidable, as the object of this examination – the soundscape of Sai Ying Pun – is as heterogeneous as the people living in this small and overcrowded neighbourhood.