Re Silence

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S+T+ARTS residencies
Retune the Soundscape of future cities
through art and science collaboration

THE MINING AFFECT SYMPOSIUM REPORT

S+T+ARTS European Commission

MINING AFFECT SYMPOSIUM

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

TASOS VAROUDIS
Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
Technology and Urban Science

MEL SLATER
Institute of Neurosciences, University of Barcelona
Behavioral Studies in Neuroscience

PATRICIA REED
Design Academy Eindhoven
Cultural Studies, Sociology, and Critical Technology

Thessaloniki Concert Hall
Martiou Str. 25 & Paralia, Thessaloniki, Greece

Monday, 26 May 2025 @ 14:00-18:00

CERTH
CENTRE FOR
RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY
HELLAS

ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY
OF THESSALONIKI

Re
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Commission

The Mining Affect Symposium will revolve around the emotional analysis of urban spaces and digital sociality in a time of data mining, cognitive labor, and manipulative disinformation.

How does the 'digital continuum' transform 21st-century urbanity, and how will its expansion redefine our nervous ecosystems?

INTRODUCTION

THE MINING AFFECT SYMPOSIUM, PART OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT RESILENCE, TOOK PLACE ON MAY 26TH, 2025, AT THE THESSALONIKI CONCERT HALL.

THE EVENT BROUGHT TOGETHER ARTISTS, RESEARCHERS, AND TECHNOLOGISTS TO DISSECT THE EMOTIONAL, SENSORY, AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS.

OPENING TALKS

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Georgakopoulou Nefeli,

Centre for Research and Technology Hellas

Welcome | *ReSilence:* Retune the Soundscape of future cities through art and science collaboration

Kicking off the Symposium, **Nefeli Georgakopoulou** introduced *ReSilence*—the European project under which the Symposium takes place—dedicated to exploring the dynamic relationship between sound and silence in urban spaces.

She began by honoring the building that hosts the event (Thessaloniki Concert Hall-M2) and its architect, Arata Isozaki. Drawing inspiration from the Japanese concept of *ma*—described by Isozaki as the meaningful silence between sounds, the in-between—*ReSilence* invites us to shift our attention from the built environment to what lies in-between: the rhythms, pauses, forces, humans, more-than-humans, events and sonic textures that shape our experience of the city.

Bringing together an interdisciplinary network of artists, researchers, designers, scientists and technologists, the project reimagines urban life through sound. Through cross-sector research, residencies, exhibitions, and scenario-driven applications, *ReSilence* develops tools and methods to examine urban soundscapes at multiple scales—fostering new ways of understanding our cities through both artistic and scientific collaboration.

OPENING TALKS

Peter Friess,

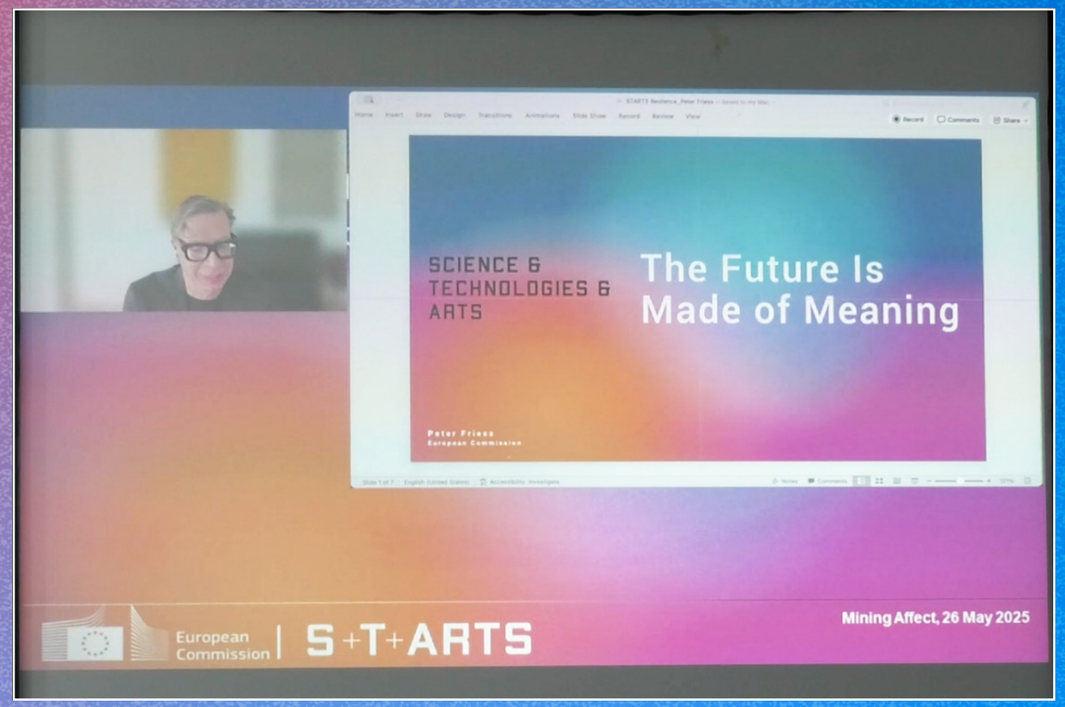
Project Officer at the European Commission

S+T+ARTS | Arts, Science, Technology

This introduction was followed by **Peter Friess**, who placed *ReSilence* within the broader context of the *S+T+ARTS* initiative. He underscored that technological progress, particularly AI and digitization, is not just about innovation or function but about the meaning and impact on culture, human interaction, and social cohesion.

Highlighting the critical role of artists as catalysts for innovation and societal reflection, he emphasized that collaboration between artists, scientists, and technologists allows for a deeper engagement with complex challenges. Peter Friess also touched on the importance of extending **cooperation beyond Europe to ensure technology serves wider social good**.

S+T+ARTS, active for nearly a decade, exemplifies how creative processes can reshape our relationship with technology, advancing models of innovation that center human vulnerability rather than productivity metrics.



OPENING TALKS

Manuel Cirauqui,
Eina Idea
Beatrice de Gelder,
Maastricht University, Fundamental Research

Introduction to *Mining Affect* Symposium

To open up the central questions of the day, **Beatrice de Gelder** and **Manuel Cirauqui** introduced the Symposium theme, titled "*Mining Affect*".

De Gelder pointed out the unresolved tension in neuroscience between biological and psychological interpretations of emotion, raising questions about how physiological signals and subjective feelings are mined and interpreted.

Cirauqui built on this, positioning affect as a valuable resource in data-driven urban systems. He argued that cities increasingly function as emotional ecosystems, where technologies extract and respond to affective expressions.

This framework, they noted, sets the stage for the artistic explorations in *ReSilence*, where sensing, emotion, and urbanity intersect.

KEYNOTE INTERVENTIONS

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Mel Slater,

University of Barcelona

The Use of Virtual Reality in Understanding People's Responses to Environmental Change

The three keynote speakers that followed expanded the discussion through distinct yet interconnected approaches.

The first keynote speaker, **Mel Slater**, one of the founders of virtual reality (VR) research in Europe, was introduced by Beatrice de Gelder and gave a talk about the development and applications of VR technology.

He began by tracing VR's history from its origins in 1965, drawing attention to key advances such as head-mounted displays and immersive environments. He went on to explain how **VR is now used in scientific experiments to study how people react to changes in their environment**, like those caused by climate change.

By immersing people in realistic virtual scenarios, researchers observe behavioral and emotional responses that can help promote better environmental awareness and mental health.Slater also showcased the novel VR project *"environMENTAL",* which integrates the *"ConVRSelf"* technique with group therapy intervention. This methodology enables users to interact with a virtual double of themselves to process personal issues and find new perspectives. This method is strengthened by Artificial Intelligence, enabling the virtual double to respond intelligently and empathetically.

Slater concluded by discussing VR's potential as a social platform, where multiple users can meet in shared virtual spaces, facilitating innovative social dynamics while broadening applications in therapy and education.

KEYNOTE INTERVENTIONS

Tasos Varoudis,
The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

Choreographing Intelligence: Data, Movement and Spatial Morphology

Expanding on the theme of technologically mediated spaces, **Tasos Varoudis**, presented by Nefeli Georgakopoulou, shared insights from his interdisciplinary work at the nexus of architecture, machine intelligence, and spatial computation.

His research reimagines **cities as dynamic, *"thinking"* entities, where data-driven design responds to both social logic and environmental resilience.**

Through projects like *"EcoStack: Computational Bioregionalism and Resilience"*—which integrates ecological datasets with urban planning for London's flood-prone brownfields—and *"MotioGlyph: AI and Human Expression"*—a study of human motion patterns as generative design tools—Varoudis highlighted the potential of intelligent systems to decode and enhance urban experience. His methods, from 3D motion tracking to open-source spatial analysis *(DepthmapX)*, help in understanding social processes within the built environment while bridging algorithmic precision with human-centric design.

The presentation culminated in a preview of upcoming exhibitions in London, where VR and physical installations will translate these computational explorations into tangible, affective urban interventions.

KEYNOTE INTERVENTIONS

Patricia Reed,

Design Academy Eindhoven

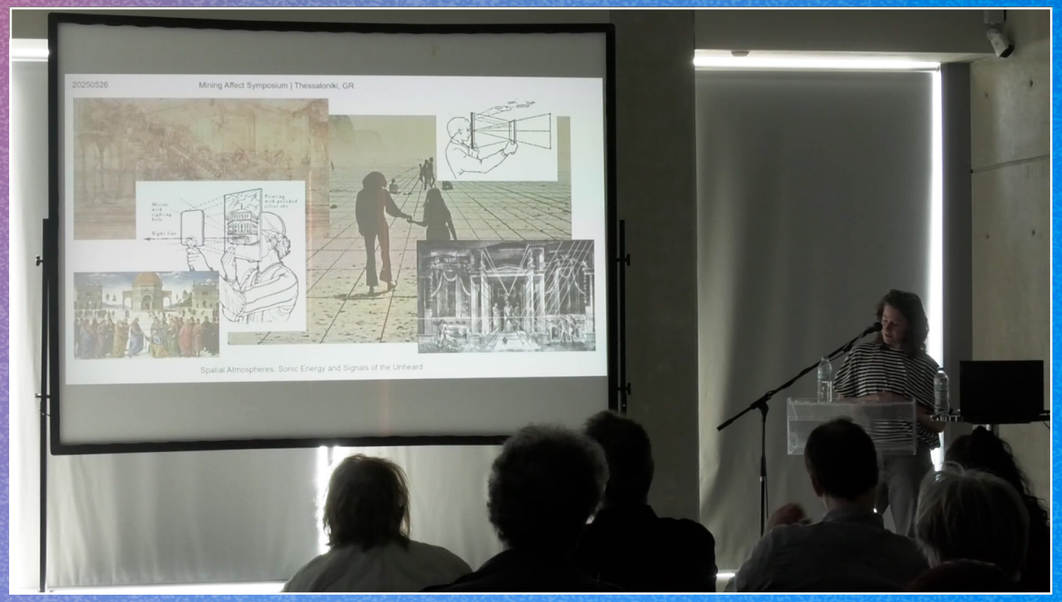
Spatial Atmospheres: Sonic Energy and Signals of the Unheard

The Symposium's final keynote speaker, **Patricia Reed**, with Berta Gutierrez *(Forty-Five Degrees)* setting the context, critiqued **the limits of human-centered frameworks in confronting planetary crises**, arguing that shifts like Copernican or Darwinian revolutions are inadequate.

Drawing on Sylvia Wynter's concept of Man—a Eurocentric construct legitimizing domination, Reed turned to how **this paradigm erases ecological and cultural multiplicity, opening the question of how it might be undone** or reconfigured in light of planetary entanglement.

Proposing *"vibrational ontology"* as an alternative, she contrasted modernist acoustics (prioritizing clarity) with vibration as material entanglement across scales.This reorientation, she argued, requires attuning to *"weak signals"* from emergent worlds, with art as a techne for creating speculative *"cuts"* in reality.

Closing with machine learning's high-dimensional spaces, Reed suggested that mathematical innovations (e.g., Grothendieck's geometries) might bridge scalar divides without negating embodiment. Her talk underscored the paradox of navigating crises with epistemologies complicit in their making.



CLOSING ROUNDTABLE

CLOSING ROUNDTABLE

Tasos Varoudis, Mel Slater, and Patricia Reed in dialogue with the audience

Moderated by Manuel Cirauqui & Beatrice de Gelder

In its closing session, the Symposium concluded with a **Roundtable Discussion**, moderated by Manuel Cirauqui and Beatrice de Gelder, tackling the complex interplay between technology, data, urban planning, and social change. Patricia Reed, Tasos Varoudis, and Mel Slater engaged in dialogue with the audience, focused on the tension between consensus and the value of *"weird"* data that challenges norms.

Innovation was framed as emerging from anomalies rather than predictable outcomes. The group critically examined whether technology should uphold the societal status quo or serve as a catalyst for radical change, using AlphaGo's unexpected strategies as a metaphor for rethinking norms.

The discussion moved to data politics in urban planning, warning against imposing models from cities like London onto different contexts, risking the loss of local uniqueness. Participants debated the limits of data in capturing complex urban realities, such as favelas versus slums.

AI's role was critiqued, highlighting corporate control and the weaponization of data. The Turing Test's emphasis on deception was questioned, with calls to rethink intelligence. Open-source AI's democratizing potential was acknowledged but met with skepticism.

Finally, mixed reality's impact and societal resistance to invasive tech like Google Glass were discussed. The session ended by urging a more creative use of technology to promote a fairer and more equitable society.

REFLECTION

THE SYMPOSIUM UNDERSCORED **RESILENCE'S MISSION:** TO INTERROGATE TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN SHAPING URBAN AFFECT, WHILE ADVOCATING FOR **PLURALISTIC, NON-EXTRACTIVE FUTURES**—FUTURES THAT FOCUS ON WHAT IS **UNSEEN AND UNHEARD.**

IT DEMONSTRATED THE POWER OF **INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION** IN RETHINKING HOW CITIES SOUND, FEEL, AND FUNCTION.

Thessaloniki Concert Hall, 26 May 2025

REFLECTION

Central to the Symposium was a sustained questioning of technological narratives:

- **Who is innovation for?**
- **What forms of intelligence are being privileged or excluded?**
- **How can cities retain their complexity and specificity in the face of standardizing data models?**

The criticality expressed—especially during the Roundtable—did not reject technological experimentation, but insisted on grounding it in **cultural specificity, epistemic plurality, and ecological awareness.**

ReSilence's unique positioning—at the intersection of **urbanism, sound, and sensory politics**—allowed the Symposium to transcend disciplinary boundaries. Rather than offering polished answers, it staged **encounters** between speculative architectures, emotional computation, and posthuman ontologies. **This plurality became its strength.**

In the end, *Mining Affect* called for a more **imaginative and accountable design of futures**—one that listens not only to dominant signals, but also to the *"weak vibrations"* of alternative worlds struggling to surface.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101070278

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