

The NY Times has [published a great piece](#) about noise pollution dynamics in New York City. Noise is a classic urban externality as it is a byproduct of productive activity such as airplanes landing, flying a helicopter to the Hamptons, or erecting a new building, or a subway arriving, or a motorist honking her horn or a biker accelerating his “hog” or a HVAC system working extra hard on a summer day. Nobody (perhaps excluding the biker) enjoys creating this noise but the sheer population density of NYC guarantees that everyone is affected. The NY Times tries to tell a 1% vs. the 99% story by highlighting that the rich have more strategies for protecting themselves from the noise. They can retreat to the Hamptons and they can invest in expensive thick windows and they can afford to live in neighborhoods further from noise hubs. The article goes on to blame the cops for not enforcing noise laws and implicitly takes a jab at Mayor Mike B. for allowing a 24 hour a day building construction phase to take place. To the lawyers, I must ask a question. When it comes to peace and quiet, what are our rights? How are our property rights enforced?

As a technological optimist, permit me to point you to [a great paper](#) by my friend Dan McMillen that studies noise dynamics near Chicago airports and the implications for local real estate prices.