

Heat and Noise (*Renao*): Media Ecologies and Urban Futures

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熱鬧 / *Renao* / “Heat and Noise”

Definition (Pan and Tong 1993: 331)

“那聽不完的聲音，那人潮擁擠的活動，還有那走馬燈般的活動”
“unceasing sound, a thronging group of people, and continuous activity”

Urban heat and noise

- ✧ Convection and propagation of a continuous visual and acoustic field
- ✧ Creation and experience irreducible to discrete performing bodies or objects
- ✧ Interplay of social life and aesthetic atmospherics (socioaesthetics)

Pan Yinghai and Tong Xunchu. 1993. *Renao*: A Sociopsychological Phenomenon of the Chinese People [熱鬧: 一個中國人的社會心理現象的提出]. Local Psychology Research [本土心理學研究] 1 (1993), 330-337.



Motivating Questions

- ✧ How might socioaesthetic creation with responsive media environments drawing on *renao* **inspire imaginaries** about new modes of being together in more livable, sociable urban places?
- ✧ What modes of discretizing-adverse media **afford a sense of ‘exchange’** emerging from convection and propagation rather than transmission, ownership, or consumption?
- ✧ Can we transform public surveillance infrastructures into sensing apparatus for media systems which **infuse public space** with signals which **communicate instead of control** the interrelationality of different complex and dynamical systems?

System Design

Istage responsive media system (sensors, computers, lights, speakers)
+ Multichannel audio recordings of *renao* public places collected in Tianjin, China
+ Moving bodies

→ Sensing from a ceiling-mounted camera + Movement and gesture by bodies

→ Continuous observation of flows of movement by the system

→ Modulation of lighting hue + Modulation of playback of audio recordings

→ “Heat and noise”

Discussion

If *renao* is spontaneous aesthetic experience, why a media system? Responsive media conditions both *attunement* and *poiesis*. On one hand, responsive media conditions both creation and experience of *renao* in ways that attune to its potential for social transformation. Such potential lies in domains such as **communal placemaking** through socioaesthetic activity, **social exchange** that is convivial and mutually enriching rather than isolating and competitive, and the use of sensing technology for **aesthetic creation** rather than surveillance or control. On the other hand, responsive media affords aesthetic creation and experience adequate to the heated and noisy activity characteristic of urban public places. As a generator of *renao*, responsive media provides settings for **playful, sociable aesthetic activity**.