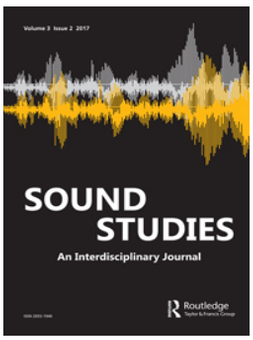

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Soundscape and sonic memory: dynamics of Jewish and Muslim day-to-day social interactions in Udlajan, Tehran

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ABSTRACT

Being home to a majority of Jews before the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, Udlajan is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Tehran. Through interviews with a select group of its past Jewish and Muslim residents, this research considers Udlajan's past soundscape and its former residents' sonic recollections in order to examine the role of sounds and silences in the social construction of space. By narrating sound memories together with other ones, Udlajan former residents express their understanding of space, communications with others, sense of identity, self and otherness, and norms of inclusion and exclusion. This paper illustrates how the Jewish residents, despite aspects of their everyday lives being circumscribed, are not mute victims but exercise agency in appropriating, negotiating and using public space.

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Soundscape; Udlajan; Tehran; neighbourhood; Jew; Muslim; sonic; memory

Introduction

Udlajan,[1] an old neighbourhood in Tehran, Iran, was home to a majority of Jews[2] before the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Following the Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's political and religious doctrines shaped the post-revolutionary policies. Such state-sponsored policies suppressed the possibility of plural and co-existent cultural identities for almost all religious minorities. This situation led to the emigration of a large number of Iranian citizens from minority religious groups, including the Jews.[3] Emigration of the majority of Udlajan Jews, closure of Jewish shops, baths, synagogues and music stores[4] following the Revolution brought about a recognisable transformation in the lifestyle of the area, ultimately changing the everyday soundscape of the neighbourhood. In other words, sounds in the neighbourhood "narrate changing histories of power as well as contemporary realities" (Wood 2013, 289). While the visual and built environment of Udlajan has received some academic attention, the soundscape of the neighbourhood has featured little in the academic literature on Tehran to date.

Barry Truax (2001) describes soundscape[5] as a system of organised acoustic communication that emphasises "the way in which the sonic environment is understood" (50). In everyday soundscapes, all acoustic fields, including street noise, the sound of people trading

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and calls for prayer, can be considered a part of the cultural frame of people's daily life.[6] Daily experiences of a neighbourhood's residents and the meaning the surrounding environment has for them can provide a suitable context to explore and compare the dynamics of self-identification. Identification, an amalgam of social construction and psychodynamic processes (Bennett 2008, 510), is formed based on the recognition of some shared characteristics with another individual or a group (Hall 1996, 2). This study considers identity as an aspect of everyday life and an always in-process construction (Frith 1996; Hall 1996). Yet, as Wood (2013) has observed, "the politics of everyday life is also embedded, textured, felt and articulated through narration, sensation and memory, through which identities are negotiated in real time" (288). In the context of Iranian history, the country's pre-Islamic culture, Islamic heritage and its relations with the West play a pivotal role in shaping the main markers of national identity (Holliday 2011). Based on my interviews and observations of everyday life in Udlajan, I argue that a combination of elements from Judaism, nationalism and Shiism worked historically to shape the Jewish residents' sense of identity in Udlajan. The Jewish residents practiced certain cultural activities and rituals, but this did not stop them from participating in national ceremonies and events, including Nowruz (Iranian new year). Some of them also attended events in the neighbourhood that were specifically related to Shiism (such as *Muharram*[7] rituals). The Muslim residents had similar experiences when it came to public events and occasions. Of course the Jewish and Muslim residents did not agree entirely on the values expressed in all Iranian-Shia rituals, nor did they share similar feelings towards them, but they came to know themselves as groups and identified as residents of the neighbourhood through a combination of similarities and differences which were reflected in their various cultural activities.

As Bruner (2001) reminds us, "a sense of commitment to a set of beliefs and values" is what remains relatively stable about the self over time (35). People's stories and narratives are a product of culture that can also be considered as their "building-blocks of identity, their way of understanding who they are and what they are in relation to the rest of existence" (DeVereaux and Griffin 2013, 1). Individuals convey their memories through narrating the lived historical, social and political context, and narratives highlight the active and self-shaping quality of their thoughts (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Elliott 2005; Squire 2013). "By interpreting how peoples of the past sensorially experienced their world, a richer, more holistic grasp of historical events is possible" (Fahmy 2013, 306). Diverse cultural backgrounds create different ways of perceiving the world and "culture operates as a lens that directs attention and filters the processing of the environment into memory" (Gutchess and Indeck 2009, 137). Remembering past events of daily life cannot be understood apart from concepts such as religion, class and family affiliations. Memory synthesises time and identity, while identity supports human beings in adjusting individually and collectively to the future, the past or both (Assmann 2006, 15–18). Studying the Muslims' and Jews' day-to-day sonic interactions and sonic memories makes possible a better understanding of the complexity of changes in the soundscape and the dynamics of people's social interactions within diverse sonic environments.

Research methodology

My field research focuses on 10 interviewees' sound memory narratives within the last two decades of Mohammad Reza Shah reign (1959–1979) and investigates how the distinction

in power relations between Muslims and Jews affected their everyday sounds. Interviewing five Jews and five Muslims, who were former residents of the neighbourhood, and examining the dynamics of their everyday interactions, I illustrate how Jewish residents, despite aspects of their everyday lives being circumscribed, are not mute victims but exercise agency in appropriating, negotiating and using public space. This fieldwork, which I call the "Ethnography of Sonic Recollections",[8] is neither strictly ethnography, nor memory and narrative analysis, but rather a combination of both. This field research is ethnographic as it involves observations as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews with former residents. However, at the same time it is a memory analysis, as it focuses on stories lived and narrated by former residents of Udlajan. During my observations, I use informal or conversational interviews, which let me discuss, probe unexpected rising issues or ask detailed questions in an informal manner. The casual nature of my interview sessions helps me in eliciting highly candid accounts from interviewees. My ethnographic research and interview transcriptions[9] provide not only my informants' memories of the past but also their emotions, feelings, subtle nuances of how each of them responded to their surrounding environment and how they narrated and interpreted their life experiences. The majority of the Jewish population of Udlajan has immigrated to the USA or Israel since 1979; thus, searching for former Jewish residents of the neighbourhood in Iran was challenging.[10] I was able to interview three Jews in Iran and two in the US.[11] The interviewees chose to include or to exclude certain things in certain ways; thus, information in their narratives is not raw data but cautiously chosen and presented. I analyse individual stories to develop a deeper contextual understanding of their everyday lives through memory recounting. I have also collected information about the context of these stories in order to situate the stories within the interviewees' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. Reframing the narratives of research participants, I investigate the neighbourhood's everyday soundscape. In this study, I see myself as a narrator who shares stories of her own experiences in Udlajan, typically in relation to the study's participants. It is important to address my position in the field as the interviewee's answers and demeanour might have been different depending on the person they interacted with. This proved to be particularly relevant for me as a secular non-Jewish young female scholar. In order to develop rapport with my research participants,[12] I deemed it essential to actively participate in community events and occasions as well as share my background and history. Being a native Farsi speaker helped me connect with my interviewees more easily.

Public and private spaces: inclusion or exclusion

In this research, the acoustic information was gathered through the recorded interviews, which provided information about the community's perception and understanding of the various sound signals and keynotes[13] that would be barely available to a passer-by spending only a few hours in the neighbourhood. Drawing on examples from my ethnographic research, I observed that sonic memories of Muslim and Jewish residents contain descriptions about different levels of inclusion and exclusion in the day-to-day life of the neighbourhood. As I followed the sonic clues in the interviewees' conversations, I found out that my informants make clear distinctions between public and private spaces including indoors and outdoors, homes, shops, mosques and synagogues. The borders between public and private spaces can be blurred, and one space can turn to the other under certain circumstances. Also, the rules of admission into places are not fixed and can be changed.[14] According to

Madanipour (2003), "[i]n cultural and social terms, the distinction between the public and private determines the routines of daily life and is crucial in the relations between self and other, individual and society" (2). My interviews indicate that the defining lines between public and private in each community are closely linked to people's understanding of selfhood and otherness, and markers such as religion, ethnicity and gender are influential in defining self and other. These factors reveal themselves in the interviewees' descriptions of sound and the sonic space of the neighbourhood. We occasionally find ourselves in transition spaces that are neither private nor public. As a result, we experience the loss of a clear distinction between public and private spaces (Nissen 2008) that one may call semi-public or semi-private. As Akkar (2005) argues, public or private spaces do not exist absolutely in urban areas (76), which can also suggest that, as opposed to the commonly held view, a public space is not always open or accessible to all members of a community. People may have different understandings of one particular public or private space; in fact, they react to their surroundings based on their socio-cultural role(s) and their interactions with other members. The relationship between public and private subdivisions of spaces is an indicator of the ways a society organises itself. The subdivision of society into public and private "regulates their behaviors and superimposes a long-lasting structure onto human societies and spaces they inhabit" (Madanipour, 1). The role of the Jewish community in Iranian society[15] has been the subject of extensive research (Sarshar 2014, 2011, 2002; Amanat 2011; Baer 2009). Much of these writings have implicitly or explicitly focused on the subordinate status of Jews in a rigidly segregated social system in the Jewish neighbourhoods. Udlajan was an example in which Iranian-Jewish life took place. In this neighbourhood, Jews and Muslims lived side by side, while each community had its own particular understanding and experience of the concepts of public (*umūmī*) and private (*khusūsī*). In the work of scholars such as Amanat (2011) and Baer (2009), the public world of Muslims is associated with power status and the private world of Jews is associated with relative powerlessness. They mainly portray Jews as helpless, passive victims, whose very identity, status and existence are dependent on their Muslim fellows. However, scholars like Sarshar (2014) have rejected this narrow, monolithic view of the Jewish community by arguing that, despite limitations, Jews play significant roles in their family, community and society. Looking at Udlajan from inside the private sphere of its Jewish and Muslim residents, one perceives the sense and the necessity of protecting a part of residents' private life from the disturbance of others. Looking at the neighbourhood from outside, from the public sphere, we understand it is crucial "to have a common ground where all can come out of their protected zones and communicate with each other" (Madanipour, 3). In this research, I call for a re-examination of general notions of public and private spaces as well as a renewed focus on religion as a way to facilitate a better understanding and conceptualisation of Jewish and Muslim residents' interaction with public space in the neighbourhood. For instance, Muslim residents might perceive a mosque as an all-inclusive public space, but their fellow Jewish neighbours are aware of the challenges they might face in entering a mosque because of restrictions regulating physical contact that were imposed upon them.[16]

Fieldwork findings and discussions

The ever-present play of power in Udlajan is recognisable in the sonic memory of the neighbourhood. Focusing on my interviewees' narratives and the ways they distinguish the

"publicness" and "privateness" of their surrounding spaces can inform us about the dynamics of power relations between Muslims and Jews. Moreover, it clarifies how, why and where these individuals draw the boundaries of their communities, and if members of the Jewish or Muslim community could ever pass through each other's boundaries. Examining the presence of *mutribs*[17] (musicians), who could more easily pass Jewish or Muslim communities' borders, helps us better understand the rules and regulations of spaces and the possibility of redefining borders. Udlajan Jewish residents were famous in the music business; they had music bands and performed at both communities' ceremonies based on their availability. As Breyley and Fatemi (2015) note, these music bands have been very flexible and the number of musicians and kind of instruments have not been fixed (33). As a result, it was very common for Muslim and Jewish families to host a music band of Muslim and Jewish musicians for their birthday parties, circumcision ceremonies or weddings. One can argue that there seemed to be an unwritten agreement about the presence of musicians who did not belong to the host religious community. My conversations with interviewees, both Muslim and Jewish, proved that this was a non-issue; a Muslim family would easily invite a Jewish music band to perform in their private parties and entertain their guests who were all Muslim. Moreover, the high demand for music performances at various occasions gave the musicians, most of whom were Jewish, the power to choose their clients. In Udlajan, there were a number of music shops, *Bungāh-i shādi*, which provided entertainment service for ceremonies and also functioned as the musicians' offices. Musicians, both Jewish and Muslims, gathered in these shops to meet clients, practice music and hang out together (Fatemi 2014, 26; Breyley and Fatemi 2015, 30).[18] In other words, these shops were public spaces open to members of both communities. Also, most of my Muslim informants reminisced about entering the houses of their Jewish neighbours on Shabbat.[19] The Muslim interviewees explained how their Jewish neighbours would ask Muslim neighbours to turn on or off the lights, stoves or some electrical devices on Saturdays. My Muslim interviewees felt privileged to have the opportunity to enter the Jewish residents' houses. As they were talking about the *khusūsī* spaces of their Jewish neighbours, their descriptions revealed the soundscape of the Jewish houses as well as different understandings of the concept of self and other. Mr. F,[20] a former Muslim resident of Udlajan, who is in his fifties and has a machine shop in *mahallah* recounted:

> When I was a child, my Jewish neighbours asked me to go to their houses and turn off their lights. They cooked their food with a primus stove and because based on their tradition they were supposed not to turn the stove on and off on Saturdays, they paid me one *Rīāl* to do so.[21]

He emphasised that the sound of kitchens in almost all Udlajan houses during the lunch or dinnertime were foreground sounds such as cutlery scraping and tapping against a china plate or a cooking pot. Mr. F added that as most of the Jewish and Muslim shopkeepers resided in the neighbourhood, they could easily go back home from their work place to eat with their family, rest for a short time, say their prayers and then go back to work. If in the past the sound of family conversations and kitchen created a unique mixture of *khusūsī* and *umūmī* sounds that were dominant during the lunch hour, they have disappeared from the daily soundscape of neighbourhood. Currently, since the shopkeepers are not the residents of the neighbourhoods they no longer close their shops at noon to have lunch with the family. Moreover, he mentioned: "The Muslims mainly thought that the Jews' houses were not clean and that was why they did not have the courage to enter their private places". I asked him what he currently thinks about their Jewish neighbours, and he replied in a low voice: "In my opinion, Jews are better than Muslims because they do not lie and practice

their religion better than Muslims. They are real Muslims". When he started talking in a low voice, first I thought somebody had entered the room. However, I realised that choosing a lower volume was his personal preference whenever he complimented the Jewish community's behaviours. Perhaps he was worried about being judged by his Muslim friends, so he subconsciously lowered his voice even when no one was around. In order to have a better understanding of his upbringing, I asked him some questions about his parents' interaction with the Jewish neighbours. He explained that when he was a little child, his parents told him that Jews would cut off the heads of Muslim children. According to Mr. F, he was told this because his parents wanted to make sure he kept a distance from their Jewish neighbours. I asked him if he has any Jewish friends and he replied No. He assumed that Jewish parents might tell a similar story to their children to keep them away from Muslims. He tried to explain to me that he did not agree with his parents' opinion about the Jewish neighbours, and that he himself admired the Jewish culture and their strong religious values. Mr. F explained that he was impacted by these false beliefs when he was younger, and that he was therefore not comfortable hanging out with Jews. For instance, once when he was invited to a Jewish wedding, he was not willing to eat or drink with them. His hesitation to eat or drink the food may come from the concept of *najāsat* (impurity) that restricted the Muslims from physical contacts with the non-Muslims.[22] However, he found the Jewish weddings quite similar to the Muslim weddings. He added that the songs Jews played in their weddings were similar to the songs that he had heard in Muslim weddings. He mentioned that the famous Persian song "*Yār mubārak*" meaning "Happy wedding, sweetheart" was one of these songs. A few seconds later, he recounted another memory. His memory involved Mr. Nejatverdi, a Jewish *mutrib*, who often played in the back of Mr. F's shop. Mr. Nejatverdi played the violin and his son accompanied him with the *tumbak*, a Persian percussion instrument. Mr. F explained that because of his interest in music he asked these musicians to come to his shop to play there and to have lunch together. As opposed to being a Jew's guest, he seemed to be more comfortable to host Jewish neighbours, particularly in his work place and not his house or private space. I assumed Mr. F was referring to the years before the Islamic Revolution; however, he pointed out that these musicians played in his shop even a few years after the Revolution. I was surprised by how musicians could play freely in his shop and did not receive any oppositional reactions from other neighbours or Islamic state forces; following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979,

> Ayatollah Khomeini condemned almost all forms of music. Accordingly, cabarets and nightclubs were closed, mixed-sex social dance was banned and popular music was restricted as the country's religious leaders sought to bring state, culture and society into line with Islamic and revolutionary principles (Hemmasi 2011, 85).

During the early post-Revolutionary years, Islamic state forces repeatedly searched private homes where suspicious of ownership of illegal entertainment materials and alcohol.[23] In another conversation, Ms. K, a woman in her sixties, a Jewish employee of Dr. Sapir hospital[24] and former resident of Udlajan, recounted a different experience. She narrated how in her daughter's birthday party in 1980, one of her neighbours gave her notice about the loud music and told her it was sinful to listen to music and if she did not turn the volume down they would inform the police. She also recounted that once she was listening to a popular Persian song called "*Bābā Haidar*" at loud volume, as was her usual habit two years after the Revolution, and her neighbour shouted at her to turn the volume down. She also added that later on this neighbour's sons became part of the clergy. She explained that although

they are still very religious, they do not react aggressively about loud music anymore. I asked her if her neighbour gave notice to Muslim neighbours as well, and she replied: Well … he was very religious at the time and did not like to listen to music at all. He gave notice to everyone … like he was police or something (laughing). But when it came to the Jews, he became more serious. It is possible that being Jewish and also female caused this double standard and placed Ms. K's Muslim neighbours in a situation to threaten her and interfere in her personal life and private space. Although Mr. F's reminiscence was taking place in his shop, a public space as opposed to his house, it seemed that the Muslim neighbours were not really motivated to warn him about the "sinful" action they were observing. Different power relations between Muslims and Jews gave Muslim neighbours the moral authority to restrict Jewish residents' daily routine and affect their everyday sounds. I asked Ms. K if she listens to music or any religious recordings while cooking or cleaning at home. She responded that while preparing food, namely the Passover bread, she mainly sings something and then unexpectedly started giving examples from her personal life experiences and interactions with Muslims. Ms. K pointed out how Muslim residents of Udlajan accused her and other Jewish neighbours of cutting children's heads and using their blood to bake the Passover bread. She tried to prove how simple-minded one should be to believe such a thing. She explained that Jews are prohibited from eating the blood of any mammal or birds; therefore, they need to drain the blood from the meat before it is eaten, and that is why they remove certain veins in different parts of the meat. In addition, a very important part of processing kosher meat includes soaking and salting the meat for a period of time and then rinsing it thoroughly. Finding sound to be so evocative, I recognised that it stirs memories and helps the interviewee to elaborate freely on topics that seemed to be sensitive. Although I did not find all my interviewees practicing Muslims or Jews, I realised that they were highly involved in their communities' religious events. Talking to Mr. F, I did not find him a religious person, but he was involved in Muslim religious practices such as the *Muharram* rituals. He mentioned that he had been the cook in the *Tikkīah*[25] Rezagholi Khan and provided lunch for the group of mourners in the month of *Muharram* during the 1960s and 1970s (the last two decades of the Pahlavi era). He and his friends set up a tent in *Tikkīah's* yard to do the cooking. He narrated that mostly men were responsible for the cooking. They communicated with a loud voice and when any of them required something, they had no other choice except shouting and asking for a favour. They made a loud noise while preparing the ingredients or washing the pots and sometimes reciting funeral dirges to Imam Ḥusayn while working. I asked him if the Jewish neighbours were allowed to enter the *Tikkīah* and he replied: "They were not interested in coming to *Tikkīah*. This ritual was not really part of their beliefs". I continued, asking him if a member of the Jewish community could participate, and he responded: "It is not possible. They only pay attention to their own religious practices. Why should a Jewish resident want to participate in the Muslim ritual?". Although I understood his point, I wondered how sacred sounds produced in *Muharram* impacted Jewish and Muslim's interactions in the neighbourhood. I asked another Muslim interviewee, Mr. K, a taxi driver in his early seventies and former resident of Udlajan, what he could remember about his Jewish neighbours in *Muharram*. He said that the Jewish community had a great respect for Muslim religious ceremonies and felt connected to them to the extent that in *Muharram* some of the Jewish residents became very emotional and cried during the rituals. I asked him about the Jews and Muslim interactions during this month and he replied: Most of the ceremonies were happening outside the *Tikkīah*. You know how loud these events

are. Big drums and … All the neighbours, men, women … I don't know … kids … everyone stood in the sidewalks to watch the group of mourners, while some of them were chest beating or singing along with the *nawḥah*.[26] This religious event affected the spiritual atmosphere of the neighbourhood. Jewish neighbours were out too and, similar to the Muslims, donated money to the group of mourners of *mahallah* to cover part of the ritual's costs. They also sacrificed animals such as sheep or roosters to fulfil their vows in this month. The Jewish community's donations or sacrifices must have shown their respect for the Muslim religious ceremonies, although they might also have been the result of some unwritten rules that would guarantee a peaceful circumstance for them in *mahallah* in return. Referring to Bakhtin's carnival concept, I suggest that *Muharram* ritual created a "second life" for the Jewish residents. During the ceremony, the hierarchical primacy was suspended to some extent and the Jewish residents found the chance to enter "the utopian realm of the community freedom [and] equality" (Bachtin 2009, 9). Temporary festivals "which often involve non-exclusive use of spaces, and generally stage liberal, often multicultural, readings of city spaces … erodes the division between reality and dream-narrative, makes a strong contribution to collective place-making" (Wood 2013, 298). Sound could create the sacred space that brought more openness to the neighbourhood and would eliminate the limitations of Muslim and Jewish interactions. The openness was not consistent, as once the sound ended the space probably became more restricted and limited. It seemed that neighbours' interactions played a significant role in this religious event. When I asked Mr. F if he still takes part in the neighbourhood's *Muharram* rituals, he talked about the changes that happened in the *Muharram* practices after the Revolution. The religious ceremonies seemed not to be held in the neighbourhood in the same way as they had before the Revolution. Mr. F complained about the changes in the social class of the neighbourhood because the majority of former residents were not around anymore. He recounted how friendly the atmosphere of their neighbourhood had been until the past two decades, and how they enjoyed themselves during the month of *Muharram* while getting together with their old friends and classmates. Mr. F mentioned: I can still hear the loud sound of drums inside my head … Our singer had a great voice … today no one cares about the good voice or so … they just use recorded *nawḥah*s. We were one of the best groups of mourners in Tehran. Everybody came to the neighbourhood to watch our group. Mr. B, a former Muslim resident of Udlajan who is in his late sixties and has a paint shop in *mahallah*, narrated a different experience about the Jews and Muslims relationship and its manifestations in sound. While I was talking to him, I felt that he made a great effort to impress me with his perspective on the friendly relationship of Muslims and Jews before the Islamic Revolution. He criticised how some people by narrating sad and offensive stories of the past destroy the good image of the neighbourhood. He denied any conflicts and misbehaviours in the neighbourhood and tried to present a better image of the neighbourhood's past. He recounted how Muslim children went to the houses of their Jewish neighbours on Saturdays to turn on or off their lights during Shabbat. I asked him if his communication with his Jewish neighbours was something more than turning on or off their lights, and he replied: "Yes. We were real friends. We were playing football and volleyball together. We were going to each other's houses". Although he mentioned that he visited his Jewish neighbour's houses to spend some leisure time with them, he did not add any further details in this regard. Most of his memories about relationships between Muslims and Jews seemed to have happened in *mahallah*'s *umūmī* spaces such as streets and alleys. He described how residents of the neighbourhood were all

familiar with each other and the shops of Jews and Muslims were located side by side. The shopkeepers were mainly from the same neighbourhood and lived close by their work place. Most of the time one could find one or two peddlers sitting on a corner or walking through the narrow alleys, while singing in loud voices to inform the residents about their presence. A number of Jews worked as peddlers mostly outside the neighbourhood. According to Mr. K sometimes they dressed up as Arabs, repeating a few simple Arabic phrases such as "*enshāl-lāh*" and "*māshāllāh*" [27] to sound authentic, and pretended to come from long distances to sell their goods at a more expensive price. He recounted how different the soundscape of the neighbourhood was then compared to today. In the past, based on my interviewees' recollections, there were a variety of stores such as bakeries, grocery shops, butcher shops, shoe shops, music shops, coffeehouses, fabric and liquor stores where Udlajan's residents were able to purchase their daily requirements and groceries closer to home; neighbourhood residents were the primary customers of these shops. Mr. K recounted that there were several Jewish shops that sold live chickens, and the sound of chickens was heard everywhere. I asked him if Muslims bought chicken from these shops and he replied: No. These shops were very messy. I am not saying this because I am religious or something … you could see feathers scattered all around the shop … I hated the smell and did not like to go near these shops. The sound of chickens worked as an indicator of a public place that was mainly used by Jewish residents to demarcate their personal space, creating a border between the semi-public space of the shop and the street outside. Mr. K added how this sound acted like a warning for him to change direction and to go to the other side of the street. Jewish residents were the only customers of these shops. He reminisced that whenever the Jewish shops were busy and you could hear the Jewish accent everywhere, it meant that a Jewish ritual was going to happen. The sound of Jewish shops and the Jewish accent were part of the fabric of Udlajan daily life defining the presence of the Jewish community. The variety of shops in Udlajan created a soundscape representing the daily life of a local community. The dominant sound of traffic was counterbalanced by a recognisable pedestrian flow and a very lively street life extending throughout the days and evenings. As Ms. S, a former Jewish resident who is a housewife and in her late fifties, explained, walking in the main streets of Udlajan revealed the continual presence of residents' vocal communications and clarified there were more pedestrians than cars back then. The existence of Jewish and Muslim shops, baths and places of worships in the public space of Udlajan caused another subdivision of *umūmī* and *khusūsī* that I call *nīmah-umūmī* (semi-public) and *nīmah-khusūsī* (semi-private). Some Jewish-owned businesses of the neighbourhood such as fabric stores and music shops served Muslim and Jewish customers.[28] Although a Jewish butcher shop was open to both Muslims and Jews, it played the role of a *nīmah-khusūsī* space for Jewish residents. The shopkeepers and customers were Jewish and spoke in Judeo-Persian. They exercised their agency as they communicated with their fellow Jews and discussed things such as the Jewish community's upcoming events while waiting for their meat to be prepared. In addition to two famous synagogues of the neighbourhood, Azra Yaghub and Nou, there were several synagogues suitable for small religious gatherings. Being scattered around the neighbourhood, these synagogues notified each passer-by about the historical presence of the Jewish community in Udlajan.[29] In today's Udlajan, one can mainly find shops that produce or sell different types of bags, namely handbags and backpacks. These stores sell their bags to the shopkeepers of other neighbourhoods and sometimes other provinces. Their customers are mostly men who buy large quantities of product each visit. As a result, the former soundscape

of the neighbourhood including the sound of residents' greetings, housewives buying groceries as they bargain with the shopkeepers or a peddler singing have disappeared from today's Udlajan. Disappearance of the former soundscape of Udlajan not only represents the neighbourhood's changes from a mainly residential area to a mainly commercial one, but also it reveals the loss of a local community daily life and its soundmarks ranging from the residents' accent to the music shops' sound or the live chicken markets' sound. Most of the former residents of Udlajan were disappointed with the changes that have taken place in the neighbourhood. The emigration of the Jewish residents and the closure of music shops were the two main issues that were raised by them. Mr. B described there were great musicians in *mahallah* who were mainly Jewish. He also added that these musicians were playing at both weddings and funerals. Unable to hide my surprise, I asked him if the Jewish musicians really were allowed to perform in Muslim religious rituals. He paused for a few seconds and replied that the Jews could only perform in Muslim weddings and birthday parties. I am not certain if he corrected himself because he misremembered or he wanted his memory to better suit the current socio-political situation of the Iranian society. In addition, he started to talk about the wedding ceremonies. He explained that weddings mostly occurred in people's houses where they made use of their yards. Yards usually had a big pond that they covered with a wooden platform to provide a stage for performances. Most of the time, a beautiful Persian carpet was placed on the top of the wooden surface. These performances were called *Takht-i huzī* or *Rūhuzī*, which literally means "on the pond". Men and women danced together, as opposed to most of today's weddings in which men and women are segregated according to the rules of modesty dictated by the state. Although the house is perceived as a private space, during wedding ceremonies it was open to all neighbours and passers-by. Moreover, sitting on their roof, a number of the neighbours were able to watch what was going on in the wedding. I asked Mr. B if he have ever participated in a Jewish weddings and he replied "Several times … their weddings were similar to ours … hmm … but they sometimes sang a few songs in their own language … but the songs were *Iranī* [Iranian]". I asked him what he meant by *Iranī*, and he explained

> "the music, melody, and everything was *Iranī*".[30] Another anecdote reveals the sonic boundaries in public and private spaces in the neighbourhood. I asked Mr. B if he ever entered a synagogue; he replied No. He explained while the Jewish residents were praying in a synagogue, it was not appropriate to disturb them. If he wanted to meet one of his Jewish friends, who was in the synagogue, he would ask a Jewish neighbour, sitting by the synagogue door, to call him on his behalf. It seems to me that the sacred sound of the prayers created a religious space that was limited to Jews and excluded the Muslims. Jewish residents' dedication and sincerity about their religious rituals empowered them to prevent the presence of others. The distinction in power relations during the Jewish rituals affected Muslims' everyday sounds, as they did not find the chance to play a part in the Jewish rituals' soundscapes. Mr. B's anecdote reveals some information about the strategies of the Jewish community for coping with the presence of strangers in their religious space. Based on the Muslim interviewees' responses, I realised that their experiences of synagogues' soundscape were limited to the vague Hebrew religious recitations that they heard outside the synagogues. For instance, Mr. B emphasised that one could hear the Jewish prayers from Azra Yaghub synagogue whenever it was crowded and people gathered in the yard. Azra Yaghub had a yard separating worship rooms from the street. During the times when people could not fit in the rooms, they gathered in the yard and consequently the sound of their prayers could be heard outside the synagogue. Other than those special ceremonies, the doors of synagogues are always open on Saturdays, but passers-by do not hear the prayers. Since my Muslim informants did not enter the synagogue, their sonic memories of the interior space were not detailed or elaborate. Mr. B narrated that the Jewish residents

> never caused any trouble in the neighbourhood and they were mostly very polite and calm. I asked him if he ever heard the sound of the Jewish prayers or if he recognised any sound in the Jewish culture comparable to the call to prayer. His answer was No. Then I asked him what the reasons for that could be and he replied, "Jews were mainly practicing their religion in their private spaces because Muslims were a bit sensitive about them. I think that was why Muslims did not let them raise their voices or use loudspeakers".

I noticed that the absence of the Jewish sonic practices from the shared public space reflects the unbalanced power relations among the Jewish and Muslim neighbours. This anecdote reminded me of a conversation that I had with Mr. N, a former Jewish resident, who is in his early seventies and works in a print shop in the neighbourhood. He narrated a memory about a Jewish tradition in which the Torah was carried from a synagogue in *mahallah* to another synagogue in Yousefabad Street.[31] The Jewish residents and a number of musicians accompanied the lead musician while singing and playing music. According to him, Mohammad Reza Shah prohibited the Jewish community from performing this tradition. One can question the publicness of the city's streets based on this narrative. However, despite the existence of this restriction, Mr. N did not seem annoyed or disappointed and told me: The majority were Muslims, so these restrictions made sense. During Mohammad Reza Shah period we had a wonderful life in *mahallah*. It had a very calm atmosphere and you could not see so many cars and motorbikes. I really missed those days.Referring to the words of Walter Benjamin in Sullivan (2001), "[t]o articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was'" (1). It is possible that feeling nostalgic weakened Mr. N's sense of annoyance about the prohibition of this tradition, or other probable challenging situations that Jews faced in the neighbourhood. When I asked him if his Muslim neighbours had ever bothered him or his family members, he simply replied "Not too much". I could not keep back my laughter and just asked "Not at all, or not too much?". He answered while laughing: Well, there were a few neighbours who were drawing lines between Muslims and Jews. They were jealous of Jews because they were very rich. However, I am not rich … (Laughing) I don't know why but Muslims really like me. It might be because as opposed to other Jewish residents, I am a very patient and an easy-going person.Moreover, he pointed out that he has a Muslim uncle from his mother's side. This made me wonder if this relationship could better explain his friendly bond with the Muslim residents. I asked him about his Muslim friends and if he has ever entered their mosques. He replied that he had about 12 Muslim friends who mostly teased him when they were teenagers. Once they had a terrible fight and he beat them hard. After that the teenage boys learnt their lessons and understood how strong he was. They did not tease him anymore and, because of his physical strength, they asked him to become a member of their group. He added that he went to a few mosques only for funeral ceremonies. Mr. N's mother and father both were *mutrib*s. However, he did not use the term *mutrib* while talking about them and he only mentioned that they had an *urkestr* (orchestra). I came across the same expression in memories of Ms. K, another Jewish informant of mine. Her husband was a *mutrib* but she also did not use this term and mentioned that her husband had an *urkestr*. She described him as famous in Tehran and he had weekly shows on the national television. The former residents of the neighbourhood used the term *mutrib* to label a group of musicians who played in weddings and parties, although the *mutribs*' family members avoid using this term. As Nettl and Shiloah (1986) note, despite a few outstanding well-respected Jewish musicians performing Iranian Classical music, majority of Jewish musicians were mainly entertainers (74–75). Also, Mr. S, a Jewish

interviewee in his early sixties who resides in Los Angeles and owns a beauty salon, explained that his parents did not show too much interest in hanging out with Jewish *mutrib* families in the neighbourhood. Mr. N recounted memories from his childhood where his mother, a well-known *mutrib*, was asked at least five or six days a week to play at different events. His grandfather on his mother's side was also a musician and had trained his daughter. I asked Mr. N if any of his siblings were musicians and he said No. He explained that his mother was very busy and passed away when they were young, so they had not had enough time to learn music from her. Mr. N described how his parents decided how many musicians they could include in their band based on the importance of the occasion and their budget. It did not really matter to them if a musician was Muslim or Jewish and their selection depended on the availability of musicians at specific times. In most of their performances, a dancer who was a Muslim woman accompanied them. I shared my information with him about the Muslim dancer Pari Solati whose daughter and son are famous pop singers in Los Angeles. I asked him if his parents had ever performed with her. He got excited when he recognised I knew Pari Solati and replied: "Pari Solati lived close by. My mother and she had several performances in the Shah's palace in Noshahr".[32] He recounted that his parents were performing in Muslim and Jewish weddings, and Muslim musicians came to their house to practice. It occurred to me that this close relationship of the Muslim and Jewish musicians might be because of their similar social status in the society. I brought this issue to his attention and told him that being a *mutrib* was not highly appreciated and respected among the majority of Muslim families. Then I asked him about the social status of the Jewish *mutribs*. He replied:

> Well … you know … I do not like to talk behind their [Muslim musicians'] back … but the Muslim *mutribs* were a bit immoral. For example, when they were in a party they sometimes went to the owners' dresser and stole some money or jewelleries. They had a bad economic situation, and some of them were opium addicts. I think they really had no other choices.

He added that Jewish *mutribs* were different, and recounted that his father was very gentle and caring. Whenever his band was supposed to play at a wedding, he would pay the musicians in advance. He did not talk directly about the social status of the Jewish *mutribs* and particularly his parents; it seemed to me that it was not very different from that of Muslim *mutribs*. According to Mr. Sh, one of my Jewish informants, who lives in Vermont, the Jewish *mutribs* were not highly respected in the Jewish community. Mr. Sh, a well-educated person who is in his early seventies, was a student of *ustād*[33] Abolhassan Saba, the great Iranian violinist and composer.[34] He recounted that his parents encouraged him to practice the violin and play in the family gatherings, but they were against him becoming a professional musician. As Loeb (1972) notes, Jewish *mutribs*' low social status was because of their peculiar working hours, eating non-kosher foods in Muslim ceremonies, having friendly relationships with dancers who were typically assumed to be prostitutes and performing on Shabbats (9). Explaining *mutrib*s' daily routines, Mr. Sh confirmed Loeb's argument and emphasised the particular association of *mutrib*s with inappropriate social behaviours such as drinking. Mr. P, the youngest of my Muslim informants (he is about forty-five) who owns a convenient store in Udlajan, was my only Muslim informant who recounted a memory about his family socialising with Jewish neighbours: "Although my mother is very religious, I can remember very well that she hung out with our Jewish neighbours frequently. They were very nice people and they never meddled in other neighbours' personal lives". He also narrated an anecdote about Shabbat: As you may know, Jews do not turn on or off any light and also do

not strike matches on Saturdays. They asked my brother and me kindly to turn their lights on. Sometimes they gave us sweets but most of the time they offered us a small amount of money.This repeated story in all of my Muslim informants' reminiscences made me doubt the motivations behind these interactions and the Muslim informants' insistence on how close they were to their Jewish neighbours. It seemed to me that they got invited into the houses of Jewish neighbours in order to help them with certain religious restrictions that would not compatible with everyday life in the modern world. Moreover, I asked myself about the possible un-narrated part of the story and wondered if the Jewish children were allowed to enter the houses of their Muslim neighbours. Among my Jewish interviewees, interestingly, only one informant reiterated a story about Shabbat. Ms. K recounted that she had a very religious Muslim neighbour who was called *hājī*[35] and was from Yazd.[36] I really liked her sense of humour while she was trying to explain her close friendship with *hājī* and his family. She imitated *hājī*'s *Yazdī* accent when recounting her memory: Whenever I asked *hājī*'s wife to send one of their children to turn on my heater, hājī called me little rascal! "*Why are you coming all the way here? Just call me, I myself will come and turn your lights on*". After he came to my house and turned all my lights on, he made sure that I did not need anything else. He passed away a while ago. God bless his soul.Ms. K's recount reveals how a religious Muslim man felt comfortable entering the house of his Jewish female neighbour. Although it shows some levels of intimacy and friendship, one may also question if *hājī*'s attitude was the same towards his Muslim female neighbours. If he felt comfortable enough to enter the private space of a Muslim friend's wife or daughter, or whether the fact that Ms. K was Jewish gave *hājī* less concern about the social norms and restrictions and allowed him to be more easy-going in his communication with the opposite sex. I also believe that being Jewish gave Ms. K more freedom and flexibility, than her Muslim female counterparts, in her interactions with men in general. Imitating each other in a jokingly manner is another sign of friendship between Ms. K and *hājī*. It also draws attention to two of the accents – Ms. K's Jewish accent[37] and *hājī*'s *Yazdī* accent – in the neighbourhood that reflect the diversity of the community. The presence of different accents in the neighbourhood's daily life could be qualified as a soundmark of the neighbourhood, in the sense that it is "a prominent feature of the soundscape, possessing properties of uniqueness, symbolic power or other qualities which make it conspicuous or affectionately regarded" (Schafer 1978, 37).[38] The diverse nature of the neighbourhood that was the result of the presence of Jewish residents as well as movements of various populations from other provinces to Udlajan was expressed sonically through a continuous mix of accents, intonations and sometimes languages (such as Azeri and Arabic). All of my interviewees showed a great respect for the former structure of the neighbourhood and remembered their Jewish or Muslim neighbours with nostalgic feelings. The interviewees explained that they hated the current noise and crowdedness of the neighbourhood, and that they really missed Udlajan's sonic past. However, they described that they have got used to Udlajan's noisy sonic environment. Based on Truax, people at first recognise an intruding sound, most likely perceive it frustrating "but too much trouble to do anything about, and before long they grow accustomed to it and accept its presence" (Truax 2001, 99). In some cases, noise and crowdedness even became valued, as it comes to represent the liveliness of the neighbourhood. In several conversations, I found young male shopkeepers in the neighbourhood appreciating Udlajan's existing soundscape and dynamism.[39]

Conclusion

Representing the day-to-day realities of Udlajan residents, this study provides us not only with current and past sonic portraits of the neighbourhood and the ways it is heard and understood by its inhabitants, but also represents the residents' daily socio-cultural interactions and their sense of identity. Through interviews with a select group of Udlajan former Jewish and Muslim residents, this paper highlights the role of sounds and silences in the social construction of space. Of particular interest is the actual relationship between public and private spaces, the way they interact, communicate and together create an overall acoustic community in which the boundaries are often blurred. Jewish and Muslim residents' conversations about sound and space explain their understandings of concepts such as self and other as well as being included and excluded. The degree of inclusion and exclusion in a space or the "privateness" and "publicness" of a particular location is not the same for all the residents. The "publicness" or "privateness" of spaces is determined based on the type, content and level of loudness of sonic exchanges and such loudness is encouraged and tolerated by different spaces or even by one particular space in different occasions. Through recollection and narration, residents of the neighbourhood restructure their past lives to fit present needs and concerns. The Jewish residents have managed to create a balance between their ethnic/religious identity and their role as citizens of the neighbourhood interacting with their Muslim neighbours and claiming their own space.

Notes

1. Udlajan is located in the southern part of Tehran. Today, south Tehran is home to the low-income population while the majority of wealthy and well-educated residents live in north Tehran.
2. During their long history of residence in Iran (more than 2700 years), the Jewish community assimilated more easily in Iranian society in the historical periods in which the emphasis was on secular-nationalist discourses and the glorification of Iran's pre-Islamic past (Rahimyian, 61). Secular Iranian nationalism provided the Jews with a sense of their historic connection to the land in which they resided. The Jewish community argues that there are no contradictions between Judaism and secular Iranian nationalism, as Jews believed that the Bible and the Talmud had a positive view of ancient Iran and Cyrus the Great, the founder of the ancient Persian Empire. Cyrus was known as "the redeemer of the Jewish people and the messiah of God" (Netzer 1996, 251–252). In Mohammad Reza Shah's era (1941–1979), Iran experienced a dynamic sociopolitical period that caused an open cultural environment. The number of newspapers and weeklies increased, Jewish organisations and synagogues could work freely, and the Jewish community found the chance to renew its Zionist activities (Rahimiyan, 62). Moreover, the economic status of the Jewish community improved to the extent that by the time of the Islamic Revolution the majority of Jews were middle class citizens (Sanasarian, 47).
3. Based on the census of Iran in 2011, Shi'ite Muslims make up 90% of the total population of 75,149,669, and Sunni Muslims follow in size with 8%, Christians number 117,704 or 0.156%, Zoroastrians number 25,271 or 0.033% and Jews number 8,756 or 0.012% (Choksy 2012, 272).
4. Also known as *Bungāh-i shādī* literally meaning "Happiness Institution".
5. The soundscape is a term coined by R. Murray Schafer. For more information on this concept see Schafer (1994).
6. For more information see Attali 1985; Tonkiss 2003; Thompson 2014.
7. *Muharram* is the first month of the Islamic calendar. It is a month of remembrance and is often considered synonymous with *Ashūrā*. It refers to the tenth day of *Muharram*. It is well-known because of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn, the third Shia Imam.

8. Only talking to two interviewees who reside in the USA, I cannot consider this research the study of Iranian Jewish community's diasporic memory. However, it can provide a preliminary context for further studies on Iranian Jewish community in diaspora.
9. I conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to allow both the interviewees and myself the flexibility to go into details when needed and to provide the opportunity for two-way communication. When conducting interviews, I asked my informants about their daily sonic experiences as residents of Udlajan: How has the soundscape changed and why? What could they remember about the neighbourhood's sonic environment? What was their first sonic-recall from their childhood? What was their favourite sound? What was the most annoying sound? What did either Muslims or Jewish residents think about sounds of each other's communities? As the nature of the questions was informal and the conversation guided the topics, my informants could elaborate on the themes that they found more interesting. As a result, some of the responses that I received are not directly related to sound. I allowed the conversations to guide follow-up questions that further investigated previous ones. I conducted all my interviews in Farsi (Persian), as most of my informants did not speak English. Being a Farsi native speaker, I decided to transcribe the interviews in Farsi, then translate them to English. In organising the interview materials, I had the challenge of whether I should consider all the responses that I received or only include the sound memories. I decided to be more faithful to the first approach and included non-sound-related responses that could help to contextualise the sound memories more easily and would provide a more comprehensive image of the neighbourhood. However, on account of ethical considerations such as my informants' concerns about their position in the society, I did not include names, connections or stories they recounted that might breach their privacy and anonymity.
10. As holding an Iranian passport prevented me from traveling to Israel, and restricted my ability to contact individuals there, I decided to conduct interviews with former Jewish residents of Udlajan who now live in the USA.
11. One of my Jewish informants lives in California, Los Angeles, one in Vermont, Putney, and three in Tehran. All of my Muslim informants reside in Tehran. It is worth mentioning that all my Jewish and Muslim interviewees were born in Udlajan and spent their childhood there.
12. Before starting my filed research, I did not know any of my informants. I spent some time with each interviewee to make connections and give my informants the chance to know me better.
13. According to Schafer (1977) there are three main elements of the soundscape: sound signals, keynote sounds and soundmarks. Sound signals are foreground sounds, which are listened to consciously. In contrast, keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously.
14. For instance, as I explain later, houses mainly known as private spaces can turn into public spaces during certain events such as wedding ceremonies and they can be open to both Muslim and Jewish neighbours.
15. Both Muslim and non-Muslim Iranians have known Iranians Jews as *Kalīmī*. Following the establishment of the General Registry Office in 1924, Iranian Jews required to register their religious affiliation in their ID cards as *Kalīmī*. The word referring to the Jews of Iran derives from an Arabic root meaning "to address" and "to speak." The designation in this context has derived from the particular "epithet given to the prophet Moses as *Kalim-Allah*, that indicated in the Koran: And to Moses God spoke directly" (Netzer 2011, 376).
16. See Tsadik 2007 for a succinct overview of these restrictions and the concept of *najāsat* (impurity) that limited the Muslims from physical contact with the Jewish community in Iran.
17. *Mutrib,* a term with an Arabic root (*tarab*), in Tehrani culture was perceived as synonymous with illiterate musicians with low moral principles who did not play serious or sophisticated music (Fatemi 2014, 19–25). *Mutrib*s, whether Muslim or Jew, had a low social status. As Loeb (1972) notes, "in Shiraz, until the 1950s, the term *motreb* [*mutrib*] was colloquially synonymous with Jewish professional musician" (6). On the Jewish occupational prestige index, musicians did not rank high and only the butcher, beggar and the body-washer ranked below them (8–9).
18. For more information about the *mutribs'* situation in pre-Revolutionary Iran see Meftahi 2016.
19. In the Jewish faith Shabbat is the Jewish day of rest that starts from Friday night until Saturday evening.

20. To maintain my interviewees confidentiality while presenting detailed accounts of their social life, I introduce them in my research with the first letter in their family names.
21. *Rīāl* is the currency of Iran, although Iranians mainly express amounts of money in *Tumān*.
22. For more information see Freidenreich 2011.
23. For more information see Siamdoust 2013.
24. Dr. Sapir hospital is a Jewish charity hospital in Tehran that is located in Udlajan area.
25. *Tikkīah* is a building particularly designed to serve as venues for *Muharram* rituals. For more information see http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hosayniya
26. *Nawḥah* is an elegy depicting mournful subjects such as martyrdom of holy Imams.
27. *enshāllāh* and mā*shāllāh* are Arabic expressions. The first expression means, "if God wills it" and the second one is mainly used to express praise and thankfulness.
28. Being in charge of certain businesses, including entertainment and fabric retail, Jewish shopkeepers had control over prices and sales in the neighbourhood.
29. For more information see Takmil Homayoun 2014.
30. For more information see http://www.7dorim.com/gooyesh/gooyesh.asp
31. It is a neighbourhood in northwest Tehran.
32. Noshahr is a port city in north of Iran.
33. maestero.
34. Mr. Sh has a number of musical compositions for violin and piano about his life in the neighbourhood.
35. A respected title given to a man who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca.
36. Yazd is a city in central Iran and people from this city speak Persian with an accent known as *Yazdī*.
37. I would like to emphasise that Ms. K similar to the majority of Iranian Jews spoke Persian with a particular accent. Iranian Jews of different cities of Iran have their own dialects such as Judeo-Kashan*ī* and Judeo-Hamedan*ī* (Yar-Shater 1989; Gindin 2011; Habib Borjian 2012).
38. Although Schafer used this argument to point to different languages that were spoken in a neighbourhood, in this study I applied this argument to point to Persian language that was spoken in different accents.
39. Referring to Bijsterveld (2008), sounds that bother some people can be music to the ears of others (2). Also, Labelle (2010) notes, although noises impact health and environmental well-being, they may represent a precise liveliness within the culture and the expression of freedom in social sphere (xiii).

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