

Agile Seed Funding Summary

Title of project: Sound fundamentals for urban professionals: a course for city-makers

Project team: Edda Bild, Daniel Steele, Cynthia Tarlao, Richard Yanaky, Prof. Johanne Brochu (and new addition: Nicola Di Croce)

Review of Project Goals

The main goal of our Agile Seed Funding was to directly compensate CIRMMT student members for their time in towards creating material for a new course that promotes the use of sound in urban planning and design, beyond simple noise mitigation. This funding went directly to paying for labour costs towards developing an outline for this course, along with preliminary content.

We are happy to announce that this seed funding has helped us meet our goals in laying the groundwork for this course, and we will continue to work on this project in 2021 towards its completion, and anticipate offering a first iteration of this course online in fall 2021.

Current Status

The course syllabus is about 75% designed, leaving room for iteration and improvement based on demos and testing (below). The structure the course focuses around different facets of the sound experience, in 5 course sessions:

- 1) Why Design with Sound in Mind?
- 2) The Making of sound
- 3) Perceiving Sound
- 4) Understanding Sound
- 5) Sound and Society

Each of the sessions contains a lecture component, a policy component, and an interactive activity. The course will be hands-on, combining three types of learning: learn by understanding (lectures), learn by seeing / listening (examples), and learn by doing (demonstrations and exercises).

Challenges

A considerable challenge of this task is to both translate a wide array of academic material that does not typically give solid recommendations into practical lessons for professionals. This is further exasperated by the need to reduce jargon to sound both appealing and accessible, while retaining the learning outcomes. This was accompanied by the fatigue of virtual work setting in. However, with the slow reopening of McGill workspaces, we anticipate keeping this aspect under control, to allow completion of the course.

Specific Outcomes

There was one welcome addition to the course design team: Nicola di Croce is an architect post-doc who is joining us at Sounds in the City by way of a Marie Curie Fellowship – he has taken great interest in the course and will help us in designing the final slides and activity materials that will showcase the course.

We offered an introduction to the course as part of a poster session and an adjacent presentation and activity at the Urban Sound Symposium in April 2021 (held digitally). This included running a moderated co-design session with participants (5 sessions of 5-6 people) to help inform course development by piloting an exercise that uses our ‘soundscape persona’ method. This method was developed in a previous study to see whether it promoted empathy and creative problem solving around the different stakeholder-based sound and noise concerns, within a set scenario.

The course will be advertised on [the Sounds in the City blog](#) (to be published shortly), in an interview for the [“The Rest is Just Noise” podcast](#), and through word of mouth to our network of professionals of the built environment; a form has been set up where those interested can sign up for updates.

Continuing work

A second improved upon iteration of this moderated co-design exercise will take place this June at the JBE, which will primarily be attended by practicing urban planners from Quebec municipalities. By the end of this second iteration of the exercise, we should be clear on the feasibility of our specific course material and have ample directions to improve the content.

We sincerely thank CIRMMT for their generosity in getting this work off the ground.