Karin Bijsterveld has been awarded with a NIAS Fellowship (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study) for her project *Hidden Ears: Wiretapping, Eavesdropping and Analyzing Sonic Information, 1960s-present*. She will stay at the NIAS from early February to the end of June 2017. By that time, the NIAS will have been relocated from Wassenaar to Amsterdam. Bijsterveld's NIAS fellowship draws on her research to be done as visiting scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin in the fall of 2016.

Hidden Ears: Wiretapping, Eavesdropping and Analyzing Sonic Information, 1960s-present

Karin Bijsterveld (NIAS Fellowship Project 2017)

In state security and forensic contexts, auditory surveillance through wiretapping and sound recording has been as old as the technologies enabling it since the 1890s. Despite the widespread rise of cyber and video surveillance, the world of hidden microphones and listening in on telephone calls has never vanished. Historical and critical studies of systematic eavesdropping have commonly focused on the taping endeavors, the decoding of encrypted messages and the socio-political origins and consequences of these activities. This project, however, aims to unravel the fascinating *history of research* into the *sonic features* of recordings—research intended to identify unknown speakers and non-speech sounds or to verify the tapes' authenticity. It studies two settings: the Ministry of State Security (Stasi) in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and its research program on analyzing recorded sound (1966-1989), and the field of audio forensics in the United States (1960-present). While US audio forensics, a field on which the Stasi program drew, started during World War II with speaker identification, it widened its scope to non-speech sound in the 1960s. Which aspects of sound did German and American experts consider relevant for state security and forensic purposes, and which auditory and other techniques of analysis did they employ? How did such research affect the use of sonic skills in the sciences more widely? And what may the problems experts encountered in the past imply for auditory surveillance today?