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Social, Cultural and Historical Aspects of Hearing Impairment. Identity and Modern Sound Environments.

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Research aim: The overall aim of the project is to explore the intersection between sound environments, identity formation and habilitation practices. While various locations involve different types of sounds, not everyone has equal access to these soundscapes. How can the relationship between sound environments and identity be studied and described? Which social and cultural processes make sound environments including or excluding, and how do they work? How can contemporary habilitation create supportive practices and develop methods in order to promote inclusion?

Social, Cultural and Historical Aspects of Hearing Impairment, Identity and Modern Sound Environments

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Theoretical and methodology framework: Social scientists emphasize the significance of sound environments to human identity formation, and stress that sounds are not neutral but include cultural ideals and standards. Furthermore, previous research has pointed out that there are social and cultural barriers that limit individuals with hearing impairments to enter specific sound environments. In our research we focus on the sound environments that can be said to have emerged at the end of the 19th century. Those environments have been accentuated in modern society, and are characterized by a different kind of noise than during earlier times. In the project we study everyday environments that people face today, through observations and interviews. However, this project also has a historical perspective that analyses how sound environments have been created through different historical times and how people have related to them.

Findings: It is central to highlight the hearing norm and also relate it to those sound environments that are constantly created in different contexts. In our research we have findings and theoretical reasoning regarding how individuals are excluded from sound environments, but also how they, through time, create different strategies to be part of environments that are central for their identities. Habilitation should be seen as an important actor that creates practices that put the responsibility on the individual to take part in different sound environments. What is central in our project is to make the hearing norm, the *audism*, visible and understandable, in contemporary and historical contexts.