Sonic Environment and Noise Mitigations

Subjects: Environmental Sciences Contributor: Sanjay Kumar

The pandemic has impacted every facet of our life, society, and environment. It has also affected both the requirement and challenges for acoustic research and applications. The present article attempts to present a summary of the impact of COVID-19 on several aspects of acoustics, from the changes in the sonic environment due to reduced human and industrial activities to natural ventilation requirements for mitigating the transmission of coronavirus while mitigating noise, and, more importantly, discusses the potential impacts and challenges for acoustics in the post-COVID-19 era. The present study specifically examines the effects of COVID-19 on the sonic environment, the acoustic treatment by considering the need for constant disinfection, the noise control on construction and neighborhood activities in response to an increased number of people working from home, and the need for having natural ventilation while mitigating noise at home and offices.

Keywords: COVID-19 ; sonic environment ; Noise Mitigation with Air ventilation

1. Introduction

On 23 April 2021, *The Times of India*, with the headline "COVID-19: Noise pollution falls as lockdown rings in the sound of silence", reported that for nearly a month, there had been no honking, no whirr of vehicular engines, no echo of loudspeakers, and no clanking of machinery in factories ^[1]. For nearly a month since the lockdown was imposed, the residents of New Delhi, India, had been waking up to the chirping of birds, which was unimaginable in the pre-COVID-19 period. It was quite a dramatic change from what we knew about the sonic environment of a typical big Indian city. This report was a typical reflection of the reduced noise level in many cities during the COVID-19 lockdown with reduced human and economic activities.

When the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic in early 2020, most countries across the globe shut down their international borders. At the domestic level, outdoor human activities were restricted in order to curb the COVID-19 virus outbreak. Social distancing and self-isolation were effective ways to slow the spread of the virus. In addition, except for a few emergency services, all logistics and transportation facilities were severely disrupted by the pandemic. The report by Eurocontrol ^[2] on the impact of COVID-19 on European air traffic stated that for the week from 6 to 12 April 2020, immediately after the lockdown, the number of flights decreased by 89.3% compared with the same period in 2019. For the more recent data, the number of flights was 46% from 1–9 June 2021 compared with the same period in 2019. As a result, a significant reduction in environmental noise levels was reported during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, at the same time, other implications included an increased rate of noise complaints by the residents, as most people spent their day at their homes. Furthermore, staying at home over a prolonged period during the lockdown induced higher stress and anxiety levels, affecting the sound perceptions.

The pandemic has impacted every facet of our life, society, and environment, and indeed it will also affect the requirement and challenges for acoustic research and applications. The recent acoustic-related issues have opened a new window for the acoustician to relook into the current acoustic solutions and amend the changes as per the present scenario.

2. Impact on the Acoustic Environment during the COVID-19 Lockdown

The unfortunate event of the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated a "sound of silence" achieved within a short duration in an unprecedented manner. The reduced human activities and traffic flow during the lockdown have caused drastic changes in the sonic environment. The reported studies mainly focused on the shift in the sonic environment at specific locations due to the lockdown and the emergence of the new sonic environment. Ulloa et al. ^[3] led a citizen science acoustic sampling across Colombia during the COVID-19 lockdown and measured the impact of human activities in the sonic environment of cities. The sound was recorded during severe mobility restrictions (April 2020) and during a period of tightened restrictions (May–June 2020). They reported a 12% increase in human activities with a significant rise in sound pressure levels of 2.1 dB (a 128% increase). There was a shift towards the dominance of low-frequency broadband

signals and a perceived dominance of human-made sounds over wildlife sounds after the restriction. Aletta et al. ^[4], taking London as a case study, and by taking a series of 30 s binaural recordings at 11 locations representing a cross-section of urban public spaces with varying compositions of sound sources pre-lockdown in Spring 2019 and during the lockdown in Spring 2020, reported an average reduction of 5.4 dB (LAeq). However, they found significant differences in the degree of reduction across the locations, ranging from a 10.7 dB(A) to a 1.2 dB(A) reduction dependent on the urban context. Bonet-Solà et al. ^[5] analyzed the noise levels in Barcelona, Spain, in eight different locations from January 2020 to June 2020 during the lockdown. Their results in terms of showed a drastic reduction of 9 dB(A), especially in nightlife areas of the city, a moderate to high change of 7 dB(A) in commercial and restaurant areas, and a slight decrease in dB(A) in dense traffic areas. Alsina-Pagès et al. ^[6] analyzed the noise levels in Girona, a 100,000-citizen city in the northeast of Catalonia in Spain, for four different locations from January 2020 to June 2020, including all the stages of the lockdown. The results of the analysis in Girona showed drastic changes in LAeq, especially in nightlife areas of the city, moderate LAeq changes in commercial and restaurant areas, and low

changes in dense traffic areas.

Sakagami ^[Z] presented a study comparing the previously reported results of the acoustic environment in a quiet residential area in Kobe, Japan, under the declaration of the COVID-19 state of emergency in May 2020, with the results of two follow-up studies in the same location in June and July–August 2020, and in September–October 2020. One might expect that the noise during the lockdown period would be the lowest. However, the author found that the noise levels were lower during September–October 2020 than during the emergency declaration in May 2020. From May to October 2020, the noise level was significantly higher in July and August of the same year due to the sound of cicadas that are familiar in this area. He concluded that it was difficult to set the target values of the acoustic environment planning by referring to the low noise level during the lockdown period, as the factor of seasonal changes in the sonic environment would need to be considered.

Munoz et al. [8] investigated the changes in the sonic environment and its perception during the French lockdown period. They acquired data from 21 continuous sound monitoring stations for the entire lockdown period in five conurbations in the south of France. They compared it to typical values in the "normal" situation (before lockdown). A reduction in sound levels of 4 dB to 6 dB was observed from monitoring stations with highly dominant road traffic noise. Mishra et al. [9] investigated the impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on noise pollution levels before, during, and after the lockdown phase in different residential, commercial, industrial, and silence zones of Kanpur, India. Before lockdown and during the lockdown, the average equivalent noise levels were found to be in the range of 44.8 dB(A) to 79.5 dB(A) and 38.5 dB(A) to 57.8 dB(A), respectively, for different zones. Their results further indicated that the impact of road traffic noise on the risk of high annovance and sleep disturbance was lower during lockdown compared to that of the pre-lockdown and unlock phase. Rumpler et al. [10] investigated the impact of Sweden's recommendation-based approach of a few imposed restrictions instead of a lockdown through the monitored variation of the city noise levels during the associated period. The data were collected during a campaign of over a full year of noise level measurements at a building façade situated in a busy urban intersection in central Stockholm, Sweden. They found that the recommendations and the restrictions imposed during the ongoing pandemic significantly affected transport and other human-related activities in Stockholm. Basu et al. [11] investigated the sound levels in Dublin, Ireland, before and after the lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis was performed using measured hourly data from 12 noise monitoring stations between January and May 2020. More than 80% of the stations recorded high sound levels for more than 60% of the time before the lockdown in Dublin. However, a significant reduction in both the hourly average equivalent sound and hourly minimum sound levels was observed at all stations during the lockdown period. This could be attributed to reductions in both road and air traffic movements. Many other reported studies for different parts of the world examined the impact on the sonic environment during their respective lockdown or movement restriction periods [12][13][14][15][16][17][18][19]. A project known as the silent cities project was a participatory monitoring program of an exceptional modification of urban soundscapes during COVID-19 containment [20]. What would be interesting soon is to examine whether the sonic environment will return to the pre-pandemic level when human and economic activities slowly return to normal, keeping in mind that the mode of working may be different after the pandemic, with more people exploring the idea of working from home and the potential of fewer business travels due to the ready availability of cyber meetings compared to the pre-pandemic era. Table 1 summarized the average reduction in sound levels during the lockdown period.

Table 1. Summarized data for reduction in average sound levels at various places during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Locations	Average Reductions	Noise Environments	References	
Girona, Spain	5 dB (L _{day} , weekend) 11 dB (L _{night} , weekend)	Active areas	Alsina-Pagès et al. ^[6]	
Central Stockholm, Sweden	4 dB(A)	Active areas	Rumpler et al. ^[10]	
Dadar, Mumbai, India	28.5 dB(A), L _{eq}	Indian festival (Ganeshotsav) time	Kalawapudi et al. ^[13]	
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	10–15 dB(A), L _{eq}	Active areas	- Gevú et al. ^[17]	
	3–5 dB(A), L _{eq}	Traffic noise		
Madrid, Spain	3.9 dB (L _{eve} , weekend) 6.3 dB (L _{night} , weekend)	Active areas	- Asensio et al. ^[18]	
	3.9 dB (L _{eve} , weekend) 7.4 dB (L _{night} , weekend)	Traffic noise		
Percelone Spein	9–12 dB(A)	Active areas *	Aiuntamont de Parcelona ^[21]	
Barcelona, Spain	2–6 dB(A)	Heavy traffic highways	- Ajumament de Barcelona 🔤	
Milan, Italy	7.3 dB(A), L _{den}	Treffic raise Alaina Dagàs et al [22]		
Rome, Italy	5.2 dB(A), L _{den}	- Tranic noise	nisilla-rayes et al. 📼	
Paris, France	4.5 dB(A), L _{den}	Traffic noise	Bruitparif ^[23]	

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the ecosystem. An article in *National Geographic* ^[24] reported that the quiet water at Monterey due to the lockdown resulted in scientists better studying the marine world. During the COVID-19 period, all transportations, such as speedboats, yachts, whale-watching tours, and commercial fishing boats, had been barred for tourists. The lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic enabled several researchers to conduct natural experiments in order to learn how human activities affect animal behaviors ^[25]. Derryberry et al. ^[26] found that reducing traffic sound in the San Francisco Bay Area of California to levels not seen for half a century due to the COVID-19 lockdown led to a shift in song frequency in white-crowned sparrows. This shift was especially notable because the frequency of human-produced traffic noise within a certain range interfered with the highest performance and most effective song. Thus, the quiet environment during lockdown allowed the birds to fill the most influential song space quickly. They noticed that the birds responded by producing higher performance songs at lower amplitudes, effectively maximizing communication distance and salience. Tan et al. ^[27] reported the change in crickets' (and other invertebrates') acoustic properties and exploratory behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study revealed that the sudden and dramatic reduction in human activity during the lockdown in the UK led several animals, such as goats and deer, to reclaim Llandudno in Wales and wander the streets of East London, respectively ^[28].

Most recently, Gibney et al. ^[29] reported that the COVID-19 lockdown had changed the way Earth moved. A reduction in seismic noise because of changes in human activity was a boon for geoscientists, who indicated that this could allow sensors and detectors to spot more minor earthquakes and boost efforts to monitor volcanic activity and other seismic events.

Moreover, the unprecedented change in acoustic characteristics of the environment during the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced human health. Dutheil et al. ^[30] hypothesized that, considering the burden of noise exposure in modern society, the COVID-19 pandemic could have the unintended effect of a massive decrease of annoyance and stress related to sound pollution, therefore being a benefit to cardiovascular disease. The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM), in an article with the title "Our Relationship with Sound: The Role Noise Plays in Our Lives," stated that people's sense of hearing changed due to the drastic reduction in city noise and the reorganization of the soundscape caused by the COVID-19-related lockdown ^[31]. Sleep quality was improved because of a substantial decrease in traffic, industrial, and construction noise. They also discovered that they could hear weather changes, birds, and other wildlife from the confines of their homes. The article concluded that one outcome of this newly found tranquility due to the lockdown was that people in cities would undoubtedly become more sensitive to unpleasant noises, especially if they were perceived as unnecessary. Not only will local residents be more sensitive to noise and vibrations, but an increased number of people would continue to work from home as part of their new regular routine, and will therefore be more inclined to report excessive noise levels to relevant government authorities. A sudden rise in construction noise complaints has been reported since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recently, Díaz et al. ^[32] presented the potential correlation between noise pollution and the incidence and severity of COVID-19. Their study analyzed the role of short-term noise pollution levels on the incidence and severity of cases of COVID-19 in Madrid from 1 February to 31 May 2020, by using variables including daily noise levels averaged over 14 days, daily incidence rates, average cumulative incidence over 14 days, hospital admissions, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admissions, and mortality due to COVID-19. Their results showed that noise pollution was an important environmental variable relevant to the incidence and severity of COVID-19 in the Province of Madrid.

3. Noise Complaints and Legislation on Noise Control

There is an argument that with less traffic on the roads and some non-essential businesses not operating during the lockdown, other noises might be more noticeable with reduced traffic and environmental noises. Some examples are the noise from garbage collection, construction noise in the neighborhood for essential development projects, and renovation noise from the neighbors. It was reported by *Straits Times* in January 2021 that complaints about noisy neighbors in South Korea spiked amid COVID-19 ^[33]. Data released by the Korea Environment Corporation earlier in January showed that the number of complaints about noise from upstairs neighbors spiked to 42,250 in 2020, marking a 60.9% increase and drawing concern over the social problems of high-rise living. The leading cause of complaints was stomping on the floor (61%), followed by dragging furniture, hammering, slamming doors, and loud music. Based on a public opinion survey, Dumen et al. ^[34] reported that despite decreased environmental noise levels during the pandemic, the noise annoyance due to neighbor noise did not change significantly.

Another common complaint was the construction noise. Residents often asked the question as to why the authority was permitting this noisy construction or road work to occur more frequently, especially when most people were expected to stay in their homes. For example, in the province of Ontario, Canada ^[35], the provincial government sought to provide noise exemptions to essential construction projects to allow for 24/7 construction work for medical facilities and other related services in order to help speed up the response to COVID-19. Tong et al. ^[36] presented a case study on noise complaints in Greater London, UK. The results revealed that during the COVID-19 lockdown, the number of noise complaints increased by 48%, compared with the same period during Spring 2019. A significant rise in complaints was about the noise sources from construction (36%) and the neighborhood (50%). It has also been reported that the noise complaint categories have changed during the pandemic. In the pre-COVID 19 periods, primary noise complaint sources were about the construction and traffic noise, while during the pandemic, most complaints were about the apartment, neighbor, music, daytime constructions, etc. ^[37]. A recent news report in Singapore ^[38] also stated that the number of complaints about renovation noise had gone up amid a backlog of projects completed after the circuit breaker (similar to lockdown), plus the fact that more people were working from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Table 2** summarizes the recent rise in noise complaints from various places during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Location	% Rise in Noise Complaints	Noise Sources	References
South Korea	61	Stomping on the floor, dragging furniture, hammering, slamming doors, loud music, etc.	[33]
Province of Ontario, Canada	-	Construction projects	-
London	48	Construction (36%) and neighborhood (50%)	[36]
Dallas, USA	-14 (reduction)	Apartment, neighbor, music, street	[<u>37]</u>
Singapore	-	Renovations, construction projects, neighbor music	[38]

Table 2. A summary of rising in noise complaints during COVID-19 pandemic and possible noise sources.

For legislation related to construction, in many countries, the usual legislation is to have a less stringent limit for the construction activities during the daytime when most people are not at home. Construction activities are usually not permitted on Sundays and public holidays when most people are at home. With most people working at home even during the day, there is a question about whether the regulations on construction noise during the daytimes on weekdays should be more stringent. A sudden rise in noise complaints during the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in amending some changes in existing noise-related regulations. For example, the local council of New South Wales, Australia ^[39], made a temporary change in existing rules for allowing approved construction sites to operate on weekends and public holidays in order to support the construction industry during this time. Furthermore, the Singapore government had announced in

October 2020 an ongoing review of construction noise limits, considering the post-COVID-19 situation in residential areas while ensuring projects would be completed within budget and on time. However, there is no clear answer to this problem. It is a balancing act between a conducive environment for people working at home and sustaining the construction industry, which has suffered badly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Key Acoustic Solutions

4.1. Construction Noise Mitigations

Lee et al. ^[40] measured the noise profiles of standard construction equipment at their respective noise source. The noise was measured using an acoustic array or acoustic camera instead of using the typical type 1 sound level meters, which would be impossible to isolate the noise profile of a particular machine or process when all the devices were operating at the same time. The study also highlighted the significant presence of low-frequency noise at construction sites for some construction equipment and processes. With working from home to continue during the post-COVID-19 era, there is a need to have noise mitigation measures for construction noise and the use of more low-noise construction equipment. For example, Nakashima et al. ^[41] reported an ultra-quiet hydraulic excavator incorporating an integrated noise and dust reduction (INDR) cooling system. This excavator could achieve a sound power level that was 5 dB lower than the most stringent restriction level set by the relevant Japanese authority. In addition, Nakada et al. ^[42] reported buckets with new durable steel laminated dampers, which could reduce noise by five dB(A) from the current level. Another standard solution is the use of a barrier to mitigate the noise emitting from construction sites.

High-rise buildings typically surround construction sites in Singapore, and low-height noise barriers are ineffective for blocking the noise from reaching the higher floors of surrounding buildings. Many investigations of the efficiency of the different obstacles showed that their edge designs would dominate their performance. Karimi and Younesian ^[43] investigated the performance of T-shape and Y-shape inclined noise barriers in railway noise mitigation. It was revealed that the inclination angle could play a significant role in the noise mitigation level, remarkably in high elevation back regions. Ho et al. ^[44] carried out experiments in order to investigate the noise reduction by random edge barriers. Their measurement showed that a jagged edge could produce more insertion loss at a high frequency. Ekici and Bougdah ^[45] presented a review paper on different noise barrier shapes using analytical and physical modeling and full-scale testing. Wang et al. ^[46] proposed a flat-tip jagged edge profile that was investigated and applied on the edge of a cantilever (slanted up to 45 degrees, facing the noise source) mounted at the top of a passive noise barrier. For future research, one may need to pay particular attention to the potential of a virus attaching to the exposed acoustic foam of the noise barriers facing the construction sites. Acoustic foams are typically exposed to noise for maximum sound absorption. The surface of the foam will need to be either antimicrobial or to be able to service despite frequent disinfection. This problem is similar to the design of acoustic absorbers or acoustic panels with antimicrobial properties in the post-COVID-19 era.

4.2. Need for Noise Barriers with Antimicrobial Characteristics

Many offices were closed, and employees worked from home during the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting much of their business in virtual meetings using tools such as Zoom, WebEx, and MSTeams. Many people have found these virtual communication tools to be effective and more efficient than face-to-face meetings. With an improved pandemic situation, some people might go back to the office, but working from home will be a choice for some professions, and some people's work arrangement could be a mix of working in the office and working from range. In a report by Mckinsey & Company ^[47] entitled "the future of work after covid-19", by analyzing the potential across more than 2000 tasks used in some 800 occupations in the eight focus countries, and considering only remote work that could be done without a loss of productivity, it was reported that approximately 20 to 25 percent of the workforces in advanced economies could work from home between three and five days a week. The fewer people working in the office would change the existing office's acoustic characteristics and the design for new offices.

Under such circumstances, better speech privacy during the meeting might be required for open offices and the designated meeting rooms. In addition, the use of acoustic absorbers and diffusers, which could be easily washable or disinfected and even possess antimicrobial properties, would be desirable, as the requirement for hygiene would be elevated in the post-COVID-19 era. Besides the acoustic absorbing properties, this added requirement is deemed new for the design and fabrication of acoustic absorbers and diffusers. In a recent study, Sakagami and Okuzono ^[48] reported the use of a sound absorption technique based on three-dimensional (3D) space sound absorbers in order to solve acoustic deficiency due to the lack of acoustic absorption. They argued that this deficiency would likely happen due to the reduced number of audience members or users of the space due to social distancing. The suggested acoustic absorbers catering to hygiene considerations were microperforated panels (MPPs) and permeable membranes (PMs), which could be easily

washable and sanitized. An MPP consists of a thin flat plate made from several different materials with small holes. Several modifications and enhancements to the original design of MPPs by modifying the holes or the back-cavity shape and sizes following the original idea were reported. The MPP cavity will need to be detachable if it is to be washable, as viruses could still enter the tiny holes. Doremalen et al. ^[49] reported that COVID-19 could persist on surfaces for days. The surface properties of the commonly used acoustic absorbers and diffusers would need to be closely examined because of this concern.

Furthermore, companies that provide acoustic absorbers and acoustic curtains in the hospital environment could be in greater demand, even for everyday workplaces. However, these curtains could be at a higher risk of becoming contaminated with pathogenic bacteria. Hence, it should possess specific properties, such as being bacterial-repellent, hydrophobic, fire-retardant, washable, light-in-weight, and contamination-proof from healthcare-associated pathogens. Recently, Ohl et al. [50] performed a longitudinal study in order to assess the bacterial contamination's period and persistence on several hospital privacy curtains. Al-Tawfig et al. [51] experimented with the antibacterial characteristics of a privacy curtain made of non-woven polypropylene materials with a special surface treatment. Shek et al. [52] performed an observational study in order to determine the contamination rate of hospital privacy curtains. It was revealed that most of the curtains remained contaminated with bacteria even after fourteen days of their use. In such a pathogenic COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for antimicrobial fabrics has increased. Several traditional curtain materials, such as textiles, including but not limited to polyester, polyester-vinyl composites, vinyl, and even acrylics, possess antimicrobial characteristics up to a certain extent. The effectiveness of an antimicrobial fabric lies in its ability to fend off microorganisms and its ability to help prolong the life of a textile. Chatterjee et al. [53] showed that a droplet would remain as a liquid for a much shorter time on a porous surface, making it less favorable to the survival of the COVID-19 virus. They found that the coronavirus could survive for four days on glass, seven days on plastic, and seven days on stainless steel. However, on paper and cloth, the virus stayed for only three hours and two days, respectively. Hence, a solution could be to use materials with a porous surface that a standard chemical disinfectant could clean. Although the virus may only survive for a few hours, it still poses a risk to the occupants if not disinfected frequently. There is also the possibility of dirt covering the porous surface and thereby altering the surface properties.

On the other hand, the report also reiterated the need for disinfecting glass, plastic, and metal surfaces. Some traditional porous materials may not have antimicrobial properties or could be quickly disinfected by the standard chemical disinfectants or ultraviolet irradiation. This could be a potential area for future research. Several commercial products have been made from antimicrobial materials that protect all other agents and are cleaned with COVID-19 killing disinfectants. Such products were originally intended for the hospital environment but may be extended to offices, factories, and even households in the post-COVID-19 era.

4.3. Noise Mitigation While Maintaining Natural Ventilation

In the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that our reliance on conventional building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems needs to be re-thought. WHO has established that enclosed areas with limited ventilation increase the risk of transmission ^[54]. However, natural ventilation via openings such as windows will allow the noise from the environment, such as traffic and community noise, to enter the rooms. Therefore, a grand challenge is to have a window or open balcony that would mitigate the noise from outside the room or building while allowing for natural ventilation, a panoramic view, and daylight. Several ideas, such as sonic crystals, acoustic balcony, and active noise control techniques, have been reported. Lee et al. ^{[55][56]} reported a field experiment of a sonic crystal window that allowed for natural ventilation while enabling a certain degree of natural ventilation in a student hostel at the National University of Singapore. The overall amounts of pink, construction and environmental noises attenuated by the sonic crystal window were found to be approximately 4.8, 5.0, and 3.4 dB(A), respectively. The typical plenum window was incorporated with sonic crystals ^{[57][58]} and a thin perforated box ^[59] for indoor noise control. Cheung et al. ^[60] presented specially designed baffle-type windows and balconies for enhancing noise mitigation. The baffle-type window or plenum window consisted of two layers of glass panels. The outer layer provided the opening for natural ventilation.

In contrast, the inner layer was a sliding panel without a direct flow path to the external opening in order to shield the noise. A similar idea could also be applied to the acoustic balcony. This idea was similar to the typical plenum window with an air gap having two offset glass panels ^[61]. A variation of the plenum window was the supply air window ^[62]. Bhamjee et al. ^[63] presented the experimentally validated mathematical and computational fluid dynamics model of a supply air window. The supply air window was an airflow window with multiple panes in which air was pulled in from outside and was heated through conduction, convection, and radiation in the cavity. The environmental noise could also be reduced while saving energy in heating the cold air from outside.

Kim and Lee [64] presented a design known as the air-transparent soundproof window. It consisted of a three-dimensional array of strong diffraction-type resonators with many holes centered on each resonator. Another approach was to incorporate active noise control while enabling natural ventilation. Tang et al. [55] implemented the idea of active noise control into their earlier design of plenum windows. Lam et al. [66] explored active noise control (ANC) as a potential solution for controlling noise that is propagated through an open window. The primary motivation of this technique was to provide acoustic insulation via active means while preserving the natural ventilation properties of the open window. In their more recent work, Lam et al. (2020) described an active sound control system fitted onto the opening of the domestic window that attenuated the incident sound, achieving a global reduction in the room interior while maintaining natural ventilation. Kumar and Lee [67] presented an overview of the fundamental concept of active metamaterials, describing the multiple tuning mechanisms and design strategies and highlighting their potential applications. Lee et al. [68] presented a review of the application of active noise control technologies on windows, focusing on the challenges and limitations. Many reported works focused on the possibility of noise mitigation while maintaining natural ventilation, even before the current COVID-19 pandemic [69][70][71]. **Figure 1** shows the potential designs of the ventilated noise barriers. There may not be too many options for research in this field. The addition of filters for the removal of the pathogen will reduce the natural ventilation.

There may be a reason to relook at louver windows instead of the more popular sliding or casement windows. Based on the frontal area of a window opening, the louver window has the highest percentage of area opening to air breeze. For a typical double track sliding window, the area opening to air breeze is only 50%. Casement windows also have a high percentage of area opening to air breeze by redirecting the air breeze through the window. If the air or wind breeze happens to hit against the glass panel, which blocks its flow through the opening, the air breeze traveling through the gap could be lower. Lee et al. ^[72] reported that the louver window could attenuate 1.4%, 5.5%, and 12.0% of the noise when the panels were partially and fully closed at 30°, 60°, and 90°, respectively, based on experimental measurements. For frequencies below 3000 Hz, the best attenuation occurred around 1700 Hz to 2000 Hz for all panel angles. The mass flow rate was reduced for air passing through the louver window when the panels were partially closed at 30° and 60°, at a reduced rate of 7.7% and 46.2%, respectively, based on computational fluid dynamics simulations. Louver windows could also be used as a passive cooling device. The aluminum slats could be replaced by antimicrobial materials such as copper in the post-COVID-19 era. There is an increased interest in using copper or copper-based composites due to their ability to destroy genomic and plasmid DNA4 ^[73] and their longstanding antimicrobial efficacy against pathogens such as antibiotic-resistant superbugs ^{[74|[75]}. Another potential is the use of antimicrobial translucent or transparent coating on the glass panel or the addition of antimicrobial elements into the glass panels.



Figure 1. Potential designs for noise barriers with the air ventilation system: (a) perspective schematic of the ventilated metamaterial absorbers units arranged in a rectangular lattice. Reproduced with permission from Xiang et al. ^[76], *Ultraopen ventilated metamaterial absorbers for sound-silencing applications in an environment with free air flows*; published

by *Extrem. Mech. Lett.*, © 2020 Elsevier Ltd.; (**b**) ventilated window panels. Reproduced with permission from Kumar et al. ^[69], *Ventilated acoustic metamaterial window panels for simultaneous noise shielding and air circulation.*; published by *Appl. Acoust.*, ©2020 Elsevier Ltd.; (**c**) ventilated labyrinthine acoustic metamaterial unit cell. Reproduced with permission from Kumar et al. ^[70], *Labyrinthine acoustic metastructures enabling broadband sound absorption and ventilation*; published by *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, ©2020 AIP Publishing LLC. Each design structure is comprised of a sound absorption system and provision for allowing fluid flows, such as air or water, unrestricted passing through the sample.

References

- Gandhiok, J.; Ibrar, M. Covid-19: Noise Pollution Falls as Lockdown Rings in Sound of Silence | India News—Times of I ndia. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).
- Comprehensive Assessment of COVID-19's Impact on European Air Traffic. Available online: (accessed on 15 June 20 21).
- Ulloa, J.S.; Hernández-Palma, A.; Acevedo-Charry, O.; Gómez-Valencia, B.; Cruz-Rodríguez, C.; Herrera-Varón, Y.; Ro a, M.; Rodríguez-Buriticá, S.; Ochoa-Quintero, J.M. Listening to cities during the COVID-19 lockdown: How do human activities and urbanization impact soundscapes in Colombia? Biol. Conserv. 2021, 255, 108996.
- Aletta, F.; Oberman, T.; Mitchell, A.; Tong, H.; Kang, J. Assessing the changing urban sound environment during the CO VID-19 lockdown period using short-term acoustic measurements. Noise Mapp. 2020, 7, 123–134.
- Bonet-Solà, D.; Martínez-Suquía, C.; Alsina-Pagès, R.M.; Bergadà, P. The Soundscape of the COVID-19 Lockdown: B arcelona Noise Monitoring Network Case Study. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2021, 18, 5799.
- Alsina-Pagès, R.M.; Bergadà, P.; Martínez-Suquía, C. Changes in the soundscape of Girona during the COVID lockdo wn. J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 2021, 149, 3416–3423.
- Sakagami, K. A Note on Variation of the Acoustic Environment in a Quiet Residential Area in Kobe (Japan): Seasonal C hanges in Noise Levels Including COVID-Related Variation. Urban Sci. 2020, 4, 63.
- Munoz, P.; Vincent, B.; Domergue, C.; Gissinger, V.; Guillot, S.; Halbwachs, Y.; Janillon, V. Lockdown during COVID-19 pandemic: Impact on road traffic noise and on the perception of sound environment in France. Noise Mapp. 2020, 7, 28 7–302.
- 9. Mishra, A.; Das, S.; Singh, D.; Maurya, A.K. Effect of COVID-19 lockdown on noise pollution levels in an Indian city: A c ase study of Kanpur. Environ. Sci. Pollut. Res. 2021.
- 10. Rumpler, R.; Venkataraman, S.; Göransson, P. An observation of the impact of CoViD-19 recommendation measures m onitored through urban noise levels in central Stockholm, Sweden. Sustain. Cities Soc. 2020, 63, 102469.
- 11. Basu, B.; Murphy, E.; Molter, A.; Sarkar Basu, A.; Sannigrahi, S.; Belmonte, M.; Pilla, F. Investigating changes in noise pollution due to the COVID-19 lockdown: The case of Dublin, Ireland. Sustain. Cities Soc. 2021, 65, 102597.
- 12. Manzano, J.V.; Pastor, J.A.A.; Quesada, R.G.; Aletta, F.; Oberman, T.; Mitchell, A.; Kang, J. The "sound of silence" in G ranada during the COVID-19 lockdown. Noise Mapp. 2021, 8, 16–31.
- Kalawapudi, K.; Singh, T.; Vijay, R.; Goyal, N.; Kumar, R. Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on festival celebrations and no ise pollution levels. Noise Mapp. 2021, 8, 89–93.
- 14. Bartalucci, C.; Bellomini, R.; Luzzi, S.; Pulella, P.; Torelli, G. A survey on the soundscape perception before and during t he COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. Noise Mapp. 2021, 8, 65–88.
- 15. Zambon, G.; Confalonieri, C.; Angelini, F.; Benocci, R. Effects of COVID-19 outbreak on the sound environment of the c ity of Milan, Italy. Noise Mapp. 2021, 8, 116–128.
- 16. Steele, D.; Guastavino, C. Quieted city sounds during the covid-19 pandemic in montreal. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public H ealth 2021, 18, 5877.
- 17. Gevú, N.; Carvalho, B.; Fagerlande, G.C.; Niemeyer, M.L.; Cortês, M.M.; Torres, J.C.B. Rio de Janeiro noise mapping d uring the COVID-19 pandemic period. Noise Mapp. 2021, 8, 162–171.
- 18. Asensio, C.; Pavón, I.; de Arcas, G. Changes in noise levels in the city of Madrid during COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 2020, 148, 1748–1755.
- Maggi, A.L.; Muratore, J.; Gaetán, S.; Zalazar-Jaime, M.F.; Evin, D.; Pérez Villalobo, J.; Hinalaf, M. Perception of the ac oustic environment during COVID-19 lockdown in Argentina. J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 2021, 149, 3902–3909.
- Challéat, S.; Farrugia, N.; Gasc, A.; Froidevaux, J.; Hatlauf, J.; Dziock, F.; Charbonneau, A.; Linossier, J.; Watson, C.; Ullrich, P.A. Silent-Cities; Open Science Framework (OSF). 2020. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).

- 21. Ajuntament de Barcelona COVID-19 Report on Alteration of Sound Levels. Available online: (accessed on 6 July 2021).
- 22. Alsina-Pagès, R.M.; Alías, F.; Bellucci, P.; Cartolano, P.P.; Coppa, I.; Peruzzi, L.; Bisceglie, A.; Zambon, G. Noise at the time of COVID 19: The impact in some areas in Rome and Milan, Italy. Noise Mapp. 2020, 7, 248–264.
- 23. Bruitparif Monitoring of Changes in the Sound Environment Related to Confinement and Deconfinement. Available onli ne: (accessed on 6 July 2021).
- 24. Welch, C. Seas Quieted by Pandemic Could Reduce Stress, Improve Health in Whales. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).
- Rutz, C.; Loretto, M.C.; Bates, A.E.; Davidson, S.C.; Duarte, C.M.; Jetz, W.; Johnson, M.; Kato, A.; Kays, R.; Mueller, T.; et al. COVID-19 lockdown allows researchers to quantify the effects of human activity on wildlife. Nat. Ecol. Evol. 20 20, 4, 1156–1159.
- 26. Derryberry, E.P.; Phillips, J.N.; Derryberry, G.E.; Blum, M.J.; Luther, D. Singing in a silent spring: Birds respond to a half -century soundscape reversion during the COVID-19 shutdown. Science 2020, 370, 575–579.
- 27. Tan, M.K.; Robillard, T. Population divergence in the acoustic properties of crickets during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ec ology 2021, 102, e03323.
- 28. Shannon, G. Noisy Humans Make Birds Sleep with One Eye Open—But Lockdown Offered a Reprieve. Available onlin e: (accessed on 4 July 2021).
- 29. Gibney, E. Coronavirus lockdowns have changed the way Earth moves. Nature 2020, 580, 176–177.
- 30. Dutheil, F.; Baker, J.S.; Navel, V. COVID-19 and cardiovascular risk: Flying toward a silent world? J. Clin. Hypertens. 2 020, 22, 1945–1946.
- ACOEM Our Relationship with Sound: The Role Noise Plays in Our Lives. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 202 1).
- 32. Díaz, J.; Antonio-López-Bueno, J.; Culqui, D.; Asensio, C.; Sánchez-Martínez, G.; Linares, C. Does exposure to noise p ollution influence the incidence and severity of COVID-19? Environ. Res. 2021, 195, 110766.
- Choon, C.M. Complaints about Noisy Neighbours in South Korea Spike Amid Covid-19, East Asia News & Top Stories —The Straits Times. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).
- 34. Dümen, A.Ş.; Şaher, K. Noise annoyance during COVID-19 lockdown: A research of public opinion before and during th e pandemic. J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 2020, 148, 3489–3496.
- 35. Wong-Tam, K. Suffering from Excessive Construction Noise during COVID-19? Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).
- 36. Tong, H.; Aletta, F.; Mitchell, A.; Oberman, T.; Kang, J. Increases in noise complaints during the COVID-19 lockdown in Spring 2020: A case study in Greater London, UK. Sci. Total Environ. 2021, 785, 147213.
- 37. Yildirim, Y.; Arefi, M. Noise complaints during a pandemic: A longitudinal analysis. Noise Mapp. 2021, 8, 108–115.
- Lin, C. Uptick in Complaints about Renovation Noise as More People Work from Home—CAN. Available online: (acces sed on 14 June 2021).
- 39. Covid-19: Noise—Temporary Changes. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).
- 40. Lee, H.P.; Wang, Z.; Lim, K.M. Assessment of noise from equipment and processes at construction sites. Build. Acoust. 2017, 24, 21–34.
- 41. Nakashima, H.; Ueda, K.; Tomoyuki, T. Ultra-low Noise Hydraulic Excavators Using a Newly Developed Cooling Syste m (iNDr). Kobelco Technol. Rev. 2013, 31, 12–18.
- 42. Nakada, K.; Imamura, K.; Yabe, M. Technical Paper Research and Development of Low-Noise Bucket for Construction Machinery; Komatsu Technical Report; Komatsu Ltd.: Tokyo, Japan, 2006.
- 43. Karimi, M.; Younesian, D. Optimized T-shape and Y-shape inclined sound barriers for railway noise mitigation. J. Low F req. Noise Vib. Act. Control 2014, 33, 357–370.
- 44. Ho, S.S.T.; Busch-Vishniac, I.J.; Blackstock, D.T. Noise reduction by a barrier having a random edge profile. J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 1997, 101, 2669–2676.
- 45. Ekici, I.; Bougdah, H. A review of research on environmental noise barriers. Build. Acoust. 2003, 10, 289–323.
- 46. Wang, Z.; Kian Meng, L.; Priyadarshinee, P.; Lee, H.P. Applications of noise barriers with a slanted flat-tip jagged cantil ever for noise attenuation on a construction site. JVC J. Vib. Control 2018, 24, 5225–5232.
- 47. Lund, S.; Madgavkar, A.; Manyika, J.; Smit, S.; Ellingrud, K.; Meaney, M.; Robinson, O. The Future of Work after COVI D-19. Available online: (accessed on 14 June 2021).

- Sakagami, K.; Okuzono, T. Some considerations on the use of space sound absorbers with next-generation materials r eflecting COVID situations in Japan: Additional sound absorption for post-pandemic challenges in indoor acoustic envir onments. UCL Open Environ. 2020, 1–10.
- Van Doremalen, N.; Bushmaker, T.; Morris, D.H.; Holbrook, M.G.; Gamble, A.; Williamson, B.N.; Tamin, A.; Harcourt, J. L.; Thornburg, N.J.; Gerber, S.I.; et al. Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1. N. Engl. J. Med. 2020, 382, 1564–1567.
- 50. Ohl, M.; Schweizer, M.; Graham, M.; Heilmann, K.; Boyken, L.; Diekema, D. Hospital privacy curtains are frequently an d rapidly contaminated with potentially pathogenic bacteria. Am. J. Infect. Control 2012, 40, 904–906.
- Al-Tawfiq, J.A.; Bazzi, A.M.; Rabaan, A.A.; Okeahialam, C. The effectiveness of antibacterial curtains in comparison wit h standard privacy curtains against transmission of microorganisms in a hospital setting. Infez. Med. 2019, 27, 149–15
 4.
- 52. Shek, K.; Patidar, R.; Kohja, Z.; Liu, S.; Gawaziuk, J.P.; Gawthrop, M.; Kumar, A.; Logsetty, S. Rate of contamination of hospital privacy curtains in a burns/plastic ward: A longitudinal study. Am. J. Infect. Control 2018, 46, 1019–1021.
- 53. Chatterjee, S.; Murallidharan, J.S.; Agrawal, A.; Bhardwaj, R. Why coronavirus survives longer on impermeable than po rous surfaces. Phys. Fluids 2021, 33, 21701.
- 54. World Health Organization. Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: Implications for Infection Prevention Precautions; WHO: Ge neva, Switzerland, 2020.
- 55. Lee, H.M.; Tan, L.B.; Lim, K.M.; Lee, H.P. Experimental study of the acoustical performance of a sonic crystal window i n a reverberant sound field. Build. Acoust. 2017, 24, 5–20.
- 56. Lee, H.M.; Tan, L.B.; Lim, K.M.; Xie, J.; Lee, H.P. Field Experiment of a Sonic Crystal Window. Fluct. Noise Lett. 2018, 17.
- 57. Lee, H.M.; Haris, A.; Lim, K.M.; Xie, J.; Lee, H.P. Incorporation of resonators into plenum window. Arch. Acoust. 2018, 4 3, 739–746.
- Lee, H.M.; Wang, Z.; Lim, K.M.; Xie, J.; Lee, H.P. Novel plenum window with sonic crystals for indoor noise control. App I. Acoust. 2020, 167, 107390.
- 59. Lee, H.M.; Haris, A.; Lim, K.M.; Xie, J.; Lee, H.P. Solving noise pollution issue using plenum window with perforated thi n box. Crystals 2020, 10, 614.
- 60. Cheung, K.M.C.; Wong, H.Y.C.; Choi Tim, W.; Keung, K.; Chau Stephen, Y.; Cheung Rudolf, Y. Development and applic ation of specially designed windows and balconies for noise mitigation in Hong Kong. In Proceedings of the Internation al Noise 2019: Noise Control for a Better Environment, Madrid, Spain, 16–19 June 2019.
- Du, L.; Lau, S.-K.; Lee, S.E. Experimental study on sound transmission loss of plenum windows. J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 2 019, 146, EL489–EL495.
- 62. Søndergaard, L.; Legarth, S.V. Investigation of sound insulation for a Supply Air Window—Field measurements and oc cupant response. In Proceedings of the Inter Noise 2014, Melbourne, Australia, 16–19 November 2014.
- 63. Bhamjee, M.; Nurick, A.; Madyira, D.M. An experimentally validated mathematical and CFD model of a supply air windo w: Forced and natural flow. Energy Build. 2013, 57, 289–301.
- 64. Kim, S.H.; Lee, S.H. Air transparent soundproof window. AIP Adv. 2014, 4, 117123.
- 65. Tang, S.K.; Tong, Y.G.; Tsui, K.L. Sound transmission across a plenum window with an active noise cancellation syste m. Noise Control Eng. J. 2016, 64, 423–431.
- 66. Lam, B.; Shi, C.; Gan, W.-S. Active noise control systems for open windows: Current updates and future perspectives. I n Proceedings of the 24th International Congress on Sound and Vibration, London, UK, 23–27 July 2017.
- 67. Kumar, S.; Lee, H.P. Recent Advances in Active Acoustic Metamaterials. Int. J. Appl. Mech. 2019, 11, 1950081.
- Lee, H.M.; Hua, Y.; Wang, Z.; Lim, K.M.; Lee, H.P. A review of the application of active noise control technologies on windows: Challenges and limitations. Appl. Acoust. 2021, 174, 107753.
- 69. Kumar, S.; Xiang, T.B.; Lee, H.P. Ventilated acoustic metamaterial window panels for simultaneous noise shielding and air circulation. Appl. Acoust. 2020, 159, 107088.
- 70. Kumar, S.; Lee, H.P. Labyrinthine acoustic metastructures enabling broadband sound absorption and ventilation. Appl. Phys. Lett. 2020, 116, 134103.
- 71. Kumar, S.; Lee, H.P. Recent Advances in Acoustic Metamaterials for Simultaneous Sound Attenuation and Air Ventilatio n Performances. Crystals 2020, 10, 686.

- 72. Lee, H.M.; Lim, K.M.; Lee, H.P. Experimental and numerical studies of acoustical and ventilation performances of glass louver window. J. Vibroeng. 2017, 19, 699–706.
- 73. Salgado, C.D.; Sepkowitz, K.A.; John, J.F.; Cantey, J.R.; Attaway, H.H.; Freeman, K.D.; Sharpe, P.A.; Michels, H.T.; Sc hmidt, M.G. Copper Surfaces Reduce the Rate of Healthcare-Acquired Infections in the Intensive Care Unit. Infect. Con trol Hosp. Epidemiol. 2013, 34, 479–486.
- 74. Grass, G.; Rensing, C.; Solioz, M. Metallic copper as an antimicrobial surface. Appl. Environ. Microbiol. 2011, 77, 1541 –1547.
- 75. Vincent, M.; Duval, R.E.; Hartemann, P.; Engels-Deutsch, M. Contact killing and antimicrobial properties of copper. J. A ppl. Microbiol. 2018, 124, 1032–1046.
- 76. Xiang, X.; Wu, X.; Li, X.; Wu, P.; He, H.; Mu, Q.; Wang, S.; Huang, Y.; Wen, W. Ultra-open ventilated metamaterial abso rbers for sound-silencing applications in environment with free air flows. Extrem. Mech. Lett. 2020, 100786.

Retrieved from https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/history/show/29197