

Proposal for Workshop 4: Soundscape and Sound Studies

Aural Diversity Network

Title: Listening-with: aural diversity and participatory listening research

Abstract:

Increasingly there are pluralising endeavours within sound studies that push back against universalising and potentially exclusionary tendencies in sound methods and conceptions of listening (Bonenfant, 2010; Friedner & Helmreich, 2016; Drever, 2019; Robinson, 202; Chaves & Aragao 2021). Through my doctoral project, I have put these critiques into dialogue with my findings, to develop a conceptualisation of *listening-with* as a form of participatory listening research. In hyphenating *listening* and *with*, I denote the epistemic attempt to lean into the plural positionalities of listeners and amplify their role and status in knowledge production. By emphasising *with*, I protect the space for participatory forms of research that are person-centred and value different knowledges.

This paper asks how can a participatory listening research approach conceptually and methodologically support aural diversity? What forms can *listening-with* take that ensure representation and enhanced understandings of aurally diverse societies?

I will grapple with these questions through sharing findings from my research that aimed to reframe urban seaside gentrification and its injustices through *listening-with* residents to displacement. In this project, I remotely supported residents on the UK south coast to undertake listening walks and listening-at-home activities during fluctuating lockdowns in 2020. Participants captured their observations and reflections in a variety of media before exploring their changing sense of place in elicitation interviews. A commitment to a participatory ethos supported and enabled a diverse range of listening experiences and practices alongside generating multifarious sound material. This plurality is highly significant and challenged my own aural typical assumptions. This led to the development of a creative listening analysis approach, engaging with critical listening positionality (Robinson, 2020) and the framing of participant material as self-reflexive narratives (Anderson & Rennie, 2016). I therefore argue that participatory listening research has the potential to enhance and support non-normative listening and aural diversity.

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