

Listening to Cities

4ª Conferência Municipal sobre Ruído, Vibração e Perturbação Sonora

Dr Francesco Aletta

27 April 2026

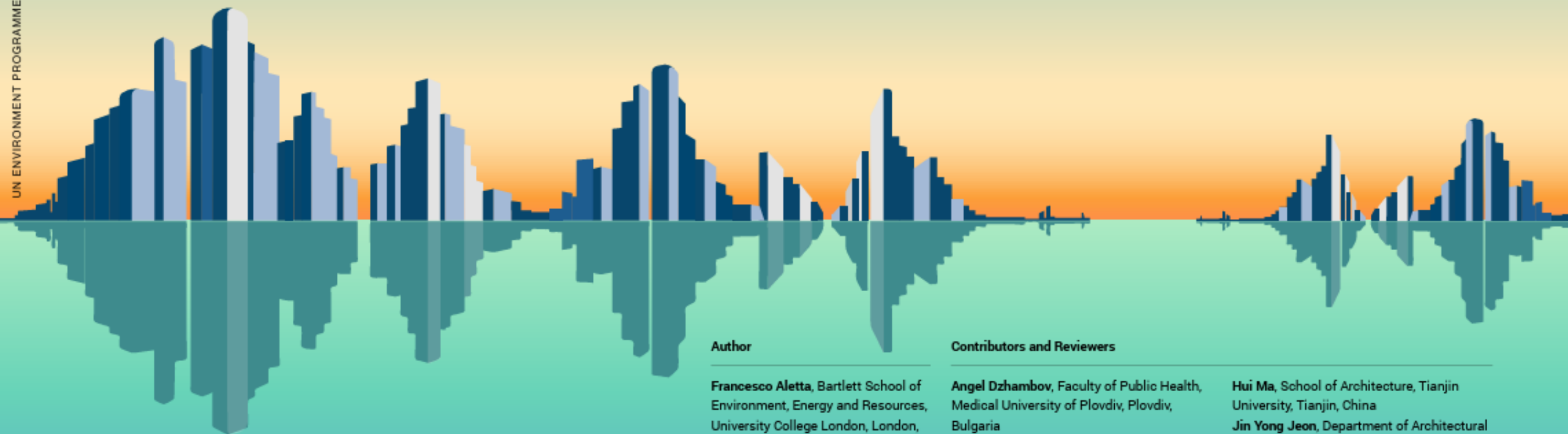
Institute for Environmental Design and Engineering

The Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources



Listening to cities

From noisy environments
to positive soundscapes



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Cities are never truly silent— sound is everywhere.

A noise is a misplaced sound.

Noise is not just nuisance, it really hurts.

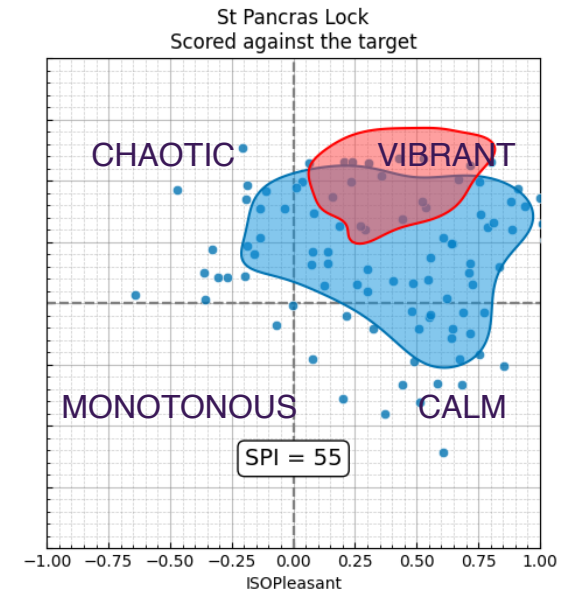
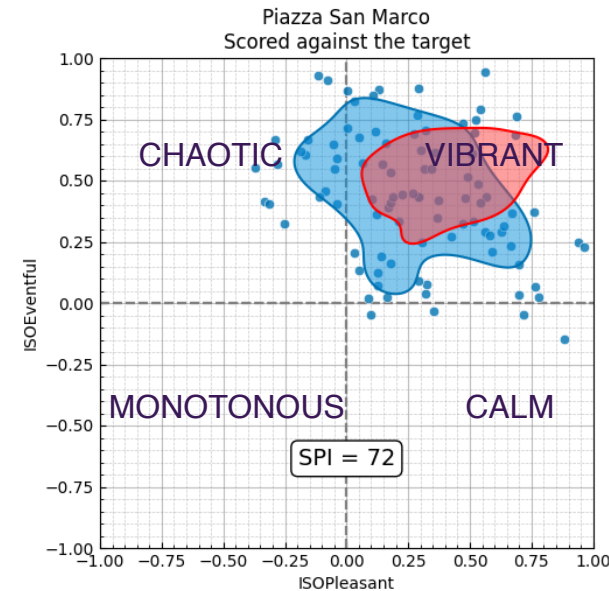
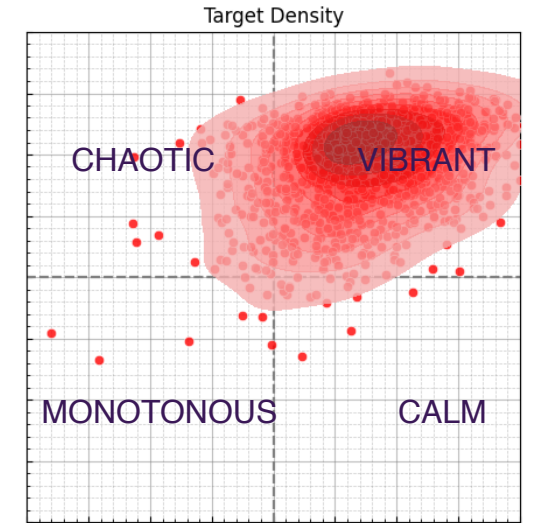
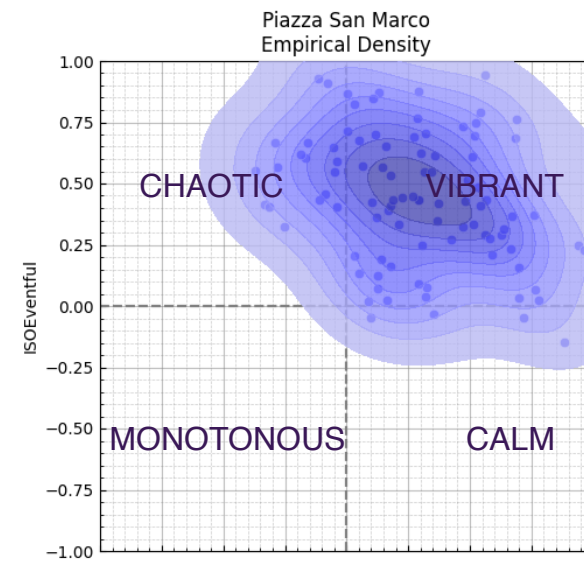
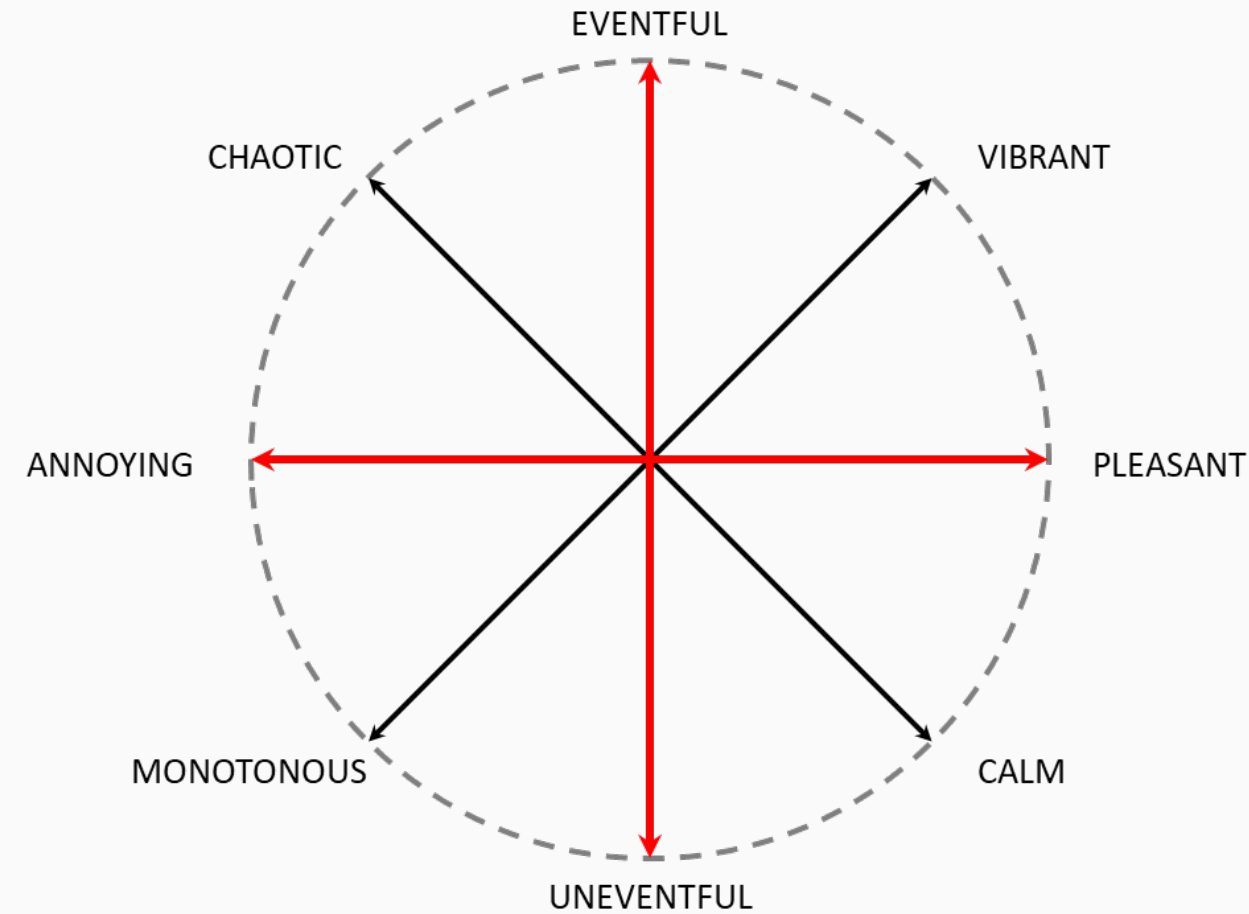
It is the same world over.

Not all are equal before the law (of noise).

We are not alone (on the planet).

Sound level is just one part of the story.

Soundscape Circumplex Model

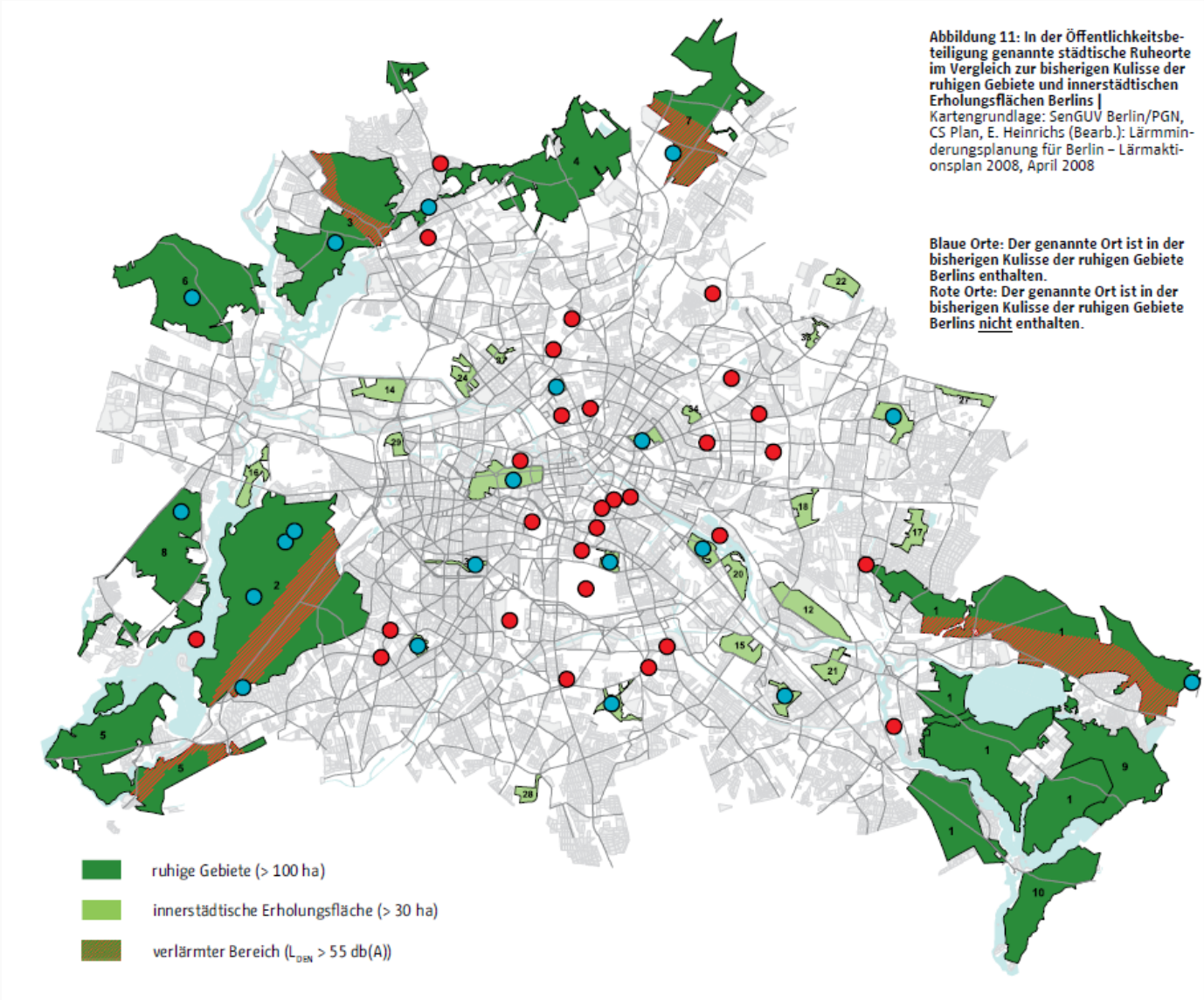


Axelsson, Ö., Nilsson, M. E., & Berglund, B. (2010). A principal components model of soundscape perception. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 128(5), 2836-2846.

Mitchell, A., Aletta, F., Oberman, T., & Kang, J. (2024). Soundscape perception indices (SPIs): Developing context-dependent single value scores of multidimensional soundscape perceptual quality. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 156(6), 3694-3706.

What do Berlin, Limerick, and Malmö
have in common?

Crowd-sourced quiet areas in Berlin added to the Noise Action Plan: direct evidence of citizen science impact on policy making



Berlin: gesünder und lebenswerter

Lärmaktionsplan Berlin 2019–2023
Nach Maßgabe des § 47d
Bundes-Immissionsschutzgesetz

Limerick soundscape design intervention and Quiet Area designation (2026)

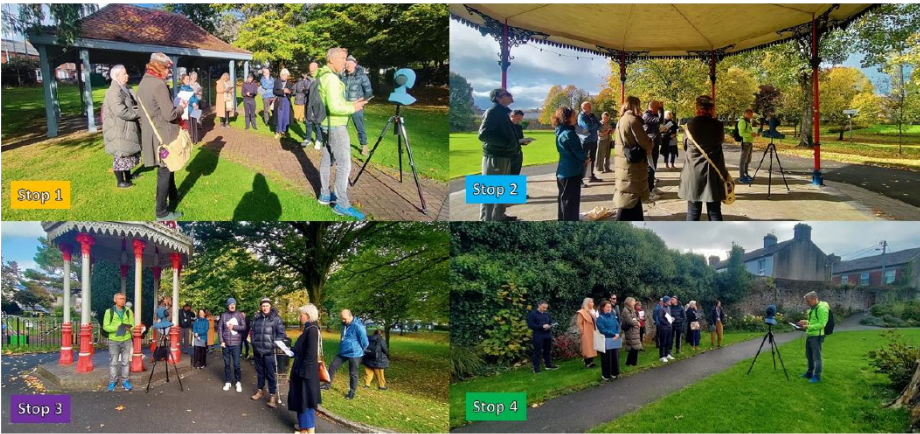
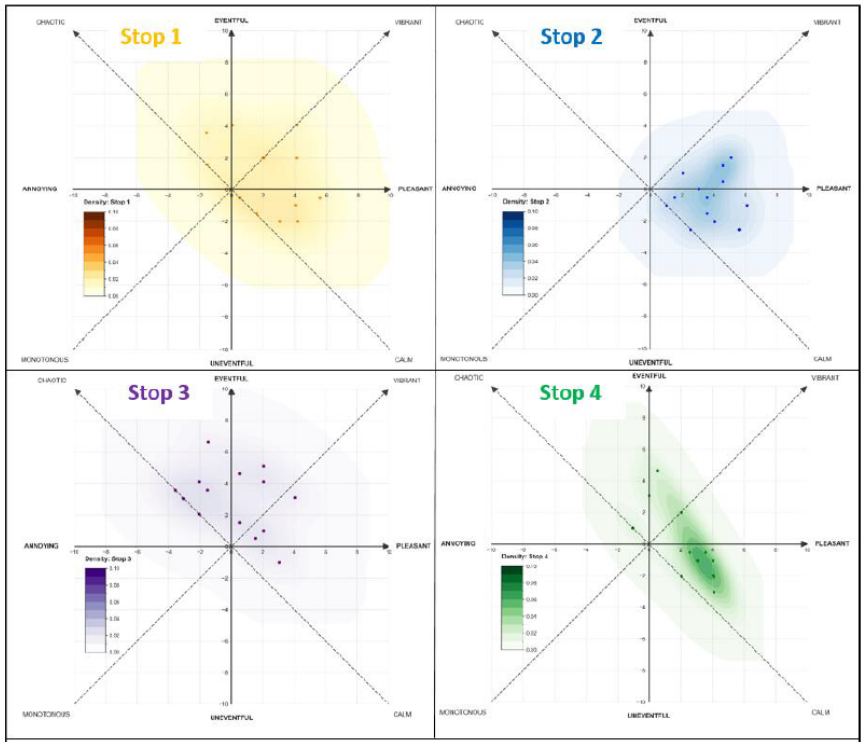
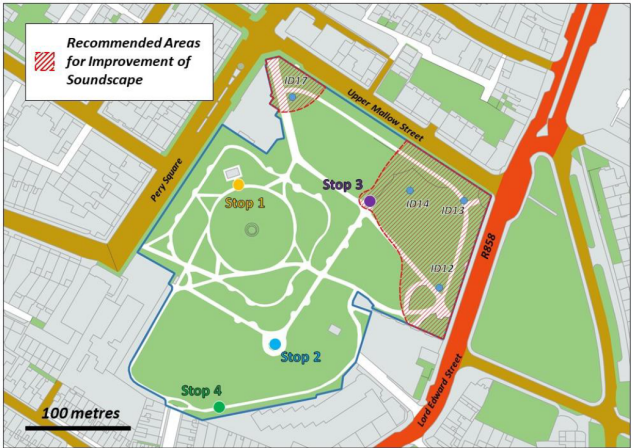


Figure 6. Listening stops 1 to 4 in the People's Park (17th October 2024).



Limerick City and County Council Secures Designation of The People's Park as a "Quiet Area"

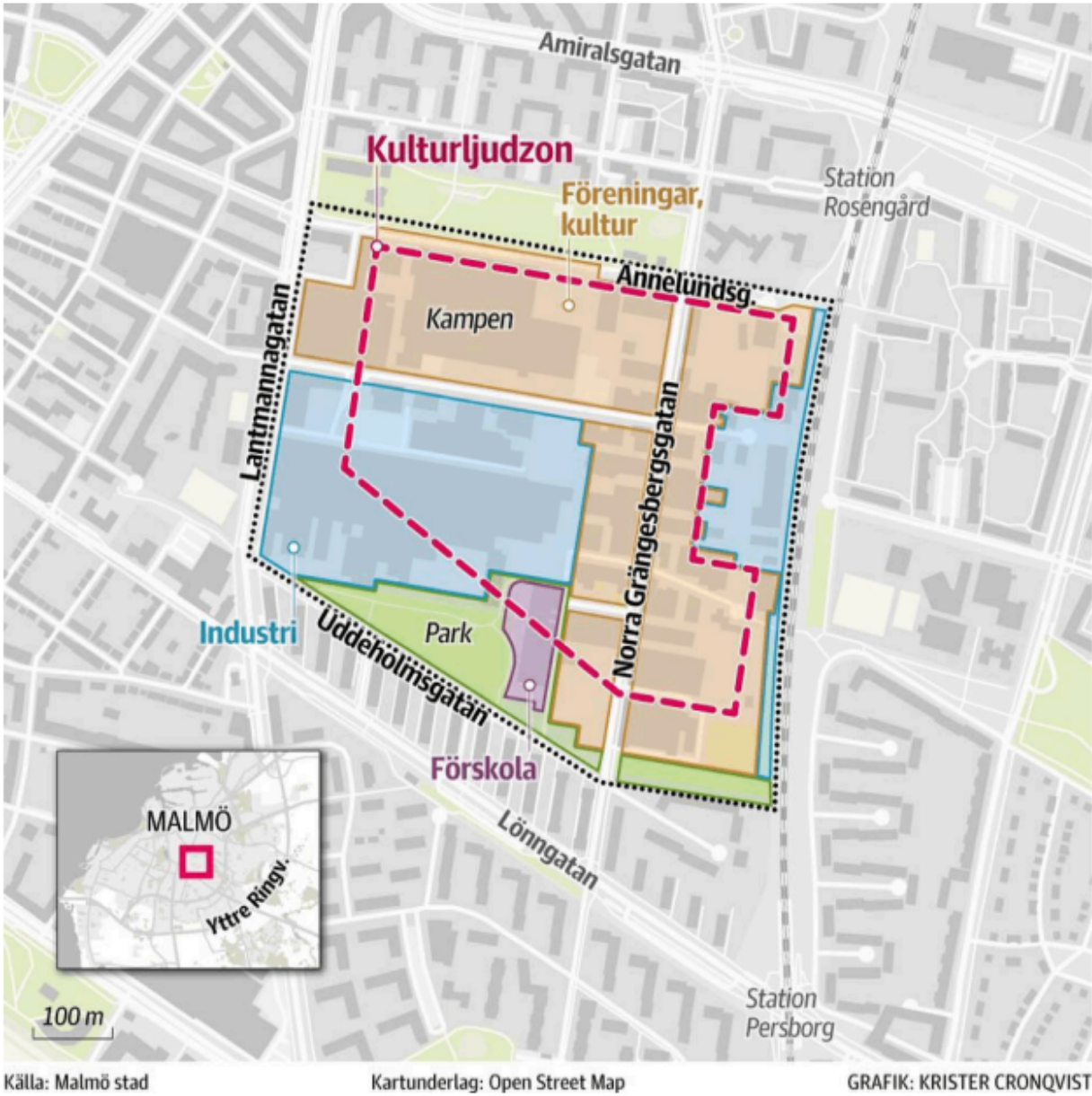
09 APRIL 2026



Aerial View of Limerick's People's Park

"The concept is to create two audio islands to improve the perceived acoustic environment in this area by providing seating to encourage relaxation and social interaction with acoustic installations that mask environmental noise and provide natural sounds influenced by the River Shannon. The artwork is intended to be permanent and of high quality."

Malmö Cultural Sound Zone – Kulturljudzon



Gatufest NGBG, Foto: Gianluca Bruna



Temporära aktivitet i parken och i kvarter



Pågen AB

- Allowing **cultural sound to coexist** with the area's soundscape
- **85 dBA outdoors** at the source as a reference level
- **25 dBA indoors** for homes, schools, and preschools must still be met



CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DE
SÃO PAULO

Gabinete Vereador Eliseu Gabriel

PROJETO DE LEI Nº 123/2026

Dispõe sobre a instituição da Política Municipal de Despoluição Sonora Urbana da cidade de São Paulo e dá outras providências.

Noise is not just a nuisance but a public-health and environmental issue: the bill states the aim of preventing, controlling, and progressively reducing urban noise exposure to protect quality of life.

Environmental justice: the bill prioritizes vulnerable groups and noise-sensitive places such as hospitals, schools, care facilities, parks, and residential areas for stronger protection.

Sound level alone is not the whole story: the bill requires authorities to consider duration, recurrence, overlapping sources, land-use compatibility, complaints history, mitigation, and even real-time monitoring for noisy events.

*“... if noise is defined only by loudness, then quiet must be the only sonic solution; thus less sound becomes the noise fighters’ categorical imperative – a battle that, globally speaking, **they cannot win.**”*

(Chris Berdik in *Clamor*, 2025)

Muito obrigado

Dr Francesco Aletta

27 April 2026

