

**Are we hearing the same soundscape? Who's listening, how, and to what?
Investigating listener ability, expectation and context in understanding perception and
classification of soundscape contexts.**

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Abstract

Soundscape research has often struggled to deal with the multidimensional experience of the phenomenological perception of the sound environment. Whilst there have been a number of important large multidisciplinary projects formed from a wide range of stakeholder disciplines, results have often been epistemologically split between interpreting the complex multidimensional, multi-epistemological, phenomenological experience of a soundscape for some disciplines, versus the positivist, objectivist quantitative approach of other disciplines. Whilst this challenge is not new or unique to soundscape studies, much of the research and methodological approaches make assumptions about the participant; their hearing, listening skills, expectation and attitudes towards social, cultural, behavioural and architectural elements within the soundscape. In considering the aural and expectational diversity of a listener, a better understanding of the question, 'are we listening to the same soundscape', can be formulated.

This paper proposes a method to qualitatively study the question of who's listening, how they define their listening ability and skill, how they listen to a place, what their expectation of the place is and what is it that they are listening to in that place. Utilising soundwalking, soundsitting with participant led field recording and free exploration of place to provide a qualitative study data of a listener's experiences and expectations from varying sound environments, with the aim of developing a classification system for soundscape contexts and exploration of the correlation between place, expectation and listener ability across aurally diverse participants.

Through an in-situ interview and pre-participation questionnaire about listening ability, expectation, context and attitudes towards safety, social norms, accepted behaviour, visual aesthetics and control, which form the basis of their place expectation. This data forms the basis of developing definitions for soundscape context and expectation; and an insight into how and what diverse listening means within a soundscape and if we are in fact listening to the same objective soundscape.

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