

Article

# The Social Construction of the Soundscape of the Castilian Cities (15th and 16th Centuries)

Gisela Coronado Schwindt 

Departamento de Historia, Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata,  
Mar del Plata 7600, Argentina; coronadogisela@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to develop some conceptual elements that articulated the social construction of the soundscape of the urban spaces of the kingdom of Castile (15th–16th centuries). We focus our attention on the revision of the normative spheres that structured the subjective universe of the Castilian inhabitants, in order to notice and spot the different sound representations that intervened in the spatial and social configuration of the cities, their possible conflicts, and levels of acoustic tolerance. This proposal is part of the so-called “sensorial turn” in the Social Sciences, defined by David Howes as a cultural approach to the study of the senses as well as a sensorial approach to the study of culture. The research is carried out through the analysis of the sensory marks present in a documentary corpus made up of normative documents (municipal ordinances, books of agreement, chapter acts, diocesan synods, and royal dispositions) and judicial documents (General Archive of Simancas) combining methods of discourse analysis and the history of the senses. In the article, we argue and remark that the sound dimension operated as a device that acted in the shaping of the identity of places, since it contributed to define and delimit their use. This was reflected in the importance given by the authorities to the normative regulation of the community, which included a textual dimension in which the historical soundscape was imprinted, revealing the multiple social interactions that integrated it.



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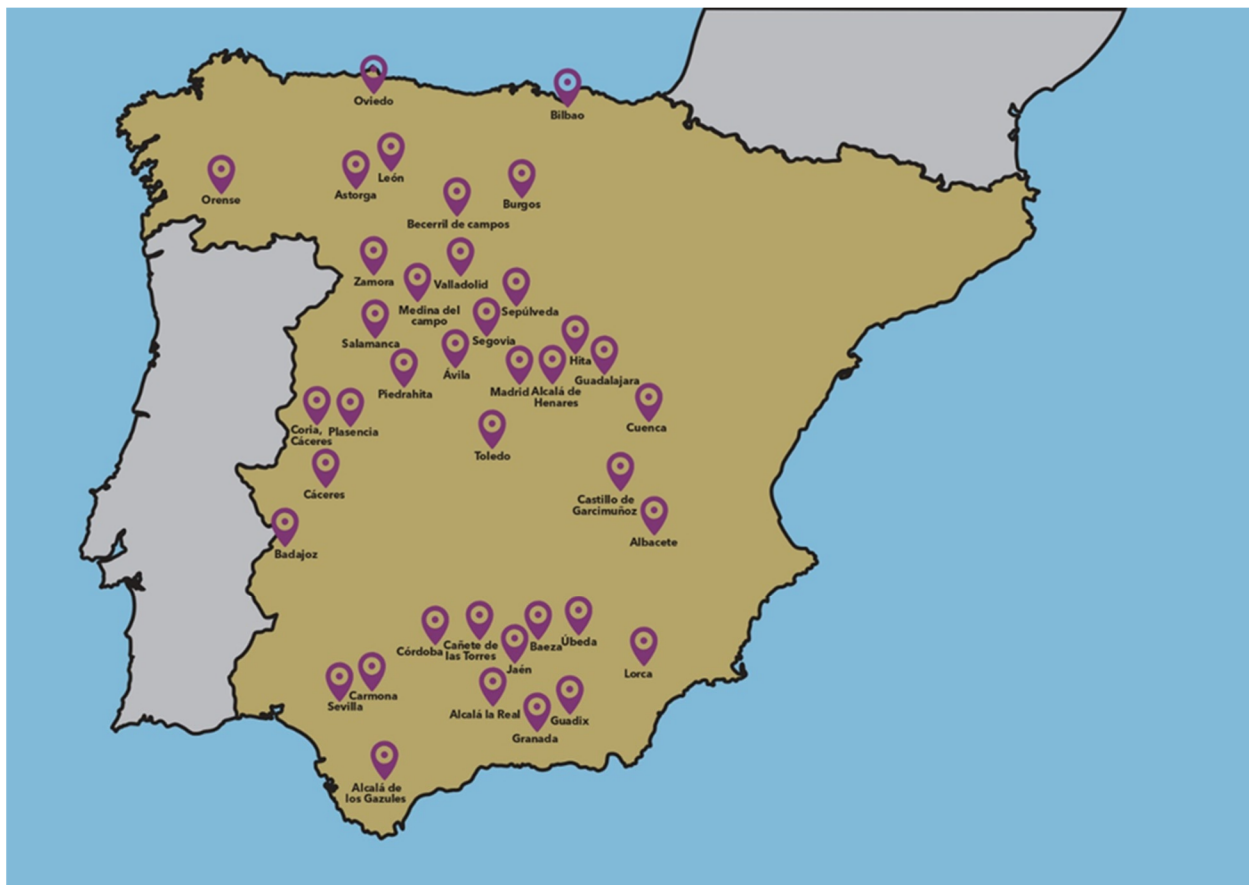
**Keywords:** acoustics; soundscape; city; Castile

## 1. Introduction

The construction of the soundscape of the urban centers in the Kingdom of Castile between the years 1400 and 1560, an object scarcely addressed by studies dedicated to the last medieval centuries, was the main objective of our doctoral research. A set of normative, judicial, and literary sources were selected for doctoral research. These represent a wide set of urban areas in the current Spanish regions of: País Vasco (Bilbao), Asturias (Oviedo), Galicia (Orense), Castilla y León (Astorga, León, Valladolid, Medina del Campo, Becerril de Campos, Burgos, Salamanca, Ávila, Segovia, Piedrahita, Zamora, Sepúlveda), Madrid (Madrid), Castilla La Mancha (Alcalá de Henares, Hita, Guadalajara, Toledo, Castillo de Garcimuñoz, Albacete, Cuenca), Extremadura (Badajoz, Plasencia, Coria, Cáceres), Murcia (Lorca), Andalucía (Córdoba, Sevilla, Guadix, Jaén, Alcalá de los Gazules, Granada, Carmona, Cañete de las Torres, Baeza, Úbeda, Alcalá la Real) (Figure 1). This choice resulted from the methodological position we adopted that favors a general analysis since it allowed us to examine both the recurring and the exceptional testimonies that emerged from the documentation in a wide variety of places. This approach differs from particular studies that researchers undertake in an exhaustive and detailed way, and contributes to a complete knowledge of a particular place, but from a local perspective, dissociated from the general dynamics of the kingdom.

In this way, the perceptions and sound emissions produced by Castilian people in the exercise of various social practices were identified from a historical point of view, including both daily activities and special events of the annual calendar (parties, celebrations, royal

entrances, etc.). This allowed us to analyze the sound representations, including their expression and the possible context of reception, which affected the spatial and social configuration of cities by assigning meaning to the multiple urban sounds and noises that were key to determine the noise tolerance of inhabitants. In addition to the recognition of the acoustic dimension of the landscape, we addressed the double nature of the notion of “noise” since it was perceived as an everyday element, and as a semantic device that not only explained conflict but also could produce it, affecting social coexistence between different groups. Consequently, the objective of this work is to specify and develop the conceptual elements that articulated the social construction of the soundscape of urban areas, through the analysis of two of the sound spheres that structured the acoustic universe of the Castilian people in the development of their everyday activities: The normative and the conflictive spheres.



**Figure 1.** Urban spaces that were analyzed (c. 1400–c. 1560).

The royal, council, and ecclesiastical authorities regulated the emission and reception of certain sounds providing evidence of the sound manifestations present in the citizens' daily lives, not only from a perspective that proposed what it should be, but also these regulations gave an account of what was happening. This attempt to regulate the sound practices of the inhabitants generated contradictory processes that originated conflicts of interest around tolerance of certain sounds and diagrammed a particular conflictive sphere.

In our research, we argue that the Castilian urban world was the result of the multiple social, political, and economic relations that the city inhabitants established as a result of the interaction with the different inhabited spaces. We consider that these interactions and the daily social practices caused the emission of certain sounds that made up a specific acoustic universe. This affected the way in which the Castilians understood and rationalized their reality, originating representations, that depending on the assessment made by social

groups, altered the range of audibility. In particular, we think that the sound dimension operated as a device that shaped the identity of places, in a sense that it contributed to defining and delimiting its use. Castilian inhabitants—as producers and hearers of sounds—established sound marks to inform the passage of time, the peaceful or conflictive nature of social ties, the content of the rites of passage of the members of Castilian society, and the meaning of celebrations, creating a “historical soundscape”. This was confirmed by the importance given to this matter by the royal, council, and ecclesiastical authorities in relation to the normative organization of the community; it included a textual dimension, regulating the character of the sound emissions, the form and content of the authorized word, and the disruptions that were to be avoided.

## 2. An Acoustic Approach to the Past

Historical science has shown a constant interest in exploring new fields of study that encompass and understand the multiple cultural manifestations of societies throughout time. Peter Burke wrote: “We seem to be living in an age of ‘turns’, in historical thought and beyond. Famous turns such as the social turn, the linguistic turn, and the cultural turn, all located in the later 20th century, have been followed more recently by the global turn, the affective or emotional turn, the material turn, the cognitive turn, the spatial turn, and a number of others” [1]. Little by little, historians recognized the importance of the senses since, apart from being corporeal endowments, they affect the way in which people perceive the world, favoring the access to perceptual and intellectual cultural manifestations. In Martín Jay’s opinion, the interesting thing about these types of approaches “is, of course, their complex interaction over time that allows us to understand that neither the sense of the senses nor the sense produced by the senses is invariant” [2]. The intention of positioning sensory perceptions as valid means of knowledge for the social sciences [3] originated the construction of the so-called “sensory studies” that have their own development in historiography known as the “History of the Senses”. This field has fostered the development of a multidisciplinary approach, suggesting a “systematic use of the senses as a methodological tool and as an object of study and reflection as well” [4].

The History of the Senses poses a re-reading of the available documentation, studying the sensorial registers transmitted by the sources and the network of dynamic relationships in which they are inserted on each period [5]. This perspective is not simply an attempt to reconstruct the variety of sensory perceptions and their transformation from one period to another or from one culture to another, but seeks to establish the intimate connection that exists between a sensory formation and the ways in which it contributes to interpreting reality and encoding it [6]. Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite think that, above all, it is a broad framework of analysis “because senses can interact and arise from distinctly different contexts and cover multiple meanings; intersecting modes of sensory perception can overlap and become bound to particular cultural, political, and social constructs—generating what scholars have termed ‘sensescapes’” [7].

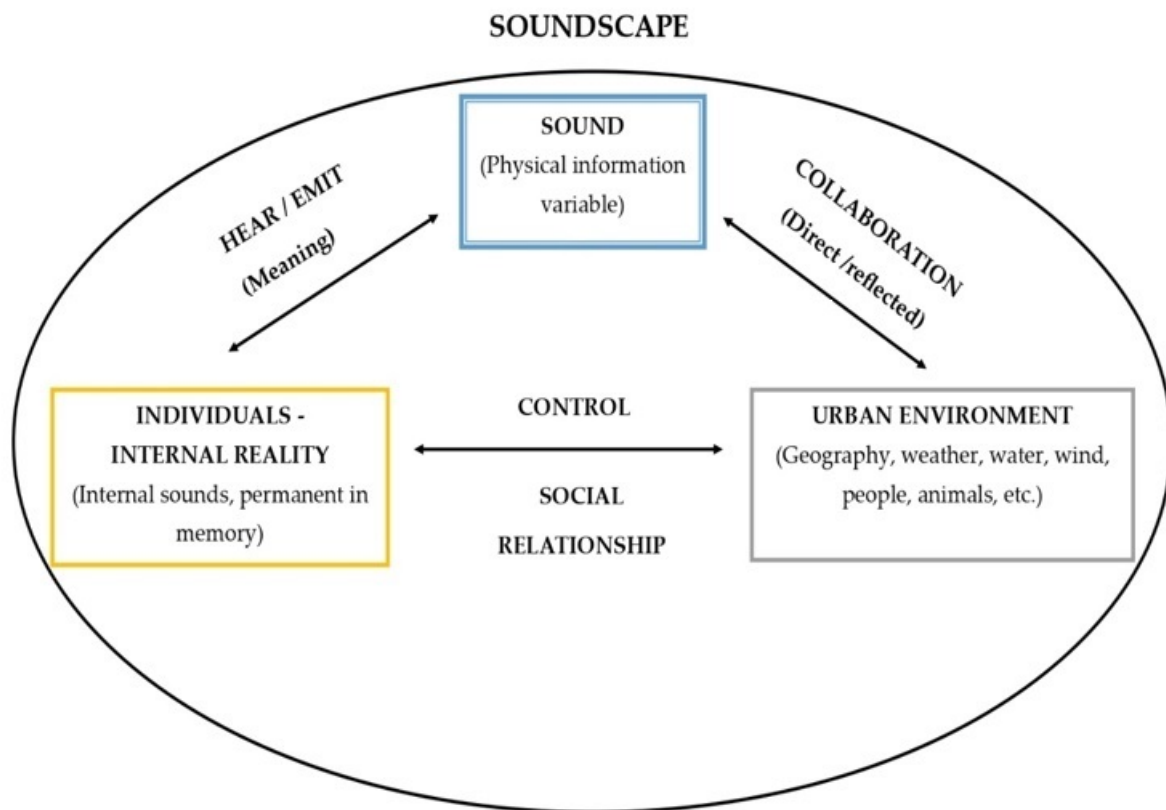
Within these approaches, there are two possible methodological paths: One that integrates all the senses in a general analysis (Sensory History) [8] and the other that concentrates on one of them to explore, in depth, the social and cultural meanings it has for a society (History of the Senses). Our interest lies in the latter, since we will analyze only the auditory sense, so it is necessary to complement our analytical tools with theoretical and methodological contributions from other disciplines. In this case, we support the proposal of acoustic studies, which are interested in understanding how sound circulates and in what way it contributes to the manner we make the world around us understandable [9]. In this field, the auditory sense is the vehicle of language and the receiver of the sounds produced by human beings and nature. Hearing [10] goes beyond the possibilities of sight, translating the sensitive matter of the world where observation can only distinguish surfaces. The world is in front of us, even if our eyes are closed.

This field has benefited from the historiographical currents of the social sciences, such as the anthropology of the senses, cultural history, musicology, among others, which made

the investigation of sounds an actual variable in human science [11]. Consequently, the sound phenomenon was a plausible object of study from an interdisciplinary perspective that encompasses a wide range of methods that address the fields of acoustic ecology, urban studies, cultural geography, cultural and sensory studies, media, and communication studies, etc. [12]. In particular, this research recognizes the contributions of historical acoustics, which emphasizes the changing nature of sound over time in the context of a given spatiality [13]. In addition, significant are the contributions of archaeoacoustics, which provides us a methodology for the treatment of an object of study as ephemeral as the sound contained in written texts. Regarding that issue, Bruce Smiths has affirmed that: “Just as a more conventional archaeologist first unearths the objects to be studied and then ranges them into categories, so an acoustical archaeologist must “un-air” sounds that have faded into the air’s atmosphere and catalogue them” [14]. It should be noted that an analytical approach is favored. This latter adheres to these proposals but does not develop a physical study of sound, a topic that is on the horizon of future research.

Along with these premises, acoustic studies pose a series of questions for guidance: What does sound mean? How does the researcher reflect on the sound? How does the researcher collect data and information? What theoretical frameworks guide the analysis? What models are available for the study of sound? [15]. Addressing these questions allows us to consider how, where, and why sound is produced, reproduced, spread, imagined, transmitted, and understood from a historical point of view. One of the most representative concepts in this field is that of “soundscape” introduced in the 1970s by the Canadian composer and researcher Raymond Murray Schafer [16]. This notion made reference to the acoustic manifestations of the environment, that is, to the sum of the totality of the sounds produced by individuals and nature. In this way, he gave a social and cultural significance to the places by revealing their political, economic, social, technological, and natural conditions. A holistic conception of the phenomenon is added to the original definition, considering the soundscape as a perceptual construction of the individual, conditioned both by the acoustic environment and the sociocultural context [17]. Consequently, soundscapes are constantly evolving according to social conditions, thus placing themselves in a specific socio-historical context [18] (Figure 2).

According to Mark Smith, unveiling the evidence that shows how sound and hearing are a historical construction is precisely the duty of the historian who is interested in sound studies [19]. The challenge of this task is that the available documents did not intend to record the sensory marks of their time, since the sensory approach “rests on the feeling that is lodged between the lines of written sources [20]. Consequently, the question is not to elucidate which historical sources are susceptible to sensory reading, but how we can carry it out. The specific challenge in this type of approach is the search for dispersed elements that are not systematized as a standard, either for the actors who intervened in their development or for those who approach their study from written records. In the same way, we must bear in mind that much of this available documentation gives us scarce and fragmentary data, which is difficult to quantify and even more so to understand its consistency [21]. However, despite these facts, this fragmented story, that the sources transmit through multiple mediations, allows us to reconstruct how the senses intervened in the configuration of social relations, codifying the interaction of men and women in a given society. Consequently, the construction of the historical soundscape not only implied recognizing the materiality of the sound, but also identifying its logical operation. In this sense, historical actors had a reflective attitude shaped by certain ideas about the transcendence of sound, although these include a practical dimension that conceives it as a means of social articulation.



**Figure 2.** Diagram based on Barry Truax's [22] scheme, where the mediating social relationship between individual and space is visualized through sound.

This construction was carried out using a qualitative-quantitative methodology to analyze textual evidence. First, sound marks present in the documentation were identified through critical reading, content analysis, thematic marking, and bibliographic evaluation, using tools provided by semiotics. Second, we systematized the qualitative-quantitative record of the identified semantic units into a record card which included the following variables: (1) Source data, and (2) sound records: Areas and places, protagonists, natural and material objects, animals, contextual situation, music, instruments. This methodology allowed us to study the interrelationships between contexts and discourses, recognizing statements, devices, objects, strategies, and recurrences related to sound content that caused meaningful effects in the society that produced them. This information became visible and communicable through the graphic representation of the soundscape of urban spaces in the Kingdom of Castile during the 15th and mid-16th centuries, which we will analyze below.

### 3. Castilian Cities: Complex Acoustic Environments

The starting point of our analysis was the medieval urban areas and their special characteristics that took part in the configuration of a specific sound dimension. Particularly, cities in the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modernity were characterized by material and sensory complexity as a result of population growth and an increase in production. A city is a complex object of study to be approached due to the different conceptions researchers have constructed about it, highlighting the need to approach the urban phenomenon from multiple perspectives, pointing out the difficulty of defining its characteristics and textures [23,24]. The medieval city is not exempt from this complex analysis since it has characteristics of two antagonistic and, at the same time, complementary periods: The ancient and the medieval. Similarly, both the new urban spaces and those that survived underwent an important turn during the medieval period, being completely transformed inside and out [25].

For this reason, we consider cities as “sensory environments” [26], places that generated different stimuli with a range of symbolic meanings for sensitive and perceptual individuals. In recent years, theoretical interest was focused on analyzing the ways in which both the human body and the city it inhabits are reassigned and reconfigured. In other words, the sensory encounters between individuals and environments are produced and structured, not only by material characteristics, but also by the social and cultural contexts in which people live. This leads us to wonder about the stimuli that led to the emergence of enclaves and their constant changes. In relation to this, we can mention the prominence of economic changes, the intervention of authority, the power of the monarchy and the local nobility, as well as the presence of ecclesiastical hierarchies [27]. In any case, although a city is never identical to another, there are elements in common that can be recognized.

Some common features that can be identified in urban spaces (cities, towns, or villages) were taken from an ideal conception and partially reproduced the material condition of the “big city”: A church (major, cathedral, collegiate church, or parish), elements that functioned as protective walls, access gates in nerve centers of the mural circuit, judicial headquarters, gallows or pike for executions, urban framework including main streets, representative buildings (palaces, towers, hospitals, bridges, etc.), and social spaces (fountain, oven, square, tavern, mill) [28].

Particularly, we will focus on the “Castilian city”, which is a formation that had its own characteristics in comparison to other European urban phenomena due to the reconquest process carried out by the Christian kingdoms in the territories occupied by the Muslims since 711 [29]. It can be approached from multiple perspectives, including the following: The analysis of its dimension, morphology, and functions, city-countryside articulation, study of the political and legal dimension and power relations, the cultural and religious functions of urban spaces, as well as the analysis of its society (structure and social dynamics, organization, and economic activities), and social practices and sociability. We will focus our analysis on the last point, considering the intervention of the sound and auditory dimension [30] in the Castilian urban society—a topic rarely addressed by medieval researchers on the subject.

The 15th and 16th centuries was a period of growth and progress for the kingdom at the political, economic, and social levels [31]. Thus, the most important consequence for our analysis was the renewal that took place in urban areas, evidenced by a new population growth. Some of the characteristics of these urban areas included the concentration of intramural spaces and suburbs, the urban transformation promoted by the municipalities, thanks to the support and political direction of the monarchy in terms of construction of public buildings, paving, water provision, widening, and maintenance of streets and squares, and the establishment of norms of coexistence, together with a significant and steady commercial and manufacturing activity.

In this process, citizen authorities devoted their efforts to establishing a good government with the aim of achieving a socially, economically, and politically regulated place. This materialized in the drafting and publication of legislation from the 14th century, such as ordinances and council capitular records, where an important point was improving population health, for example avoiding the generation of sounds—which became noise—of certain productive and trade activities that affected coexistence and caused conflict among neighbors that ended up in the civil court.

This effort to regulate the coexistence of the inhabitants concerning certain practices and their sounds originated the layout of a specific soundscape taking into account at least four sound spheres (normative, temporal, ritual and festive, and conflictive) where we can identify the performance of sound representations both in the social sphere and in the structuring of places. In this paper, we will concentrate on the normative and conflictive spheres to value the effort of the royal, council, and ecclesiastical authorities to provide order to the places and their sounds as well as to deal with conflicts among neighbors due to sound intolerance of certain social practices.

#### 4. Urban Sounds Legislated: The Normative Sphere

An acoustic organization was carried out around the sound object that acoustically unified Europe during the Middle Ages: The bell. Its official use in ecclesiastical buildings dates back to the sixth century, assuming a triple function: Gathering the faithful for *lectio divina* and prayer, announcing the passing of time and frightening the evil spirits [32]. Starting in the eighth century, its use became widespread in parishes and monasteries. Between the 12th and 13th centuries, the construction of large bell-towers on the defense towers of churches began, since larger bells were casted and manufacturing techniques were improved. The complexity of meanings that the bells held for past societies was expressed by Alain Corbin in his analysis of the change of meaning of these sound objects in the French countryside before and after the Revolution of 1789, revealing the complex links they had with the communities and giving them a sonic power symbol of a more complex sensory environment. Likewise, Corbin highlighted how the bell had become a marker of identity, noting that “La cloche, en un subtil mélange symbolique, perpétue le souvenir et dit la novation; or, son message auditif, plus impératif que le message visuel de la statue, est aussi doté d’une plus intense puissance émotionnelle” [33]. Its sounds played a fundamental role in the behavior of Castilian society, since its ringing contributed to build a dimension of the subjectivity of the inhabitants in their relationship with the environment. The sound of bells configured the different social representations that marked the lives of men and women, building a sound language with particular features depending on the tone, the rhythm, the duration and the moment of the ringing. Likewise, this object fulfilled an outstanding function by reaffirming a group’s own identity, creating a social bond by means of the information it provided and the auditory competence that it demanded from the members of the community. In its public dimension, the bell had a double role since it was identified as *vox dei* and *vox populi*, serving in the ecclesiastical and public spheres as an indicator of time, liturgical rites, and citizen alerts. Mojca Kovačič argues how the polysemic meaning of the sound of the bell and its perception have been transformed over time by pointing out that: “it is the sound of a religious institution, the sound of tradition, the sound of history, the sound of faith, glory, and happiness, the sound of the time, prayer, mourning, music, and, most recently, of noise” [34].

The bell enclosed a world of complex meanings since, from the moment it was created to the moment of its actual use, it implied a series of rituals that reaffirm its role in the divine manifestation in certain places. This sound object was conceived as the means of access to the divine and the embodiment of the voice of divinity [35], mainly for the activation of the five senses in the context of the liturgy [36]. Consequently, the possession and manipulation of the bell was important for ecclesiastical institutions since it was the sound instrument par excellence both in the transmission of information and the conformation of the Christian worldview. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze the role it played in the delimitation of time and its impact on the sensory experience of the individual [37], which will lead to the establishment of certain behavior guidelines defined by the authorities [38].

Ecclesiastical dispositions organized the day according to a distribution of prayers throughout the 24 h implementing bell ringing at certain hours to remind men and women of their Christian duties. Every three hours, Castilian churches’ bells announced the passing of time. The first alert occurred at midnight, when the ringing of *Matines* took place [39]. Then, at three in the morning, *Laudes* was played; at six in the morning *Prima*; at nine *Tercia*. Then, the third block of the day began at noon with *Sexta* and at three in the afternoon with *Nonas*. The ringing of *Vespers* at six announced the evening, and *Compline* at nine announced twilight: “Ordenaçion santa fue estableçida ( . . . ) que los clérigos ( . . . ) fueren obligados a rezar las Oras canonicas cada dia. Las quales Oras de la noche e dia, conviene a saber Maytines e Prima e Tercia e Sexta e Nona e Bisperas e Cunpletas, fueron canonizadas en la Pasion de nuestro Señor Jesuchristo ( . . . )” [40] (It was established that the clergy prayed the canonical hours every day ( . . . ) it is convenient to know *Maitines* and *Prima* and *Tercia* and *Sexta* and *Nonas* and *Vespers* and *Compline*, they were canonized in the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ). The ringing that essentially marked the perception of

time in the individuals was the one that announced the *Ave María* prayer by means of three claps: “establecemos e ordenamos que, asi en la nuestra yglesia cathedral como en todas las yglesias principales e parrochiales de nuestro obispado, los sacristanes e, donde no oviere sacristanes, los clérigos dellas, cada tarde tangan el Ave Maria, dando tres badajadas de la campana mayor que oviere en la yglesia, y esto por espacio de una a la otra tanto que se puedan dezir tres Ave Maria, e despues se tanga esta campana por algún poco espacio conveniente, o otra campana, segun esta ya acostumbrado” [41] (we establish and order that in our cathedral church, as in all the main churches and parishes of our bishopric, the sacristans and, where there are no sacristans, the clergymen, every evening ring the *Ave María*, giving three claps of the largest bell that may exist in the church for a space of time that allows three Hail Mary’s to be said, and then this bell is rung for some convenient space of time, or another bell is rung), after sunset: “( . . . ) ordenamos e mandamos que el sacristan de la nuestra iglesia mayor de la dicha çibdat, e en las otras villas, en las mas principales, cada un dia despues del sol puesto, quando escomençare a escuresçer, tanga al Ave Maria ( . . . ) en las dichas iglesias principales ( . . . ) tangan todos los otros sacristanes de las otras iglesias de la dicha çibdat e villas, e non en otra manera, so pena de cinco mr. ( . . . )” [39] (We order and command that the sacristan of our main church in that city, and in the other towns ( . . . ) every day after sunset, when it begins to get dark, blows the Hail Mary ( . . . ) in the said main churches ( . . . ) and not otherwise, under penalty of five maravedís [Iberian coins]) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The normative sphere.

In this way, bell sounds were—in the sacred dimension—the announcers of the omnipresence of God and the duty of the believers to worship him. Likewise, they played an important role in the profane dimension becoming the sound signal par excellence indicating the presence of the ecclesiastical institution in the secular sphere, imposing their authority through the establishment of behavioral patterns to the inhabitants.

The communication capacity of the bell also engaged the interest of council authorities to inform inhabitants of the council’s decisions regarding certain practices developed in



urban areas. For instance, the need to meet to decide on government matters when the *concejo* ringing announced it—a reference that appears in the documentation with the explanation: “ringing bells, according to custom and usage”. This practice spread to different urban areas in the kingdom, such as Madrid (“estando el concejo de la dicha Villa ayuntados a canpana rrepicada”, Being the council of the said Village gathered at the ringing of the bell [42]), Guadalajara [43] and Bilbao [44] throughout the 15th century, and Becerril de Campos [45] and Hitain the early 16th century: “El concejo de la villa de Hita, junto a canpana tañida según que lo avemos de huso e de costunbre para tratar/de las cosas conplideras al concejo” [46] (The council of the Village of Hita, gathered at the ringing of the bell according to use and custom to deal with certain things related to the council). Apart from informing the need to meet, the bell also determined the place of summons and deliberation of municipal issues. During the 15th century, and also great part of the 16th century, the councils did not have a consistory or their own bell, so it was necessary to use a large place for the congregation of aldermen that had this sound element, such as churches. In 1431, authorities from Ávila met *a canpana repicada* (at the ringing of the bell) at yglesia de Sant Juan (church of San Juan) [47]. Another place used by the authorities to meet and deliberate was the city main square. In this local communication center all kinds of news circulated, including those of an official nature as well as rumors and gossip. In addition to the commercial, political, and recreational uses and activities [48], the square was a place where different sociabilities, and individual and collective identities were generated, built, and strengthened through various elements and practices, which reflected attitudes as well as knowledge and sensitivities of the members of a group.

The city of Baeza in 1456 kept records of the practice of ringing the bells of the Santa María Cathedral Church to summon, not only the mayor and aldermen, but also the residents and inhabitants of the city, in front of the sacred building: “Los dichos sennores corregidor e regidores partieron de la dicha iglesia de Sant Pedro e vinieron a la iglesia de Santa Maria catedral de la dicha cibdat e mandaron repicar las canpanas de la dicha iglesia, al repique de las quales dichas canpanas vinieron ( . . . ) los vezinos e moradores de la dicha cibdad, estando ayuntados en la plaza, delante de la dicha iglesia, en presencia de mi Pero Ruiz, escrivano publico” [49] (The said gentlemen, the mayor and aldermen, left the said church of San Pedro and came to the church of Santa María cathedral in said city and ordered the bells of said church to be rung, that ringing called ( . . . ) neighbors and residents of said city, gathered in the square, in front of said church, before me Pedro Ruiz). This communicative situation was associated, as we can see, with certain places, which, due to a privileged position in the geographical distribution, dominated the environment and allowed the sound signal to be transmitted to a wider radius. The church, the council, and the square were meeting places with an auditory dimension generated by the activity of the attendees. The use of a sound instrument was needed so that it was superimposed on top of the murmuring and the talking. Therefore, the ringing of the bells made a sound that brought daily life to a halt and offered a different connection between the people who, putting their activities aside, attended the gatherings in order to occupy other social roles. In this combination of elements, spaces were resignified by the process of subjectivation, which encouraged the individuals to act in a particular way during the gatherings. However, the actions were not always limited by the desire of the institutions, there was also resistance that was reflected by ignoring the bells’ call, as shown by the Madrid authorities in 1481. It was stated that: “Este día, dieron fe los porteros del concejo desta dicha Villa en como ( . . . ) fueron llamados rregidores e caualleros e escuderos e procurador de los pecheros para que viniesen a este abto siguiente ( . . . ) a canpanar repicada llamados por tres o quatro vezes e non vinieron ( . . . ) E los dichos señores rregidores pidiéronlo asy por testimonio a mí el dicho escriuano” [42] (This day, the doormen of the council of this Village attested the way in which ( . . . ) aldermen and knights and squires and the procurator of the commoners were called to come to this act ( . . . ) the bell rang three or four times and they did not come ( . . . ) And the said aldermen thus asked for testimony to me the said notary).

The bell sounds also warned about the safety and well-being of the population demanding specific actions to be performed by them. For example, the *facendera* ring communicated the need to gather in order to repair roads and bridges, the *nublo* ring functioned as a storm warning, and the fire ring warned about fires commonly occurring in urban areas. The city of Cordoba stipulated “que salgan todos a campana repicada a matar el fuego” [50] (let everyone go out to the bell to kill the fire) demanding the inhabitants to attend and extinguish the sinister. These calls had an influence upon the subjectivation processes of the Castilian people, demanding a coordinated response upon the perils and council authorities. The need to organize the defense of the space originated the establishment of relations of solidarity between the residents, which guaranteed the social harmony desired by the authorities (Figure 4).



Figure 4. The normative sphere.

This coexistence was reinforced by other sound resources, which tried to direct the actions of the citizens and, together with it, the way in which a peculiar subjectivity of the inhabitants was built. One of the resources used were the shouts of the town criers. Town criers became a symbol of institutional presence whose main function was to disseminate the provisions, ordinances, or decrees approved by the Crown and the city councils. José Manuel Nieto Soria identifies a series of features that made these sound communication devices effective, namely: Their solemn dimension, since they were performed by an established and well-known protocol, speaking loudly and blowing trumpets; its disseminating function, by addressing the entire community, according to an established dissemination program; its ability to produce an emotional impact through the sound effect generated by the acclaim; as well as its unifying profile, since its reception did not distinguish the social status of the listeners. According to the historian’s opinion, these “must have been messages that, although very explicit, would have to be subjected to brevity limitations which facilitated general understanding” [51]. Thus, town criers became carriers of a legal value since, once those messages were declaimed in loud and

intelligible voice, their fulfillment became mandatory without the inhabitants being able to allege ignorance of the regulation. Therefore, not only was the content of the text important, but also the mode in which it was disseminated.

The Castilian Crown had a strong interest in the publication and communication of its various decisions. In May 1400, for instance, King Henry III commanded the authorities of the bishopric of Jaen to ban the export of equine and mule cattle illegally produced by people from the nearby Kingdoms of Aragon and Granada [52]. Likewise, one of the greatest concerns of the Castilian monarchs was the tax collection compliance, as observed in 1464, when Henry IV ordered the councils of Murcia, Lorca, and Cartagena, to comply with the 1463 and 1464 Alcabalas Notebook Act in which it was ruled that no individual should prevent or seize the collection of the alcabalas. Also, penalties were set for the offenders. The royal provision determined that this decision was to be proclaimed publicly by the squares and markets [53].

These provisions were also outlined in other cities such as Baeza in 1455 and Ubeda in 1471. On 15 February 1455, Henry IV sent a letter to the council of Baeza, it was directed to the senior accountant Diego Arias. In the letter, he was ordered to record every income received, so that these cannot be required again [49]. While, on 12 September 1471, Elizabeth, as princess of Asturias, ordered the justice of Ubeda to comply with the income owed, transferring its possession to her main collector [54]. The proclamation of matters related to trade, sales, and price variations [54], and the supply of various products, such as meat [50,54] and wheat, were a matter of constant concern. The supply of bread was of vital importance in Castilian society since it was part of the diet of a large part of the population [55]; this product also produced the most significant periods of food shortage during the 15th century. In Rafael Oliva Herrer's opinion, the conflicts caused by the availability of wheat were not related to natural factors; on the contrary, they were linked to political decisions and the mechanisms of operation of the cereal market [56]. Consequently, the authorities made an effort to implement policies as to guarantee the people the availability of grains at reasonable prices, with the aim of ensuring social peace. Accordingly, proclaiming in a loud voice and ensuring the listening of the prices and restriction on wheat and its derivatives were essential for all city inhabitants.

The proclamation was also the communicative intermediary between the councils and the population. In 1431 the city of Avila established: "estando en la plaça de Mercado Mayor, que es en los arravales desta dicha çibdad, Miguell Sánchez ( . . . ) pregonó a altas bozes todo lo contenido en la dicha ordenança de las dichas medidas a pedimento de Pero Gonçalez de Avila" [47] (Being in the Plaza de Mercado Mayor [Major Market Square], which is in the suburbs of this city, Miguel Sánchez loudly proclaimed everything present in the said ordinance of the said measures requested by Pedro González de Ávila). The act of communicating, receiving the message, and, thus, producing a positive, negative, or different response had to be ensured by a clear reproduction system, on account of the fact that listening was what made compliance obligatory by establishing that no one could claim ignorance [57]. Likewise, the reception was reinforced by repeating the message up to three times in the busiest places [57], along with the use of other sound resources, which provided the dissemination a greater attention and impact. Avila proceeded accordingly publishing the city's ordinances carried out by its mayor and council, who: "mandaron repicar e repicaron todas las canpanas de la iglesia mayor de Sant Salvador e ansimesmo las canpanas de la dicha iglesia de Sant Juan e, tañendo tronpetas e atanbales e tanborynos ( . . . ) los dichos señores ( . . . ) mandaron publicar e se publicaron las dichas hordenanças, pregonándolas a altas bozes Pero Gómez, pregonero público de la dicha çibdad" [47] (We ordered all the bells of the main church of San Salvador to ring and they rang and also the bells of the said church of San Juan and, blowing trumpets and drums and tambourines ( . . . ) the said gentlemen ( . . . ) had the said ordinances being ordered to publish and actually published, Pedro Gómez, public crier of the said city, proclaimed them loudly) (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The normative sphere.

The sounds given off by the bell participated in the construction of the subjectivity of the Castilian inhabitants acting in a double dimension. On the one hand, they intervened in the sacred dimension by reminding the believers their Christian duties and making the divine presence explicit. On the other hand, in the profane dimension, they demarcated the temporal blocks of human existence, informing the need to congregate for the deliberation of communal matters and warning about potential dangers that required the population to act. The vocal sounds of the communicators were also part of this process by announcing the presence of the authority in community areas, demanding compliance with the rules imposed by the councils and the Crown, in order to ensure social order within the framework of a demarcated spatiality that influenced the behavior of individuals. Indeed, guidelines issued by the authorities attempted to obtain a performative value in Castilian urban society through the sounds of the bells and the voices of the town criers.

### 5. The Disturbing Sounds of Social Order: The Conflictive Sphere

The desire to establish some kind of “urban public order” to guarantee social peace in the kingdom involved not only a direct action by the authorities regarding political matters, but also the establishment of regulations of coexistence in shared spaces. This task was carried out, between the 11th and 14th centuries, by the families and residents. However, a gradual extension of family ties and kinship was produced, which had an impact on urban social behavior. This new context allowed the emergence of new ways of behaving, socializing and shared sensory systems.

To these transformations those of a material and demographic nature were added. As explained, they affected the space layout of the inhabitants, causing conflicts between the residents due to the different tolerance parameters to certain sounds and the variable social assessment of silence. In this regard, two test cases inform us about this disagreement in auditory perception and, therefore, the opposition of certain subjects to the prevailing

sensory system. This situation was considered by the council authorities when issuing regulations on the development of trades in urban areas. As stipulated in Madrid in 1481, a license to shoe was given to master Pedro “to make a wooden foal to shoe where Joan Zapata indicates in the square market” [42].

At the beginning of the 15th century, Toledo enacted a corpus of municipal ordinances that regulated the production and trading of the textile activity [38]. However, when they were written, the places allowed to perform the silk weaving activity were not included. As a consequence, in 1494, the highest authority of the Cathedral of Toledo petitioned before the Catholic Monarchs, due to a conflict with a silk weaver called Luis Cardero, who had installed his loom in a room adjacent to the ecclesiastical capitol residence. It was argued that due to the “racket and noise in his house” that Cardero would make when using his loom and, therefore, “would not let us sleep, study or pray” [58].

This situation was not unusual, since it had occurred in the past, in times of the mayor Gómez Manrique (1476–1491). It was him who had ordered to “remove the said loom from the said chamber for the many grievances and damage” that it caused. However, according to the complainants, due to the personal agreements between Luis Cardero and authorities of the council, delivering justice was not possible. As a result, Cardero reinstalled the loom and resumed his work. In this way, the noise nuisances reappeared and with it the conflict between the neighbors. In light of this situation, the lawyer from Pedrosa, resident judge of Toledo and member of the Royal Council, filed a complaint with the authorities who listened to both parties and resolved that the sentence granted long ago be carried out, with the aim that the complainant ceases his claims about the matter. According to the verdict, the fine that the weaver had to pay for not complying with the ruling amounted to 10,000 *maravedis* [Iberian coins] payable to the royal chamber.

Another cause of annoyance among the inhabitants was the butcher shop. The process of slaughtering, splitting, and eviscerating animals in urban areas caused a series of sanitary and hygiene damages—mainly due to odor, bone remnants, and blood—which required the authorities to develop sanitary and space reorganization policies. Added to a concern for hygiene, the regulations had a sanitary nature since they “took care of the meat for sale, which implied the control of meals prepared with meat and the council protection of the population from the butchers’ deceptions. Certain trades, which contribute to the configuration of the social limits between sectors, are decisive in the hygienic concerns that require socially clean spaces, and for this the authorities forced them to move to areas away from the city—due to their dirt—, in relation to the assessment that the medieval order gave to the activities in contact with blood” [59].

In 1480, the abbot and the monks of the Monastery of San Bartolomé de la Villa de Medina del Campo, together with Miguel Sánchez (administrator of the monastery), sage García Terencio (regent of the Chair of Grammar) and some residents of the old street of the Villa sent a letter to the royal authorities requesting a prompt solution to the multiple inconveniences caused by the butchery activity that took place at Pedro Bustos’s house, butcher of the Court, located on the same street. The complainants stated that the butchers carried out the slaughter of the animals in two houses located opposite the Holy Crucifix of the Monastery of San Bartolomé chapel [60]. According to the victims, the sacred place possessed a crucifix that was visited by the people with great devotion but, due to the continuous bellowing of the cattle during the sacrifice process, it was impossible to celebrate mass and the devotion of the parishioners was interrupted. An additional problem was the fetid odor given off by the remains of slaughtered cattle [61]. Due to this damage suffered by the residents of the old street of Medina del Campo, the authorities were requested to seek a solution to the problem. The activity was banned from being carried out at Pedro Bustos’s residence and, consequently, the slaughter was transferred to a place away from the Villa.

The monarchs responded to this claim, ruling that none of the butchers, whether from the Court or the city, or any other person, carry out the slaughtering in their homes. This measure was in line with the initiatives of the Castilian councils to move the slaughter-

houses to the suburbs or beyond the city walls. Likewise, it was determined that Pedro de Bustos did not rent the house to third parties for the same trade. The fine for non-compliance with the royal order was of two hundred *maravedis* for each day that the slaughtering continued in that place.

The conflicts caused by intolerance to certain sounds made the components of the symbolic universe explicit, they accounted for the senses as a way of experimenting with community life. Likewise, the senses were channels through which the discomfort and displeasure that resulted in conflictive social relationships were expressed.

The different modalities of spatial organization of the Castilian cities represented a determining factor in the way in which social practices, related to the use of urban spaces and urban material components, were crystallized into a desire towards a certain social order. By this articulation between spatiality and praxis, we verified that sounds were structuring of social and cultural relations by becoming the matrix of daily conflict. From this perspective, we can see that the intolerance of certain sound emissions generated conflictive situations in the spatial coexistence due to the physical condition of the sounds that expand in the environment and go through the walls, invading other people's spaces.

The conceptualization of a sound as noise is a subjective and cultural attitude since it depends on the perception of each individual and their tolerance towards a certain loudness in line with the community cultural parameters. Consequently, the sound–noise relationship is not dual, on the contrary, it is continuous, since there are different intermediate acoustic environments between acceptance or rejection. This situation not only generated a disturbing sound signal, but it also became a more complex structure of one or more sounds associated with other perceptions. That is to say, assessing a sound as noise does not rely on physical matters, but above all, on the social and cultural consideration of the subjects towards the source of sound generation and their own position in society. Consequently, religious people favored the silence of their intellectual, religious, and devotional activities over the sonority of the services. The total absence of sound is a non-existent event, since a zero degree of silence does not exist in nature. Any environment is permeated with sound manifestations, even if they are faint, spatial, and distant. Everyday human beings produce and are accompanied by a sound trail that participates in their culture and identity. This assessment of silence depends on “what the object is and who its subject is, that is to say, who is the one who is silent or says and what is it that is silent or does not say” [62].

This need to establish parameters of silence was a constant concern during the celebration of divine services. The verbalization of the word of God by the priests and its reception (spiritual listening) [63] required the predominance of silence in the environment over both material and human sounds. Synod law repeatedly stated that during the divine service “honesty and silence must be kept” by attendees and officiants [64]: “Ordenamos y estableçemos que ( . . . ) en tanto que se dizen los divinos ofiçios ( . . . ) esten en silencio callando, con la mayor reverençia y temor a Dios” [64] (We order and establish that ( . . . ) while the divine offices are said ( . . . ) they remain silent, in silence, with the greatest reverence and fear of God). On some occasions, those who did not favor the necessary silent environment were the clergy and singers themselves; punitive fines were applied to them. Likewise, additional spaces and practices required the absence of sound for the proper development of their social functionality, such as monastic environments. Ana Arraz Guzmán proposes two types of silences for the ecclesiastical sphere: Silence of respect and of strategy. The first was related to the attitude of the believers and imposed by the clerical authorities. The second, of a more complex nature, responded to circumstances where prudence, cunning, simulation, or lies were tools used by the clergy [65].

The value given to silence also led to the prohibition of various sounds in different urban spaces. For example, the shouting and clamoring produced by people during games [49] and fights [66], indecent chants during religious services and the crying and screaming caused during funerals. Towards the end of the 15th century in the diocese of Avila it was stipulated that “digan ni fagan ni permitian fazer las burlas y cosas feas,

torpes y deshonestas ( . . . ) ni canten chanzonetas ni cantares deshonestos” [39] (say or do or allow to do mockery and ugly, clumsy and dishonest things ( . . . ) nor sing songs or dishonest singing).

The council and ecclesiastical legislation paid special attention to the inconvenience caused by crying in funerals. The council authorities reported that: “los parientes e otras personas que ban acompañar e onrrar el cuerpo del tal defunto, mientras se dize la misa ( . . . ) fassen dentro en la dicha yglesia muchos llantos e lloros e dan muchos gritos e bozes, por manera que perturban las oras e ofiçios divinos e ynpiden a los dichos clerigos ( . . . ) faser los dichos ofiçios nin dezir las dichas oras, lo qual es cosa fea e deseruiçio de Dios e vergonçosa a los que le ven e oyen” [67] (Relatives and other people who accompany and honor the body of the deceased, while mass is being said ( . . . ) cry and weep in said church and give many shouts and voices, in such a way that they disturb the divine hours and offices and prevent the said clerics do the said offices or say the said hours, which is an ugly thing and a disservice to God and a shame to those who see and hear).

Based on biblical regulations, these interdictions were consolidated by the idea that the deceased should be accompanied by the Christian community between the voices of the psalms and the funeral songs and not between screams and sobs. Attention was paid to these noisy and dramatic acts; lay and ecclesiastical performers were condemned: “Desonesta cosa parece los llantos ( . . . ) por dolor de aquellos que desta presente vida pasan, asi como aquellos que no han esperança de la resurreçion postrimera. E por quanto hallamos que en este nuestro obispado se acostumbra mucho el rasgar de las caras e eçeder mucho en la forma de los llantos, tanto que turban los divinos ofiçios ( . . . ) mandamos ( . . . ) no çelebren los ofiçios divinos ni entierren los muertos por que se hizieren los tales llantos despues que los cuerpos fueren metidos en las yglesias, hasta tanto que el llanto çese” [68] (Cries seem to be dishonest things ( . . . ) for the pain of those who in this present life pass away, as well as those who have no hope of resurrection. And since we find that in our bishopric it is very customary to tear the faces and exceed in the form of crying, so much that they disturb the divine offices ( . . . ) we order ( . . . ) they do not celebrate the divine offices or bury the dead if such crying after the bodies are brought into the churches, until the crying ceases).

The forbidden sounds caused by certain trades and the assessment of silence by some inhabitants also contributed to shape the sensory experience of the Castilian inhabitants within the framework of setting up social relations of coexistence. The civil and religious authorities, through their legislation, contributed to this process of social subjectivation of space within the framework of Castilian urban development.

## 6. Conclusions

Investigating the urban sounds of the Kingdom of Castile in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modernity and its performance in shaping the historical dynamics gave rise to several doubts and questions. Firstly, how to create a solid documentary set of ephemeral evidence such as sounds for the entire Castilian territory. Secondly, there was the question of building a methodological framework that would allow us to address our topic taking into account the specificity of the historical period to be explored. In order to satisfy the need to establish a dialogue between our perspective of analysis and the historical-spatial framework, we adopted the theoretical premises of the History of the Senses, Anthropology, and Sound Studies that allowed us to apprehend the senses (the auditory in particular) as cultural constructs. Indeed, we were able to explore the sensory experience of the members of the Castilian urban society and the meanings they assigned to the sensory practices and representations. We particularly observed how matters related to sounds were modified and how they functioned both in terms of the importance attributed to the auditory sense and its intervention in different social spheres. Lastly, we faced the challenge of articulating the concepts of sounds, noises, listening, soundscape, and sound representations in an ensemble discourse that would account for the historical soundscape of Castilian urban spaces from the 15th to the mid-16th centuries. This implied distinguishing, from the

historical context, the nature of these conceptions in social dynamics in a double sense. On the one hand, as agents that provide meaning to certain practices and, on the other hand, as elements that contributed to rationalize and explain the world, since the auditory sense was one of the first intermediaries between the individual and the environment. These were the challenges that we tried to solve by means of a meticulous documentary analysis, in which the explanation of the sound structure printed in the various political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of the Castilian cities was included.

In the present work, we set out to analyze the sound spheres that made up this soundscape. In particular, we emphasized the normative devices that regulated the sensory (sound) experience of the construction of subjectivity, which later became the interaction between the individual and space. The regulations issued by the secular and religious authorities tended to organize this new society in order to achieve and maintain a required social peace. Among these regulations, those that paid attention to certain sensory perceptions were highlighted.

The sensory reading of an extensive documentary corpus allowed us to identify various sound marks [69] in the written record, that is, those sounds that were important to Castilian society, according to their cultural and affective significance, and those that shaped a specific soundscape. Firstly, the ringing of bells stood out as time delimiters and promoters of social practices. Secondly, the town crier emerged as the main sound component of communication who, through their loud and intelligible voice, communicated the decisions of the authorities to the whole population. Carrying out this *praxis* led to the performativity of what was announced, since, once the regulation was pronounced, compliance became mandatory. Third, there was a discrepancy in noise tolerance and a negative assessment of certain activities, such as butchering and weaving. The performance of these trades caused sounds that mismatched the perceptual parameters of the nearby inhabitants—mainly the religious people—who considered silence as the fundamental requirement for the performance of religious services and the contemplation of the parishioners. The assessment of silence by the authorities was expressed in the continuous regulations of situations that caused acute resonances in common spaces, such as those caused by acts of pain in the face of death, games, fights, and “indecent” chants in sacred facilities.

The royal and council authority, through its regulations, tried to create and maintain a social order in a context of expansion and construction of power. Thus, limiting the processes of subjectivation in urban areas which influenced the construction and use of private and public spaces. Regulatory practices on sounds and hearing determined a new way of feeling that was crystallized in perceptual systems based on a population subjected to mechanisms of control and coercion within urban limits. Likewise, these actions of the secular and ecclesiastical power that operated on social practices through regulations, established values that coincided with the precepts that the authority reproduced over the population on both spheres. All these components created a dynamic and identifiable urban soundscape in the course of historical development, whose sound is found between the lines of the written record.

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