



Conflict, Democracy & Listening

Workshop presented as part of The Listening Project

Friday 26 September 2008

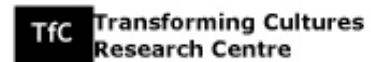
12:30 - 5 pm

Convenor: Dr Mark Gibson (Monash)

Sponsored by the ARC Cultural Research Network

The Trans/forming Cultures Research Centre, UTS &

Generously supported by the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum



The Listening Project: Background

The Listening Project is a program of collaboration that will generate sustained discussion and publication around the politics, technologies and practices of the cultural literacy of 'listening'. The project develops a new area of study through an innovative model of networking, bringing together researchers across a range of disciplines as well as media and cultural producers. The program will examine the neglected dynamics of 'listening', an emerging focus in Media Studies and citizens' media interventions. Habitual critiques of representation and the politics of 'speaking' (or giving voice to the voiceless) are giving way to investigation of more active possibilities for social inclusion and change based on recognition, dialogic engagement and acceptance.

Tanja Dreher, Justine Lloyd and Penny O'Donnell, Project Conveners

Roundtable Workshops

Five afternoon tea workshops will be held in 2008, leading to a multi-authored publication around the theme of 'listening' in 2009. The discussion will be structured to lead to the identification of potential collaborative projects and papers for publication. Future workshops:

Disability, Democracy, Media & Listening

10 October 2008, UNSW

Gerard Goggin & Rosemary Kayess

Listening Practices

31 October 2008, USyd

Penny O'Donnell (USyd) and Juan Salazar (UWS)

Publications Workshop

14 November 2008, UTS

Workshop Rationale

It is difficult to conceive of democracy without a belief in the possibility of listening. But over the last twenty years, the theme of listening has increasingly been displaced by those of power and conflict. While the latter are often associated with the left, they have also been taken up by the right, resulting in interesting resonances between cultural studies analyses of 'discursive strategies' and conservative campaigns against political correctness. This workshop considers the prospects for restoring a place for listening in the wake of the culture wars. Has the displacement of listening been a temporary phenomenon or does it have structural roots? Are 'conflict' and 'listening' really mutually exclusive themes? What are the most promising sites for new models of listening? To what extent might they be generalised?

Readings

- Les Back (2007) 'Live Sociology' in his *The Art of Listening*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 151 – 167.
- Susan Bickford (1996) 'Listening and Action: Reconstituting the Intersubjective World' in her *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, pp. 141 – 173.
- Marcia Langton (2008) 'Trapped in the Aboriginal Reality Show,' *Re-imagining Australia edition of Griffith Review*, 19, pp. 143 – 162.

Framing Questions

1. What is the relation between listening and democracy?
2. Has the art of listening to others been displaced by an emphasis on conflict in political debate?
3. Are 'conflict' and 'listening' mutually exclusive themes? Does vigorous opposition to other positions or points of view mean necessarily that one's ears become closed?
4. What are the conditions for listening in contexts which have seen high levels of conflict?
5. Who listens and who does not? Who gets listened *to* and who does not?
6. Is listening important mainly for those in positions of power? Should the powerless or oppressed be expected to listen?
7. What are the most promising sites for new ways of listening in public?
8. What can be learnt about listening from practitioner perspectives – in museum exhibitions, the media, political activism or advocacy?
9. How might cultural research contribute to listening in contexts of conflict, violence or bitter political differences?
10. Can we observe a fading of the strong political oppositions of the culture wars? What are the promises and risks of a greater attention to listening?

Participants

Mark Gibson	Workshop & Node Convenor, Monash University
John Kean	Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre
Caroline Martin	Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre
Elizabeth Sude	Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre
Anne Barnes	University of New South Wales
Clare Coburn	La Trobe University
Kate Crawford	University of New South Wales
Tanja Dreher	Project Convenor, University of Technology, Sydney
David Goodman	University of Melbourne
Lisa Gunders	University of Queensland
Shane Homan	Monash University
Amelia Johns	Victoria University
Justine Lloyd	Project Convenor, Macquarie University
Penny O'Donnell	Project convenor, University of Sydney
Aneta Podkalicka	Swinburne University
Emily Potter	University of Melbourne
John Tebbutt	La Trobe University
Cate Thill	Project Officer, University of Technology, Sydney
Andrea Witcomb	Deakin University
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