



Methodologies to Capture Listening

Workshop presented as part of **The Listening Project**

Friday July 31, 2009

9 – 5

University of Technology, Sydney
Building CB10.02.460 (ground floor)
Jones St, Ultimo

The Listening Project

Convenors: Cate Thill (UNDA) Tanja Dreher (UTS) Kate Crawford (UNSW)



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ARTS



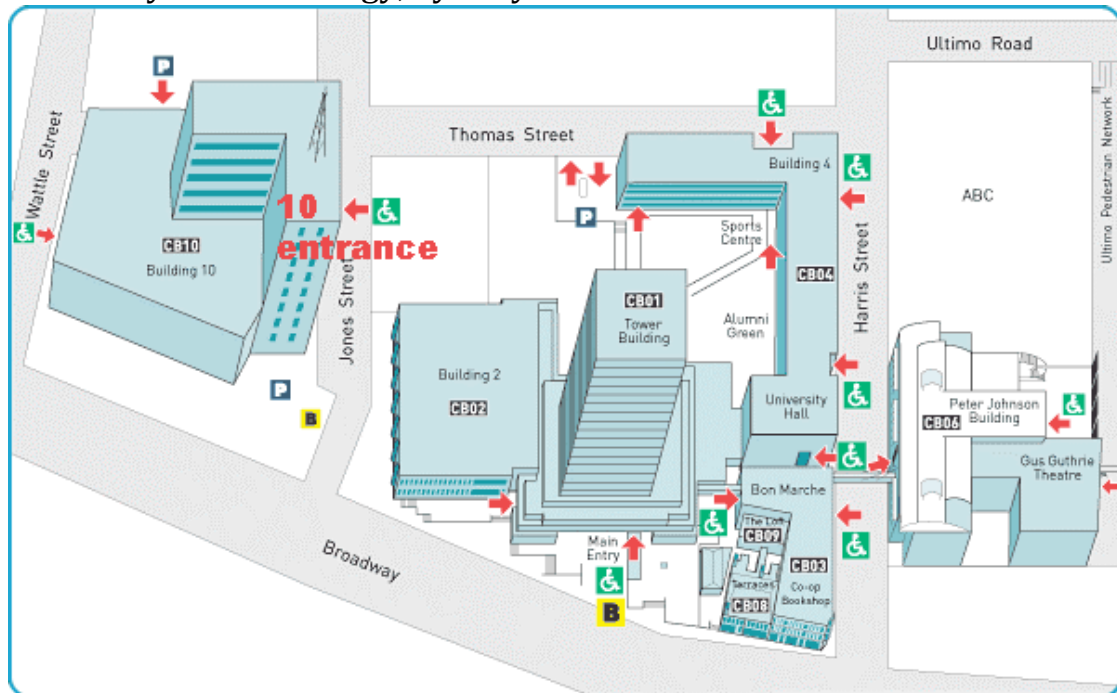
Supported by the ARC Cultural Research Network & the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University; the Trans/forming Cultures Research Centre, University of Technology, Sydney.

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Workshop Location

Building CB10 Level 2 Room 4:60

University of Technology, Sydney



Workshop aims

- Identify and discuss available methods for the study of 'listening'
- Explore possibilities for innovation in adapting existing methodologies and developing new ones
- Develop methods to be used in ARC grant applications on 'listening'
- ECR development
- Discuss possibilities for an edited collection

Proposed workshop outcomes

- Contribution to development of ARC grant applications
- Collaborations
- Potential for an edited collection

Workshop: Methodologies to Capture Listening

July 31, 2009 Building 10, 2:460

900 Welcome Coffee/Tea

915 Introductions Cate Thill, Kate Crawford, Tanja Dreher

930 Session One

Chair Cate Thill

Justine Lloyd, Mark Gibson, Stephen Muecke, Tripta Chandola, Chris Chesher,
Kate Crawford

1100 Coffee

1115 Session Two

Chair Tanja Dreher

Gerard Goggin, Rosemary Kayess, Penny O'Donnell, Vera Mackie, Chris Healy,
Cate Thill

1245 Lunch

1330 Session Three

Chair Kate Crawford

Jo Tacchi, Jean Burgess, Chris Ho, Wanning Sun, Ben Hoh, Tanja Dreher

1500 Coffee

1515 Open discussion

Facilitators: Cate Thill, Kate Crawford, Tanja Dreher

Key questions:

- What combination of methodological approaches brings us closer to a nuanced understanding of listening?
- What sorts of projects will advance the listening research agenda?
- What are the most significant challenges and difficulties?
- What is the most productive and innovative potential?

1700 Workshop close

1800 Conversation continues over a networking dinner at

The Emperor's Garden Restaurant, Haymarket.96 - 100 Hay St, Haymarket - (02) 9211

The Listening Project – Methodologies to Capture Listening

Rationale

This workshop builds on and extends the productive discussions generated through The Listening Project in 2008 by focusing on methodologies for research on 'listening'. The question of appropriate methodologies arose in several of these themed workshops and is of particular interest to a number of researchers seeking to develop ARC grant applications on listening for 2010.

The workshop will focus the question of methodologies through attention to another challenge identified in the 2008 workshops: the need to develop better understandings of the differences and interrelationships between private and public as well as between interpersonal and institutional listening. The challenge is to develop methodologies, which can integrate micro and macro perspectives.

The workshop moves beyond established traditions of listening *as* methodology (e.g. interviewing, participant observation, anthropology, oral history) to focus instead on the methods available to document and analyse listening itself – especially where 'listening' is understood figuratively as political and ethical practice. Rather than established discussions of listening as research, the discussions will explore possibilities to document and analyse listening processes of receptivity, recognition and response.

Workshops to date have found that 'listening' understood in this way is particularly difficult to 'pin down' or to 'capture'. Attention to listening means grappling with process, relationships and potentiality. Indeed, Susan Bickford in *The Dissonance of Democracy* (1996: 153) acknowledges 'the difficulty of answering this question of how listening reveals itself'. Silence, question-posing and argument are all ways of making space for others to be heard or demonstrating engagement – and therefore potentially capture listening as a practice – but these practices can also indicate a refusal to respond or to listen responsively. The methodologies workshop will therefore progress the 2008 discussions by asking what these kinds of ambiguities mean for the development of empirically grounded research on listening.

Funded through the Cultural Research Network of the Australian Research Council, the Methodologies to Capture Listening workshop is convened by Tanja Dreher (UTS), Cate Thill (ND) and Kate Crawford (UNSW).

Participants

Kate Crawford	Workshop Convenor	University of New South Wales
Tanja Dreher	Workshop Convenor Project Convenor	University of Technology, Sydney
Cate Thill	Workshop Convenor Project Convenor	University of Notre Dame
Justine Lloyd	Project Convenor	Macquarie University
Penny O'Donnell	Project Convenor	University Of Sydney
Jean Burgess	Queensland University of Technology	
Tripta Chandola	Queensland University of Technology	
Chris Chesher	University of Sydney	
Mark Gibson	Monash University	
Chris Healy	University of Melbourne	
Christina Ho	University of Technology, Sydney	
Ben Hoh	University of Technology, Sydney	
Rosemary Kayess	University of New South Wales	
Vera Mackie	University of Melbourne	
Stephen Muecke	University of New South Wales	
Wanning Sun	University of Technology, Sydney	
Jo Ann Tacchi	Queensland University of Technology	
Jan Idle	Project Officer The Listening Project	
Jemima Mowbray	Research Assistant Listening Across Difference, UTS	

Jean Burgess

Dr Jean Burgess is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries & Innovation, QUT, where she works on cultural participation and user-led innovation in new media contexts, focusing particularly on user-created content and vernacular creativity. With Joshua Green she is the author of *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Polity, 2009). She has also developed several applied research partnerships with cultural institutions and community-based organizations, focusing on the uses of co-creative media such as digital storytelling for cultural participation, advocacy and engagement.

Position statement

Various strands of my research explore the cultural implications of the different practices of listening associated with particular new media platforms. One strand recognises that the emphasis on 'broadcasting ourselves' in much popular online culture (e.g. YouTube) privileges speaking above listening, and that broadening access to 'voice' in the media is no guarantee of access to an empathetic or engaged listener. Running counter to these models of free, unreflexive speaking and 'distracted listening' are the models of purposive and empathetic listening that are embedded in the values and practices of the now-internationalised Digital Storytelling movement. At the same time, digital storytelling workshops are generally conducted under the guidance of cultural and creative 'experts' who guide and facilitate the participation of 'ordinary' storytellers, within formal and technological constraints.

In exploring methodological possibilities around listening in new media, I would like to draw on participant-observation across a number of digital storytelling projects, including BBC Capture Wales, and the State Library of Queensland project that used digital storytelling to capture community responses to the Apology – itself, arguably a communicative act that embeds "listening". Digital storytelling itself is a methodology for listening – I am interested in the ways in which practices of active and reflexive listening are embedded in the aesthetic values, technical practices and social interactions of the workshop-based digital storytelling process. The individual voiceover is literally material to the production of affective relations such as empathy between the participant and the eventual audience; and the technical process of constructing a digital story, for the participants, involves engaging closely with the sonic materiality of the voice, and not only the symbolic content of the video.

Tripta Chandola

I am a researcher based in Delhi. I am pursuing my PhD from Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. My PhD topic is, “The Noisy City: In-between Sound and Silence”, and through my doctorate research I aim to understand the dynamics between the acoustic and physical space(s) in the city and the manner in which each influences the trajectories drawn into these spaces. Also, I am interested in exploring the relations between aurality and modernity and the manner in which it is posed vis-à-vis visuality and modernity.

My research was based in a prominent slum settlement in Delhi. I am looking at the spaces -immediate, extended and imagined - where the slums and the city interact and engage and its politics. In doing so, I am questioning and reworking the construction of slums as representative of 'sites' of social, economic, political, and moral degeneration in the city. Through the examination of the everyday interactions between the slums and the city, I intend to explore the role of the slums in the city and through the narratives of/from this space, emphasis on the 'matter of choice' that the residents of the slums exercise in living in these spaces, which more often than not is denied to them. The research this far has informed me that the slums view the city through the same lens the city views them as sites of social, moral, political, economic degeneration. It's the legitimacy one perspective enjoys over the other which involves and engages the space in the larger discourse.

My doctorate research stems from my overarching and overwhelming interest in the city, its lives, loves and longings; the urban and its myriad forms, imaginations and projections.

Listening into Noisy spaces: Slums

A prominent slum settlement in Delhi, India, was the research site for my doctorate research. Before undertaking this research, I had conducted research in this slum over a period of 18 months for DFID project to examine the ‘Role of ICT’s in poverty alleviation’. It was whilst conducting this research that my interest in further pursuing research in slums was consolidated. This research experience highlighted the problematic of middle class, mainstream representation of slums in different media and cultural contexts. It also highlighted the dense and complex everyday materiality of slums, which has significant influence on the manner in which slum dwellers imagine and interact with the city. These insights determined the course of my doctorate research. I decided to explore the everyday materiality of slums through a research and experiential lens hitherto unexplored: sonic cultures. The intent of doing so is two-fold: a) as with other calcified realities about the Slums, the experience of the space—from a distance—is relegated as a noise, smell, and dirt. Indeed the density of population and limitation of space in the Slums account for amplified sounds and the lack of proper sewage systems thereby, stagnant waters and dirt. They are appalling from a sanitized middle-class sensibility; however, within the Slums these—noise, smell, and dirt—are a significant part of the everyday life. These sensual experiences are significant in

grounding the realities and negotiating the everyday politics in the Slums. And, b) by evoking the sensual as a prism to reflect the everyday reality, it permits subverting the middle-class *gaze* thereby allowing for an understanding of everyday in the slums, the manner in which Slums *examine* and *engage* with the city, without the prejudices and compulsions of dominant cultural codes.

Slums – socially, culturally, and politically – lack a representation, and thereby voice in the mainstream. Undertaking research in sonic cultures of slums, I encountered two main methodological concerns, which I would like to discuss in this workshop, a) listening into contested spaces as slums whose soundscape is generically reduced to as ‘noise’ in the popular, middle class representation, and b) listening into slum dweller’s listening.

In the initial phase, I conducted interviews to explore the everyday soundscapes. In these accounts, they were callously referred to as ‘something’, which has been present ever since, almost ‘like a blanket which one gets into the habit of covering oneself with irrespective of the weather. Something which stops making you feel cold or warm, sad or happy’ (F, 40). At that stage, I was inclined to attribute this understanding to a lack of sonic sensibility or an in-depth engagement with it. It was only in the later phases with the assistance of cultural translators that I evolved a nuanced understanding of sonic cultures and their articulation in Govindpuri.

The questions pertaining to sound I raised with the residents, in this phase, were essentially determined by my middle-class sonic sensibility and were, thereby, culturally irrelevant in the context of Govindpuri slums. For instance, in this phase to explore the everyday association with sound amongst residents I initiated discussions about traffic with focus on honking. The movement of vehicular traffic along Govindpuri slums lends it a pronounced sonic background. I naively assumed that the residents of Govindpuri slums would engage with traffic sound and honking in the same manner as I—residing in a sanitized middle-class residential area— would: disdainfully as nuisance especially, when prominent in early or late hours of the day.

Over the course of my research in Govindpuri slums, I immersed myself in the sonicity of Govindpuri slums to understand the articulation of sound, noise, and silence in this specific context. These, not surprisingly, do not corroborate with middle class understandings. These articulations are highly ambiguous emanating from specific social, cultural experience of the space. Whilst engaged in a conversation about honking, an old woman who lives alone (her sons have shifted out of the slums but she is staying back in the hope of acquiring the resettlement plot when the demolition happens) mentioned that every night her neighbor’s son, ‘drives in through on his bike honking all the way’ this she said, ‘made her feel safe’ as, for her, this assures her the presence of someone young in case of a crisis. Inquiring whether this honking disturbs her sleep, she said, smiling, ‘it is this honking which makes me sleep, peacefully’. The same honking for the young girl in the neighborhood was an indication of ‘rowdiness’ not because of the sound, per se, but because of the ‘young male driver’.

The first phase of my research in Govindpuri slums then was a process to *listen into*

its soundscapes and broaden my sonic experience to understand better the varied articulations and associations of sound. The initial temptation to disregard lack of sonic conversations as lack of sonic sensibility was a shortcoming on my behalf as an outsider—researcher—to decode the sonic codes. It was whilst I was sonically educating myself I was confronted with questions which framed the research to follow: how to make inroads through labyrinth of soundscape other than your own? How to locate a sound, a noise, a silence within this sonic culture and attempt its biography? How to incorporate individual, personal experience of sound into a broader generalization about a culture, place, and people?

In the second phase, I listened into residents of the slum listening. Owing to the density of population, lack of space, and limited mobility (especially in the case of women), sonic negotiations shape the everyday hegemonic structures and power hierarchies. Within the slums, different groups - based on their social, cultural, and political positions – have been identified as Speaker, Listener, and Hearer depending on the influence they can exercise in the sonic hierarchies. Different sonic strategies of listening and hearing are employed by dominant groups to reiterate their position and by the disempowered groups to circumvent the hierarchies; of these gossip, eavesdropping, silencing, and silence are a few. My research highlighted that sound is not devoid of its politics. More often than not, it embodies the politics of the space it emanates from whilst sustaining its own hierarchies. The research complicates the private-public domain of experience and articulation necessitating the question of the negotiating and circulating privates and publics. Lastly, listening and hearing emerge as highly politicized, controlled, manipulated, and negotiated categories of experience significantly determining ones position in the sonic environment, thereby, problematizing the position of the listener, speaker, and hearer.

Chris Chesher

Chris Chesher is Director of the Digital Cultures Program at the University of Sydney. His research interests are consistently in media change, and particularly the reconfigurations of events associated with digital technologies. Recently he has written about patterns of multiple uses of mobile phones at a U2 concert; regimes of vision in users of TV (glance), cinema (gaze) and games (glaze); and an Innisian critique of the imbalance between time-binding and space-binding capacities of digital media. He is completing a co-authored book *Understanding the Internet: Language, Technology, Media and Power*. He involved at the early stages in collaboration with the Social Robotics group at the Key Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney.

Interrogating Listening Robots

Among the many social actors that may hear what we are saying is a growing collection of robotic listeners: computers that in some manner listen, process, and act on, the sounds around them. In this workshop I'd like to discuss my approach and methodology for investigating the emergence of popular culture objects that artificially capture listening.

This paper is an early component in a broader project on autonomous and robotic technologies we're starting in Digital Cultures, in collaboration with the Social Robotics group in the Key Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney. My interest in the 'Methodologies to capture listening' workshop is to examine my approach to a paper that will survey a range of case studies of the emerging digital technologies that 'listen' to voices, music and other sounds.

The methods will include historical, cultural and hermeneutic analysis of a range of texts (written and technological), as well as my own first hand experiences with many of the case study technologies. I will also investigate the cultural, institutional and economic histories involved in the research and development of intelligent listening technologies. I may seek to interview developers or others at Information Technologies Australia, who implement voice systems on phone services.

The texts are likely to include:

Software

- Midomi and Shazam (iPhone apps that process short grabs of sound and use slightly different techniques to identify songs playing nearby)
- Dragon Dictate (PC software that translates voice into text)
- Singstar (PS3 karaoke game that scores singing performances)

Academic articles in computer science on speech recognition,
Academic articles in cultural history of auditory technologies

Journalistic and PR coverage of listening software
Legal documents
Possible interviews with Information Technologies Australia

Developers of phone speech recognition services for Centrelink, Credit Union Australia, Dominos Pizza

These technologies clearly raise a range of ethical and political questions, as well as more subtle questions that emerge when we start sharing meaningful acoustic space with non-human agents.

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Kate Crawford

Associate Professor Kate Crawford is based in the Journalism and Media Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. Her current research focuses on the technologies of listening, from social media services such as Twitter, to the cochlear implant. She currently holds an ARC Discovery Postdoctoral Fellowship to conduct a three-year study with Gerard Goggin into mobile media use, focusing on questions of affect, youth culture and sociality. Her books include *Adult Themes* (2006) and *Understanding the Internet: Language, Technology, Media and Power* (forthcoming, with Chris Chesher and Anne Dunn).

High Fidelity: Listening as metaphor for online receptivity

On July 9th of this year, Nick Couldry addressed the ANZCA conference attendees in a keynote address about the importance of 'voice' in the media. He drew from the long history of democratic theory that considers voice the key metaphor for participation and engagement. It was familiar and comfortable ground for many in the room. It is a cosy metaphor; it needs little by way of explanation. The same libertarian emphasis on voice has also coloured the understanding of networked space since the mass popularisation of the Internet in the 1990s. This was a particular feature of American technolibertarian thought, where many early figures wanted "information technologies to be used to create a new 'Jeffersonian democracy' where all individuals will be able to freely have a voice within cyberspace" (Barbrook and Cameron 1997, 45).

There are several problems with this kind of view. But the one that has focused my attention over the last year has been the missing element: what happened to listening online? What I find particularly intriguing about this research question is that the privileging of voice, and particularly voice-as-democratic-participation, has had such an influence over critical accounts of online activity. Listening has not been given any substantial consideration as a significant practice of intimacy, connection, obligation and participation online; instead, it has often been considered as contributing little value to online communities, if not acting as an active drain on their growth. It is also considerably harder to talk about – people's first thought, understandably, is that researching listening online is something to do with sound, such as podcasting or music sharing.

Lurkers – the name given to those who inhabit the margins of debates, and rarely or never contribute in public – are commonly defined as 'non-participants' in network spaces. Worse, they have been compared to 'free-loaders who leech the energy of online communities without offering anything in return' (Kollock and Smith). But *they*, of course, are *us* – we who use the internet at all have been, and will be, lurkers. Researchers have found that over 90 percent of an online community will only practice light public activity, if any (Zhang and Storck 2001, Nonnecke and Preece 2003). Strangely, I found myself to be conducting a kind of defence of lurking, by firstly considering it as a kind of listening, involving actively logging in and tracking the contributions of others, and as contributing a mode of receptiveness that

encourages others to make public contributions. But also, I was interested in the times we weren't listening – being 'tuned out' either intentionally or involuntarily. The concept of listening, it seems to me, can invoke a more nuanced dynamic of online attention and distraction, and frames this process as an embedded part of networked engagement. Moreover, as a metaphor for attending to discussions and debates online, listening more usefully captures the experience of many internet users have. However, listening is not always pleasant or positive, neither is it necessarily 'democratic' in any way: further, it can generate discomfort, confusion and claustrophobia, amongst a range of negative affects. But beyond the specifics of lurking, I am now researching how listening might be a productive metaphor for a wide range of emergent networked spaces, and social media in particular. Spaces such as Twitter and Facebook offer streams of multilayered information, and desktop clients can allow for messages from social media services to be streamed to one's desktop or phone continuously. It also functions for many users as a continuous background presence, a steady stream of messages that can be briefly focused on then returned to the peripheries of attention.

In previous work I've isolated three forms of listening online: background listening, reciprocal listening and delegated listening. These names have emerged through research and conversations with others, trying to reach for ways to better describe and define the many ways we listen – as well as the many ways we 'pretend' and 'perform' listening – in networked spaces. But I want to develop ways to go further in capturing the granularity of listening – part of my interest in this event is having further conversations about how on earth it can be done. What I do know is that an expansion of the language is needed in this particular area of research, and an acknowledgment of the spaces outside of language. I am not trying to be elliptical here, merely to nod to the importance of silence as well. As Don Ihde wrote, 'If there is an ethics of listening, then respect for silence must play a part in that ethics' (1976, 180). Respect for silence is not something often associated with networked space, but it a necessary struggle is emerging to find it, even if that is just switching off and being unavailable, unhearing and unheard.

Finally, I am interested in emerging disciplines of listening, and how certain technologies are participating in the reshaping of what it means to be a listening subject. This is partly informed by Crary's work (1999), but continuing where he left off, tracking the ways in which communication networks function to push our attention and distraction to new limits, as well as triggering the creation of new agencies to outsource this work of presence and perception. What kinds of methods can assist in capturing the regimens of self-management and the regulation of social presence that many of us now experience? What kinds of obligations do workers, parents, lovers, friends feel to be listening, via a range of network tools, and what kinds of silence are permissible, and how are they chosen? Not easy questions, I grant you, but I'm looking forward to the opportunity to discuss them with the assembled group.

¹ And to be clear, this is not a criticism of Couldry's work, but rather to underscore the long-standing emphasis given to voice in work on media. He himself has noted the need to consider listening in greater detail, and its productiveness as a metaphor for understanding the social presence of media (2006, 6).

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Tanja Dreher

Dr Tanja Dreher is an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Transforming Cultures Research Centre at the University of Technology, Sydney. Tanja's research focuses on the politics of listening in the context of media and multiculturalism, and of racism and antiracism after September 11, 2001. Current projects include The Listening Project (co-convened with Justine Lloyd, Penny O'Donnell and Cate Thill) an ARC Linkage project with Information Cultural Exchange (ICE) and a UTS ECR Grant on 'Listening across difference'.

Recent publications

-*Dreher, T (forthcoming) 'Speaking up or being heard? Community media interventions and the politics of listening' *Media, Culture and Society* (revised manuscript accepted April 2009)

Dreher, T (2009) 'Eavesdropping with permission: the politics of listening for safer speaking spaces' *borderlands ejournal* Vol 8 (1)

Dreher, T (2009) 'Listening across difference: media and multiculturalism beyond the politics of voice' *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* Vol 23 (4)

Lee-Shoy, T & T Dreher (2009) 'Listening spaces for intergenerational communication' *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* Vol 23 (4)

Listening across difference

I am currently beginning a pilot research which analyses a number of projects for speaking and listening across difference with a focus on the relatively under-researched dynamics of 'listening' and the politics of recognition. While community media are regularly deployed in order to 'empower' marginalised voices by speaking up and finding a voice and/or by speaking back to stereotypes and prejudice there is relatively little research which explores the processes of reception, recognition and response – or lack thereof – which forms the 'other side' of the politics of speaking up.

The first stage of pilot research will examine a range of community media projects which seem to invoke different modes and subjects of listening. A recent showcase of digital storytelling initiatives, the public launch of *Fairfield Stories* included a diversity of short films which would seem to interpellate different audiences or listeners – from a film detailing the impacts of a falling out between high school friends, to reflections on migration and war through a young woman's journey to Cambodia to meet her grandmother for the first time, and a film aiming to raise awareness of an NGO campaigning for the rights of Pygmies in Central Africa. The 2009 Arab Film Festival Australia included a film launch and forum for the short

animation *Hurriya and her sisters* produced by young Muslim women and supported by the Human Rights Commission in order to address stereotypes and challenge misconceptions. And an earlier community showcase of digital storytelling projects produced by young Khmer Australians in Fairfield developed a space for 'intergenerational listening' (Lee-Shoy and Dreher 2009).

The pilot research will involve participant observations and in-depth interviews with participants and facilitators of 'speaking up' projects such as digital storytelling, community media and arts. Key questions to be explored include:

- Who needs to hear this story and why?
(you/friends/family/school/work/general public/authorities etc) Does it matter if anyone hears this story? What were you hoping to achieve?
- How do you know if your story has been heard? What are the signs of listening?
- Are there ways to better facilitate listening to these stories?
- What does it mean to be heard, or not? What comes next?

These questions are loosely based on a forum and research project, 'The Impact of Listening and Being Heard' developed by the Brooklyn Historical Society to examine the impacts of an oral history project which enabled veterans of the Vietnam War to tell their stories (thanks to Vera Mackie for this example).

The aim is to develop a typology of listening modes which might include listening to oneself, intergenerational listening, background listening (cf Crawford 2009), eavesdropping (cf Dreher 2009), etc. with a variety of outcomes – empathy, understanding, education, empowerment, challenge, transformation etc. Different speaking and listening projects invite or demand different modes of listening, which might in turn be enabled or refused.

In later stages this typology of listening modes and ends will be further explored through:

- in-depth interviews with key arts and community organisations and funding bodies will explore the different artistic communicative and instrumentalist priorities/expectations that they bring to community media and arts projects, and the ways in which projects are 'heard' or recognized
- tracking the recognition of 'speaking up' projects in media
- research on 'listeners' to these projects – audiences, organisations, councils etc ... where why and how do stories or projects resonate, where why and how is that refused
- following on from suggestions by Tiffany Lee Shoy (Fairfield Council): how can local governments become listeners and in what ways does or doesn't community television facilitate listening across difference.

The analytical framework for analysis draws on the politics of recognition framework as a theory for the analysis of institutional listening (focusing on entrenched hierarchies of value, attention and esteem) and also exploring what a focus on 'listening' adds to the politics of recognition (a focus on communications, process, reception and response). Initial engagements with the politics of recognition suggest a range of possibilities, including non-recognition or non-response (as either a refusal to listen or, in contrast, an enabling 'background

listening'), affirmative or inclusive recognition, and transformative or deconstructive listening. In particular I am interested to explore the ways in which Nancy Fraser's distinction between affirmative or inclusive recognition and transformative or deconstructive recognition might resonate with Susan Bickford's distinction (drawing on Arendt) between listening motivated by love for an other and listening motivated by love for the world. These arguments also suggest the need to look beyond common assumptions of empathy and understanding as the ends of listening.

The pilot research will also examine 'Living Libraries' as an emerging strategy for speaking and listening across difference. Participant observations and in-depth interviews with participants and facilitators will:

- explore the ways in which comfort, security and interest are negotiated in speaking and listening protocols and interactions
- focus on the regulation of difficult listening and the (re)distribution of comfort and discomfort
- explore Living Libraries as one example of listening spaces – where, why and how are they created and what happens

Any thoughts on how to further develop / improve the research would be hugely appreciated! I am particularly interested to think about how to employ methodologies other than interviews and participant observation – perhaps through action research, roles plays etc.

Mark Gibson

Dr Mark Gibson is chair of the Graduate Communications and Media Studies Program in the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University. He is Editor of *Continuum – Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* and Convenor of the Cultural Literacies Node of the ARC Cultural Research Network.

Mark is particularly interested in the relation between the themes of listening and power, a question which is a significant thread in his recent book *Culture and Power* (Berg/UNSW Press, 2007). The history cultural studies, traced in the book, has been one in which listening has been displaced – at time quite explicitly – by power and conflict. He is also currently engaged in an interview-based ARC Discovery project on creative networks in outer suburbia.

Workshop Notes

My interest in the theme of listening has largely followed a wider interest in reviving a sense of the public sphere as a site of communicative exchange, rather than simply as a site of ideological struggle. In my book *Culture and Power*, I trace a historical tendency in the opposite direction. The book is a study of the field of Cultural Studies, which, I argue, was concerned in the 1950s and 1960s with communication between those with different backgrounds and experiences (particularly those of class). From the 1970s, however, it increasingly reconceptualised such exchanges on the model suggested by Volosinov (via Stuart Hall): the signifier as a site of 'struggle'. This turn reached its apotheosis in the 'culture wars' of the 1990s, where, as the military metaphor suggests, models of communication were comprehensively displaced – both on the left and right – by models of power and conflict.

There are now quite widespread reservations about this turn and a variety of projects which can be seen as attempts to find their way out of it. 'Listening', for me, is one of these.

I think it is important to distinguish 'listening studies' from an earlier interest in audience reception. The comparison is sometimes made as a deflationary response to attempts to promote an attention to listening: Hasn't all this been dealt with in audience studies? Isn't listening just a version of 'reception', a phenomenon that is well-known and understood? The question is legitimate: What *is* the difference between thinking about listening and thinking about audience reception? And it is a question which is particularly worth considering when turning our attention to *methodologies* for listening studies. Audience reception studies is now a thoroughly 'methodologised' field. We know how to do audience studies – or, if we don't, there are textbooks there to instruct us. Why should listening studies not simply adopt known methods? How is it different?

The answer to this for me is that audience reception studies was formed by earlier historical moment. In its 'cultural studies' version at least, audience studies largely

accepted the displacement of models of communication with models of ideological struggle. This is clear in Stuart Hall's classic distinction between 'dominant', 'negotiated' and 'resistant' readings. The distinction opens up a field of empirical enquiry: Are these readers (or 'receivers') accepting the ideological propositions which are put to them? Are they resisting them or negotiating them? These are questions about reception and they have indeed given direction to a lot of interesting and worthwhile studies. But they are not in my view questions about *listening*. In ways that theorists like Susan Bickford and Les Back have tried to tease out, listening is about something more than simply accepting or resisting a proposition. The latter assumes neatly differentiated 'subject positions'; 'listening' assumes the possibility, at least, of a messier inter-subjectivity.

So a starting point in thinking about 'methodologies', for me, would be to try to sharpen and clarify the distinction between 'listening studies' and 'audience reception studies'. What might we take from audience studies? What would we have to reject? It is likely that some methodologies – I am thinking particularly of ethnography – always sat somewhat uneasily within the framing assumptions of classic audience studies. How many times have audience researchers found inter-subjective complications that brought into question the assumption of differentiated positions? The idea of 'negotiated readings' was supposed to account for these, but did it ever really? What might listening studies take from this?

Chris Healy

Chris Healy teaches cultural studies at the University of Melbourne. His most recent book is *Forgetting Aborigines* (UNSW Press, 2008).

Abstract

My thoughts on methodologies of listening are, as yet, ill-formed and overly personal. To some extent, my relationship to listening was formed at an early age by intermittent periods of deafness due to undiagnosed ear infections, as a school child, by periods of living in places in which very different kinds of English were spoken, and as an adolescent by hours and hours and hours of listening to popular music on AM radio. I now think of these experiences as training me in a certain kind of attentiveness in listening.

These experiences were supplemented by a strong interest in oral history fostered during my undergraduate studies which I developed further in producing a book and a radio series based on interviews with former employees of the Angliss meatworks in Melbourne. In doing this I engaged with two new forms of listening, the first the experience of men listening to animals. Lester Allen, for example, cited to sounds of animals coming into the works as one of the reasons for leaving his job as a slaughterman; 'Hear them. They would know.' The second 'new' kind of listening was that of a radio producer who needed to learn to listen in technical, cognitive and emotional registers in order to make radio work.

More recently I've been concerned to find ways of listening to cultural silences in relation to indigeneity and, in new research, to think about how television has and is transforming listening.

Christina Ho

Christina Ho is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UTS and a core member of the Transforming Cultures research centre. Her current projects include:

Cultural participation, belonging, art and social engagement through creative practices in Western Sydney

An ARC Linkage project examining how Western Sydney residents from diverse cultural backgrounds create spaces for cultural citizenship via community arts and development projects. The project explores 'listening' in terms of the social recognition received by these projects, looking at whether/how creative self-expression resonates in the wider community.

Cultural Frictions/Tractions

This project looks at the politics of recognition among culturally diverse communities in Australia, India and South Africa. It explores inter-cultural relations in terms of three main types of recognition:

- non-recognition of difference
- presence recognition
- active identity recognition

This project includes case studies of several forms of (non)'listening', including inter-faith & inter-cultural dialogue, anti-racism initiatives, and 'civil inattention'.

Relevant Publications include:

- Ho, C. and Dreher, T. (eds) (2009) *Beyond the Hijab Debates: New Conversations on Gender, Race and Religion*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ho, C. (2008) 'The Politics of Dialogue', paper presented to the 4Rs Conference, University of Technology, Sydney, 30 September – 3 October.
- Ho, C. (2008) 'Diversifying Feminism: Migrant Women's Activism in Australia', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 33(4): 777-783.
- Ho, C. (2007) 'Muslim women's new defenders: Women's rights, nationalism and Islamophobia in contemporary Australia', *Women's Studies International Forum* 30(4): 290-298.
- Ho, C. (2007) "'A Christian, a Muslim and a Jew walk into a room...': Inter-faith dialogue and the desecularisation of Australian multiculturalism', *Everyday Multiculturalism Conference Proceedings*, Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, http://www.crsi.mq.edu.au/news_and_events/documents/christinaho_000.pdf
- Ho, C. and Dreher, T. (2006) 'Where has all the anti-racism gone?' paper presented to the New Racisms, New Anti-racisms conference, Research Institute for Humanities & Social Sciences, University of Sydney, 3-4 November.

Who is listening in community arts?

This paper is about who 'listens' in the context of community arts and development, and is part of a larger ARC Linkage project on cultural citizenship and community participation in Western Sydney.

In community arts and development, the emphasis is usually on speaking out and self-expression – digital storytelling, making films, producing music, exhibiting artworks, performing plays, building blogs. It doesn't matter what the format is, as long as it allows participants to tell their story, give their perspective, speak their mind. These spaces for self-expression are increasingly viewed as a way to address a range of larger social problems, including youth delinquency, social disadvantage and isolation, and cultural marginalisation. Participating in community arts projects brings people together, gives them new skills, social networks, self-confidence and a new voice.

The organisations that run such programs are typically asked to document outcomes in terms of the people who participated in the creative production. How many participants were there, and what tangible benefits resulted from their participation? Outcomes such as educational and employment success are valued under the prevailing instrumentalist approach to community arts, in which success is measured in terms of outcomes usually unrelated to the art practice itself.

With the proliferation of new voices emanating from community arts projects, one question that is less asked is: who is listening? Who are the audiences for community arts? What impact do these projects have on the broader community? Evaluations of community arts and development projects are usually focused at the level of the individual participant. Yet in order to take seriously the notion of 'community development', we need to add a broader community level to the models of evaluating the impact of community projects. How were the projects received in the wider community? Did they receive 'mainstream' recognition? Did the themes of the creative productions resonate in the community? Did they change the way people think? Did they reinforce or challenge community norms? And which sectors of the community responded to the work?

Given that arts projects are fundamentally acts of communication, it is important that some attention is paid to those at the receiving end. Looking at the recognition received by projects is also important for valuing the intrinsic worth of creative productions, as opposed to seeing them simply as a means to an end (keeping kids off the streets, etc). To take seriously the creative outputs themselves means examining whether they are successful as acts of communication, whether they are recognised by others as interesting or valuable in some way.

Apart from basic surveys of audiences who attend art launches, performances and so on, it is very difficult to gauge who is 'listening' when it comes to community arts. This is particularly the case if one wishes to gauge who is 'listening' not just at an individual level, but at a more community or institutional level. Community arts

practitioners usually want to make an impact beyond their immediate social circles, to reach broader audiences, sometimes including ‘mainstream’ society. How can we determine when this has happened?

These are the questions that drove a small survey conducted by Tanja Dreher, Francesca Veronesi and myself. Our case study is a community organisation called Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) based in Western Sydney. ICE facilitates a wide range of community arts and development projects, involving Western Sydney residents, particularly young people and those from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Over the years, ICE projects, involving hundreds of participants, have produced a massive quantity of creative outputs – films, music CDs, creative writing, art exhibitions, websites, and so on. The organisation also has an impressive PR machinery that continually spreads the word about projects, products and events.

What we wanted to find out in our survey was who was listening or at the receiving end of all of this massive creative output. Were ICE projects tapping into larger community conversations and making a difference? Were they making an impact on the community’s collective consciousness or norms? Were they being recognised by the ‘mainstream’?

There is obviously no reliable method for capturing such abstract processes. But as a crude initial attempt, we conducted a telephone survey for mapping recognition of ICE projects among Western Sydney institutions. These institutions were:

- local councils
- TAFEs
- local newspapers
- Federal and State MPs representing Western Sydney electorates

We limited it to Western Sydney to focus on ICE’s immediate community, the community they are funded to serve. And we targeted ‘mainstream’ organisations, in order to extend the focus beyond the (ethnic) community (arts) sector. If there was recognition of ICE projects among these ‘mainstream’ organisations, could we conclude that ICE was really having an impact on the broader community? And what type of recognition was being received? For example, were ICE projects seen as embodying high quality artistic values, or more as welfare provision to disadvantaged individuals, or something else?

We asked respondents whether they had heard of ICE or its key projects, about their experiences (if any) of working with ICE, and what impact they thought ICE projects had had. The results were interesting! At the workshop, I will discuss the details of this survey and provide an analysis of whether it was successful as a method for capturing ‘listening’ in the context of social recognition of community arts and development projects.

Ben Hoh

Ben Hoh (ben@eviltwin.com.au) works at the intersection of community cultural development, web design/development and cultural studies. He is also a Masters research student at the University of Technology, Sydney, writing his thesis on how space, trauma and everyday life are modelled in online testimonies of war and occupation. Through Tracer, his research and development studio, Ben has been exploring methods for engaging with the conjunction of feelings, space and everyday life. Examples include numerous life writing and “life mapping” projects with young refugee people, such as Storybox (2004), Parramappa (2005) and Suburban Crossings (2007), all developed with the community arts organisation Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE). With London’s Proboscis studio, he helped develop the “Lattice: Sydney” program (2008), which focused on creating innovative approaches to space and culture amongst emerging cultural producers in Western Sydney. From this process, he has been developing People on Streets, a platform for “ambient social sensing” in public spaces. Ben’s commercial design work includes the award-winning Swapping Lives (2005) and First Australians (2008) websites, both for SBS.

Listening via networks of attunement and sensibility

One of the struggles with projects of “listening” is getting past the assumption that there’s necessarily a privileged subject — a “me”, a “we”, an institution, or a representative body — that does The Listening, thus acknowledging or authorising the (previously marginalised) voices being heard, which somehow have an essential authenticity. This point is easy to make, but harder to realise practically. In my research on the blogging of war, I see this struggle played out in projects like Global Voices Online, an international “blog aggregator” that attempts to editorially highlight the global scope and diversity of blogs. Upon its inception, Global Voices’ slogan — “The world is talking. Are you listening?” — was primarily addressed to North American and Western European media audiences, and the project (which is funded by Reuters) tended to present itself as a kind of alternative international news desk, carved up into editorial regions and nation-states, and populated by authentic native informants and guides for fascinated Westerners. To the credit of Global Voices, it didn’t take long for debates within the project to touch on its potential to reinforce an established system of geopolitical identity and attention, under which “we” might try to totalise our surveillance and apportioning of the world, in a kind of Orientalist elephantiasis of intelligence-gathering.

To move into more productive territory, these kinds of problems need models and methods that *redistribute* the activities of saying and listening across wider and more *networks of sensation* — flowscapes that have always extended beyond the established coordinates of subject and object. For example, my community cultural development work with young refugee people hasn’t been about getting mainstream institutions to authoritatively “listen” to the interests of a neatly circumscribed and marginalised “community”. Rather, it’s about collaboratively building *platforms* so

that people can collectively and iteratively work out models of the world and their relationships to it, and to synthesise ways of creatively expressing those relationships, both actual and potential. For the Suburban Crossings project that I helped run in 2007, young African refugees who had recently settled in Fairfield in Sydney's West explored and photographically documented the everyday minutiae of their neighbourhood, describing their history of coming to and settling in such a landscape, and plotting the results on an online street map. In doing this, the participants created an *active matrix* of their unfinished relationship with place — a mixture of familiarity and unfamiliarity, broken claims on places and the forging of new ones, with all the agonistic negotiations that entails. Similarly, in my research on blogging, I've found that fragmented online accounts of everyday life in war zones like Baghdad still stitch themselves stubbornly together across chains of different blogs into affectively charged sensory maps, through which losses can be acknowledged and mourned open-endedly, fortunes assessed or revised, and future potentials foretold or foreclosed. Approaching both of these examples requires a spatial redistribution of listening that locates it dialogically across subjectivity-spanning networks, rather than at privileged coordinates. "We" do not listen, our mutual enmeshments in webs of process and production do. And despite my ambivalence about their geopolitical aesthetics, projects of listening like Global Voices at least work with concepts of mutual production and spatialised engagement, which (despite their reification) open up the possibility for productive relationships to emerge.

Like the rest of the "spatial turn" in the humanities and social sciences, and also the recent emergence of a "cartographic geopoetics" in movements for global justice, this emphasis on space and networked distribution in projects of dialogue is symptomatic of a broader mimetic strategy, one that endlessly re-enacts the scenario in which life is globalised and counter-globalised by capital and labour. However, this mimesis isn't an easy process of representation, reception and interpretation, but one of *traumatic repetition*. So besides the unquestioned sovereignty of the Listener, the other problem with listening is that *some things are so overwhelming that they are impossible to say*. It's all very well to be interested in listening to the voices of others, but in our dialogic networks there is also silence — not because people have necessarily been censored, but because the enormity of some experiences exceeds the capacity for language to directly process or re-express them. In both my work with young refugees and in my readings of blogs written in war zones, I've come to realise that there are indeed limits to the sayable, and that a preoccupation with simply listening to *who said what* will fail to do justice to the matter. One limited way I approach the materials I research, then, is to *accept* the mimetic repetitions of trauma in which I am imbricated as a reader, *as a kind of method in itself*. That is, just as my argument for an emphasis on the spatial distribution of dialogue in projects of listening traumatically mimics the spatial antagonisms around capitalist globalisation, the only adequate way to receive and begin to make sense of certain experiences of others is to accept the shocking imperative to re-enact aspects of what remains.

I'm not arguing for a narcissistic model of vicarious trauma in which everyone is interchangeably damaged by its endless and unmediated transmission, and neither am I trying to magically bridge the incommensurability of various differences; rather, I am arguing for methods that will not dismiss the sometimes inaudible frequencies of culture, because these frequencies are the ones that often emanate from the experience of the most serious injustice. For example, I see my reading strategy for the first person blogging of war not just as a critical analysis of rhetorics and the triangulation of facts, but also as a long process of *attunement* to certain sensibilities about unspeakable catastrophes of space and time — sensibilities that emerge not from any particular audible statements, but from how various statements and silences are collectively arranged: architectures of mood. My listening methodology is thus a shocked and recursive mimicking of some of the processes occurring in these blogs. Here I am excited by Jonathan Flatley's *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (2008), in which he notes that the German word *Stimmung* means both "mood" and "attunement", and that Heidegger deploys it to emphasise our processual relationship with environments, for which feelings are not internal to subjects but socially circulated in spaces. Like Flatley, I appreciate the attunement to sensibility as an expansive potential for the melancholy that arrives with loss to resonate with others, and do unexpected things. I'd also like to reclaim "sensibility", that "peculiar susceptibility of impression, pleasurable or painful," from 18th Century British sentimental philosophy, in the sense that Austen's opposition of *Sense and Sensibility* connotes, to describe the productive tendencies of networked affect — an alternative, "minor" sensory regime.

To cap off my approach to listening with another cheesy auditory metaphor, for me this mimetic attunement to the inaudible frequencies of traumatic experience is nothing less than a different form of solidarity: a radical kind of "sympathy" — not the patronising, narcissistic kind, but more in tune with the physical phenomenon of "sympathetic vibration", in which different objects, if they're close enough and oriented in a particular way, begin to resonate at the same frequency.

Rosemary Kayess

Rosemary Kayess is a human rights lawyer. She is a visiting fellow at the University of New South Wales in international human rights law and Acting Director of the Disability Studies and Research Centre. Rosemary chairs the Management Committee of the NSW Disability Discrimination Legal Centre, She has had extensive involvement in the United Nations (UN) development process for the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was a member of the Australian Government delegation to the General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on the Convention in New York. Her research interests are in human rights law and equality and non-discrimination.

Abstract

One of the most significant developments in the field of disability has been the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. A major achievement for this Convention is the way that it successfully integrated ongoing involvement with civil society. This convention heralds a new formal role for civil society and more fundamentally people with disability. Civil society engagement with UN treaty monitoring committees up until now, has been through treaty body practice rather than formal provisions contained within any particular treaty¹. CRPD is the first convention to so thoroughly engage civil society in the negotiations and to include substantive provisions outlining on-going engagement with implementation and monitoring. These provisions are embedded in Article 4 General obligations, Article 33 National implementation and monitoring and notably Article 32 International cooperation².

The inclusion of these provisions recognises engagement with civil society as a particularly important part of capacity building, which is critical in relation to disability. The very nature of disability, and the inherent systemic discrimination and social exclusion that is an element of it, means that many governments have very limited expertise in disability. People with disabilities have been excluded from key social institutions which has isolated them and the issues that disability raises from mainstream public policy. This was repeatedly demonstrated through the

¹ It is important to note that working relationships between NGOs and most of the Treaty Monitoring Bodies have evolved on an informal basis. None of the core Human Rights Treaties establishing the different Committees expressly mention NGO contribution to the work of the Treaty Bodies. The Convention on the Rights of the Child does provide scope for NGO participation within Article 45:

In order to foster the effective implementation of the Convention and to encourage international operation in the field covered by the Convention: (a) ...The Committee may invite the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund and other competent bodies as it may consider appropriate to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their respective mandates.

Although there is no express reference to NGOs in this article, it appears clearly from the *travaux préparatoires* that the expression "other competent bodies" was meant to allow cooperation with and participation of NGOs in the work of the Committee.

² CRPD Article 4(3), Article 33(3)

failure of successive treaties to recognise disability as an area of concern. The dominance of the medical model has meant disability has been a welfare or clinical issue within social security, medicine and rehabilitation. Further segregation in education has meant historically low levels of academic achievement, which have kept people with disability out of key professions and public administration.³ As a result, people with disability have not been represented in the decision-making process. Disability has not been an area for academic concern in the areas of law, policy, public administration, planning and architecture which has led to limited understanding of the issues raised by disability.⁴ The voice of people with disability has not informed policy debates or programmes. This has meant that ever since disability emerged as a significant human rights issue, governments have been slow in implementing remedial programmes.⁵

If people with disability are to have accorded to them a central role in informing policy debates there needs to be meaningful frameworks and mechanisms to ensure consultation happens in a effective way. Core elements to be considered are;

- **Accessible:** in form, mode and content. People need to be able to both access the material but be able to understand the content.
- **Time:** timeframes need to reflect the process of consultation with representative organisations. That whilst important organisations and individual's have to balance competing priorities.
- **Reflective:** creates a dialogue with people with disability.
- **Respectful:** people should feel comfortable to hold an alternative view.

³ Linton, S. (1998) *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. NYU Press. New York. Chapter 3.

⁴ Ibid Chapter 4 see also Barnes, C., Mercer, G. and Shakespeare, T. (1999) *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*, Polity Press, Oxford.

⁵ Bengt Linqvist (1995) *Standard Rules in the Disability Field – A New United Nations Instrument in Human Rights and Disabled Persons: Essays and Relevant Human Rights Instruments*, Theresia Degener & Yolana Koster–Dreese, eds., Dordrecht; Boston; London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. pp:63-68

Justine Lloyd

I am a lecturer in Sociology at Macquarie University, Sydney and a Research Associate of the Transforming Cultures Research Centre at UTS. I am currently working on a set of projects which build on feminist critiques of the public sphere and seek to develop innovative, historically informed ways of looking at contemporary media forms. My research uses audio archives, policy documents and interviews to map cultural histories of media.

Methodologies to capture listening: the ‘News Game’

Summary

This project evaluates the effectiveness of focus groups based on the ‘News Game’ as model for analysing the role of media in listening practices via focus groups with community media trainees. This project seeks to develop an structured analysis of the role of mediated listening and to uncover the ways in which media forms and individual moments of reception are linked to wider social conflicts and collective beliefs. It will provide a model that will be applicable to other contexts. Findings will significantly advance international debates about the role of community media in reformulating contemporary social relations. (97 words)

Description

This approach follows on from a recent body of research on ‘framing’ as a key category of media analysis. This burgeoning tradition focuses on how powerful tropes permeate media coverage and shape reception in often unconscious and invisible ways. This approach has been developed from separate two traditions: the critical media studies exemplified by the work of the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) outlined below and the cognitive linguistic analysis of Lakoff (1980, 2002), both of which have significantly developed the microsociological and communicative action framework of Goffman (1974).

As part of its ongoing research into the salient relationships between media structures and audience beliefs, the GUMG’s ‘News Game’ has been used to examine the relationship between media effects and audience beliefs in a more nuanced and complex manner, specifically in a way which would capture “what people already ‘knew’ [about ‘public knowledge issues’] and to show the process by which they had arrived at their own beliefs” (Philo 1993: 258). Traditional content analysis together with group discussion “identifies patterns of understanding and belief... and [provides a means of tracing] the origin of these, in for example, media accounts or from other sources such as schooling or peer groups” (Philo 2002, n.p.). Research subjects are asked to reflect on news values and genres by adopting the role of media producers: focus groups “are given a set of photographs from actual media coverage of a specific theme. The members of each audience group are then asked to pretend that they are journalists and requested to write a story or report to accompany the photographic images that they have selected.” (Devereux 2003: 145). This mode of research has helped question the assumptions about ‘media

influence' that typify a set of behaviourist approaches known collectively as the 'effects model'.

This project builds on these observations, and seeks to develop an analysis of the role of mediated listening via moderation of discussion with participants:

1. by investigating where such 'frames' or 'templates' "come from"; thus taking a position that discourses are not 'imposed' by media on a passive audience, but have to connect with social forces and extend the ways in which individuals make sense of the external conditions of their lives in a practical manner;
2. by clarifying how listening takes place within the 'circuit of culture': thereby taking reception as a starting point the logic of communicative action
3. by mapping collective responses to specific news coverage of key social issues which represent axes of social difference and subject formation⁶

This data will provide a better understanding of listening dynamics along a spectrum of sites and engagements, which range from highly routinised to unpremeditated moments of media reception, and which are difficult to access as a research problem even in a traditional ethnographic manner (Downing & Husband 2005; Husband 1996, 2008).

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⁶ To be determined at the time of the workshops, to ensure contemporary relevance, but organised into a) an issue of gender relations (for example, the recent coverage of issues of sexual consent and abuse involving the Cronulla Sharks NRL team), b) an issue of migration (for example, the current discussions of racist violence towards Indian students) and c) issue of financial/economic coverage (for example, whether corporate salaries should be limited).

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Vera Mackie

Vera Mackie holds an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellowship in Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne and has held Visiting Professorships at Hitotsubashi University, Ochanomizu University and Victoria University. Major publications include *Gurōbaruka to Jendā Hyōshō* [Globalisation and Representations of Gender], Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 2003; *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; *Relationships: Japan and Australia, 1870s–1950s*, Melbourne: University of Melbourne History Monographs and RMIT Publishing, 2001, co-edited with Paul Jones; *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, London: Routledge, 2000, paperback edition 2006, co-edited with Anne Marie Hilsdon, Martha Macintyre and Maila Stevens; and *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900–1937*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, paperback edition 2002. Current research interests focus on the politics of visual culture in modern Japan and the cultural history of the body in modern Japan.

Testimonies: Listening, Looking and Reading

Testimonies have formed a major element of feminist campaigns around historical wrongs such as demands for compensation by survivors of the enforced military prostitution/ sexual slavery system in the Second World War. Since the early 1990s, a group of elderly women have presented their stories at public meetings, seminars, conferences, demonstrations, and people's tribunals, often mediated by interpreters. These testimonies have been recorded as voice recordings and moving images. We also have transcripts and translations of their stories. Others have chosen to record their experiences through painting.

In this presentation I would like to raise questions about the ethics of listening to and reading these testimonies. All of these survivors are now frail, elderly women. One can imagine that providing such testimonies in front of strangers must be exhausting and challenging. From the researcher's point of view, what is the difference between hearing these live testimonies, seeing and hearing them reproduced in audio and visual media, reading records of the testimonies, or looking at the survivors' paintings?

Listening to testimonies is an embodied experience, where one hears the voice and sees the survivor at first hand. At times, however, this must be mediated through an interpreter. Audio or video recordings allow the testimony to be made accessible to greater numbers of people, but may lack immediacy, and may be subject to editing. Editing and post-production may rework the message in subtle ways, but may allow for the inclusion of further contextual material. Transcription turns the testimony into a document, with a concomitant loss of nuance and immediacy. Nevertheless, this allows large numbers of people to access the same story, and for the testimony to be used in a consistent way. Transcribed testimonies are 'frozen' in a way which is not true of live discourse, which may vary in subtle ways between one telling and the next. What are the respective methodologies for listening, reading and looking at testimonies of traumatic events?

Stephen Muecke

I met Melissa Lucashenko at the Byron Bay writer's festival; we were on a panel together. She signed her new book *_Too Flash_* 'To Stephen, who is a good listener.' Maybe that's because I got about with a cassette tape recorder in the Kimberley in the seventies and eighties. I used to arrive at camps and ask people if they had any good stories to tell me, then I'd tape them and write them down. Paddy Roe was a fantastic storyteller and my transcription technique tried to retain his particular oral style, something the American poet David Antin would appreciate when you listen to his 'talk pieces'. He says something like this: A poet has to pursue a line, to push forward with whatever means they have to do what they have to do; cross the seas, climb a mountain, or whatever. Over the years, Paddy Roe had to make those white people listen, make them come to him, sit around under his old tamarind tree and listen for a few minutes or a couple of hours, and there was always a group there, people listening to the listening, how it was going down. I was a witness to listening, and made a record of it. These days I'm learning to yarn, like when I perform a lecture without notes. Or not quite, I get it down to a couple of pages of notes. But I'm aiming to be able to perform all my lectures just by thinking enough ahead, in the right way, with some memorising. That way I will be able concentrate on the listeners.

Stephen Muecke is Professor of Writing at the University of New South Wales, Australia. Recent related publications include "Cultural Science? The Ecological Critique of Modernity and the Conceptual Habitat of the Humanities," (Cultural Studies, May 2009); "The Writing Laboratory: Political Ecology, Labour, Experiment," (forthcoming in Angelaki); *Joe in the Andamans and Other Fictocritical Stories*, Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 2008.

"How can we analyse mediated listening beyond 'reception' "? —Reproduction rather than communication.

I am interested in the ethnography of listening events. A listening event is everything that comprises the (re)production of the sound text. It is not just the composed vibrations that come to the ear; it is the topic, the setting, the ritual, the channel, the cultural codes, including the 'tone'.

But unlike Gumperz and Hymes' 'Ethnographies of Speaking' (1964), I want to leave behind the dominant metaphor of communication—the telephone line metaphor if you like—as the theoretical model for what goes on at a listening (or speaking) event. I want to suggest it is not so much about information passing down a line from a source to a receiver. It would be worth carrying out an empirical experiment involving asking subjects what was 'communicated' to them. For instance, in a classroom, after a poem is recited, what do the students say they have heard? They will remember bits of information, words, *maybe* images, *possibly* the odd feeling. But most likely they will go on to **reproduce** a text which is the sort of thing they have been trained to say after listening to (more likely reading) a poem.

So I want to introduce the idea that the listening/speaking event is about reproduction. When you listen to something you are engaging with something that *exists*, not something that bridges a communicative gap. So let us not privilege the two human ends of the (imagined) communicative chain, but focus instead on the object being listened to.

This is how Bruno Latour demolishes the trope of the ‘gap’, which I think affects how we think about listening:

If by “epistemology” we name the discipline that tries to understand how we manage to bridge the gap between representations and reality, the only conclusion to be drawn about it is that this discipline has no subject matter whatsoever, because we *never* bridge such a gap — not, mind you, because we don’t know anything objectively, but because *there is never such a gap*. The gap is an artifact due to the wrong positioning of the knowledge acquisition pathway. We imagine a bridge over an abyss, when the whole activity consists of a drift through a chain of experience where there are many successive event-like termini and many substitutions of heterogeneous media. (Latour, “A Textbook Case Revisited”)

This is why I want to argue that the text is not a *bridge* between subject and object; I want to expand the text’s relations into an *empirical multirealist* world.

Here the text is sustained in a kind of existence, but *what kind of existence* is this? While a literary text, as an object, is not ‘alive’, its existence is defined through its active relations with other things, human and non-human, in a complex ecology. This is a space of negotiation and transformation which does not privilege either subject or object. A poem does not exist *primarily* in relation to human subjectivities (phenomenology), nor *primarily* in relation to objects (materialism). It has its ‘own’ existence not reducible to either of those privileged poles in the modernist conceptual architecture. It is not the secondary effect of any primary realities, and cannot be reduced to them, in the manner that a sociology can reduce a religious experience to a set of structures and functions, or a religion can reduce AIDS-preventing condoms to a sin against human fertility. These sorts of reductions can and are made, more or less convincingly, but through a series of hard-won negotiations and transformations from one link in a chain of reference to another.

Is this what we are doing as we are listening? Thrown into the midst of things we are actively negotiating a field of real transformations. Yet we would like to have the text speak to us *with its own voice*, would we not? When we listen to a sermon or prayer, couldn’t we have a *religious* (listening) experience (instead of an intellectual one?). When we listen to a poem or story, couldn’t we have an *aesthetic* (listening) experience (instead of an intellectual one?). This is what I mean by listening to something as it reproduces its own mode of existence.

Penny O'Donnell

Penny O'Donnell is Senior Lecturer in International Media and Journalism in the Department of Media and Communications at the University of Sydney.

Penny's recent research focuses on theoretical and empirical exploration of media listening practices. She is particularly interested in journalism-related listening practices that seek to do more than encourage journalists and their news audiences to 'empathise' with distant others. Instead, her focus are those journalistic interactions that promote more open forms of communication and develop social communicative capacity by moving outside individual/group comfort zones, acknowledging and negotiating power differentials, and engaging unfamiliar and/or hostile perspectives. Key themes include purposeful listening, hearing dissent, intercultural dialogue with strangers, listening and community or social justice media, and listening and journalism reform.

Penny has been involved in research and teaching about improving Australian journalism standards for some fifteen years. She has published several book chapters and various articles on questions of change in journalism, including in the areas of reporting of Indigenous and cross-cultural issues, general news and current affairs, and global conflict. In 2009, she received ARC funding to investigate the future of quality journalism in the Internet Age.

Penny coordinates The Listening Project with Tanja Dreher, Justine Lloyd and Cate Thill.

Wanning Sun

Wanning SUN is Professor of Chinese Media at University of Technology Sydney, Australia. She was Visiting Professor at State University of New York (2005-6). She researches on media, migration, and social change in China and its diaspora. Her works include *Leaving China* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), *Media and the Chinese Diaspora* (ed.) (Routledge, 2006), and *Maid in China: Media, Mobility, and a New Semiotic of Power* (Routledge, 2009). Wanning has an ongoing interest in the relationship between media and diasporic identities, and has worked on the migration and the Chinese-language media in diaspora for over a decade.

Brief Summary

I am interested in developing an effective methodological framework within which we can engage in a much needed dialogue between academic researchers and media practitioners. This framework will hopefully allow us to facilitate a shift from a focus on the multicultural mainstream (e.g. SBS) to the multicultural Other (e.g. Chinese language media among the mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and southeast Asian Chinese communities in Australia). A number of questions which I would need to address include: What are the most effective ways of interesting industry partners to come aboard and see relevance in our project? How can media researchers develop a language which enables them to engage in meaningful dialogue with the 'ethnic' language media industries? And what analytical skills are necessary in order to gain vital understandings of industry perspectives, needs, priorities, and issues? And finally, how to find possible ways of collaboration/linkage between academia and industry in both research and in media practices?

My interest in developing this methodological framework is thematically connected with and builds upon a number of key events which the CRN has supported, in particular the Superdiversity, Diaspora and Media Symposium, co-ordinated by Greg Noble and Tanja Dreher, and the Media and the Politics of Listening in Multicultural Societies coordinated by Tanja Dreher and Gay Hawkins. However, I hope to go beyond the multicultural mainstream academic forum on the issues of diasporic formations and multicultural identities, and aims to provide a forum whereby both academics and non-English language media practitioners can talk to and listen to each other. It is my hope that some insights may emerge directly from the often referred to as the 'ethnic' minorities, adding an important and often missing voice to our understanding of the politics and practices of multiculturalism in Australia.

Jo Ann Tacchi

Associate Prof. Jo Tacchi is a Centre Fellow at the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI) at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. Jo is a social anthropologist specializing in ethnographic study of traditional and new media technologies. She currently leads a number of research projects in Australia and South Asia that explore methodological developments using ethnographic approaches, and creative engagement with digital technologies through content creation.

Australian Research Council Linkage Projects:

- Finding a Voice: Making Technological Change Socially Effective and Culturally Empowering. (South Asia)
- Assessing Communication for Social Change: A New Agenda in Impact Assessment for Communication for Development Initiatives. (Nepal)

Intel Corporation funded project:

- Moving Content: Creative Engagement in Marginal Spaces. (India)

A 2009 book co-authored by Jo, *Action Research and New Media: Concepts, Methods and Cases* is published by Hampton Press.

Finding a Voice has a website at <http://findingavoice.org>. An online training manual for Ethnographic Action Research is available at <http://ear.findingavoice.org>.

Methodological overview of work concerned with participation, engagement, recognition and voice (and by implication, ‘listening’)

Below I set out some background to the methodologies I have been employing over the past few years, before detailing a proposed study and its proposed methods. All comments greatly appreciated!

Background

Since 2002 I have been experimenting with a variety of versions of ‘ethnography’, grounded in an anthropological understanding of this approach, and making it relevant to the study of media, information and communication technology (ICT) and issues of voice and participation in development. The approach that has had the most impact to date is ‘ethnographic action research’ or EAR (ear.findingavoice.org) which was developed specifically for ICT and media for development initiatives, and which has been employed in large multi-sited research projects. As its name suggests, EAR is a combination of an ethnographic approach (ongoing, embedded) and action research cycle (plan, do, reflect). It also incorporates participatory techniques. EAR was initially developed by me and sociologist Don Slater (London School of Economics) through a Department for International Development funded research project in 2002, and later through UNESCO funding. I recently completed the *Finding a Voice* project, which deployed EAR across 15 sites in South and South East Asia (findingavoice.org). I am part way through a 4 year ARC Linkage which is adapting EAR for use as a participatory impact assessment

methodology, with a communication initiative in Nepal. Central to all of this ethnographic media research has been the concept of 'communicative ecologies'. In order to understand the potential and real impacts of individual media and ICTs in any given situation, it is necessary to place this experience within a broader understanding of the whole structure of communication and information in people's everyday lives. Within *Finding a Voice* one way in which we addressed this was by mapping the different ways that communication and technology intersect for individuals in different communities. That is, not just press, broadcasting or telecoms but also roads, buses and trains, visits to neighbours, gossip, and public and private places where people meet to communicate. Communication is located within an environment in which arenas of economy, politics, culture and development (to name only some) interpenetrate. More recently, through Intel Corporation-funded research in low infrastructure areas of India I have been using a 'multi-sited ethnography' approach (Marcus 1995).

Proposal: Modalities of Voice, Materialities of Politics: A Project for Comparative Empirical Research

In collaboration with Nick Couldry, I am working on a new research proposal (and seeking funding) to explore issues of voice and recognition. The aim is to explore voice across the domains of politics, culture, economics and development - and relate this to social actors' broader sense of agency. We aim to adapt a multi-sited ethnographic approach, following connections, associations and relationships concerned with what Couldry calls the 'crisis of voice'. Through this proposed research, we want to explore the potential of developing a revised version of 'communicative ecologies' that takes account of issues of 'voice'. An approach to communicative ecologies that is being developed through the Intel-funded *Moving Content* (we are calling it 'multi-sited communicative ecologies') may prove useful to this project.

Semi-structured interviews will be at the core of the project approach. These will be designed to allow respondents to reflect at length on what 'voice' means to them, and what opportunities for voice are available to them. Respondents will be asked these principal questions in the context of a broader discussion about their experience of employment, political/civic action, and media consumption/production. That is, they will be addressed as potential agents across the domains of current crisis of voice that we have identified. The data from these interviews will make up the core data set that we will work with collaboratively. We will use online tools to organise, manage and analyse this data. Fieldnotes and communicative ecology mapping will provide additional data.

Research questions

1. What elements contribute to 'having a voice' [i.e. an effective voice] for a range of social actors? More specifically:
 - 1.1 How important is the relative contribution of a) political/civic/development project participation, b) workplace/consumer voice, and c) media-based participation/ interactivity?
 - 1.2 Does the contribution of components of voice vary, depending on employment status and/or geographical location [viz close to or far from administrative/metropolitan centres]?
 - 1.3 What role do transnational/transcultural reference points play in 'voice' for various agents?

2. What practical conditions contribute to, or undermine, the possibility of having or sustaining an effective voice for a range of social actors?
3. How does the experience of voice in various domains contribute to social actors' broader sense of agency?

Basic methods

RQ1 – through in depth interviews (interview schedules to be developed and tested in the first two months of the projects)
 RQs2 and 3 – through interviews, supplemented by observation/fieldwork and some investigation of local communicative ecologies, in two contrasting regions in each country (countries still to be determined, current proposal is Australia, India and China with a parallel UK project).

Comparative Research Design

In each country 36 in-depth interviews will be conducted, face to face, addressing 6 categories of people:

1/2	employed in public/private sectors
3/4	active in electoral political/civic sectors
5/6	high consumers of reality TV/ news & documentary

In each category, we aim to interview half from a metropolitan/administrative centre, and half from a regional or remote area. In the UK project, this will be London and a town in the North East of England; in Australian this will be Brisbane and a town in regional Queensland; in India this will be New Delhi and a town in Uttarakhand (a State in the North of India, in the foothills of the Himalayas).

Cate Thill

Dr Cate Thill, with A/Prof Kate Crawford and Dr Tanja Dreher, is convener of the Methodologies to Capture Listening workshop and coordinator of the Listening Project (with Tanja Dreher, Justine Lloyd and Penny O'Donnell). Cate is a lecturer in Sociology and Communications at the University of Notre Dame Australia. Her research on listening explores how the state listens to marginalized citizens as well as how these listening relations are mediated by the democratizing claims of social and cultural movements. Cate has recently published an article on difficult listening in the context of the Northern Territory Intervention in a special edition on Listening: New Ways of Engaging with Media & Culture edited by Penny O'Donnell, Justine Lloyd and Tanja Dreher (*Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 2009). She is also currently working on an edited collection on disability, democracy, media & listening that arose out of the 2008 workshop with Prof Gerard Goggin (UNSW, CRN) and Rosemary Kayess (Disability Studies and Research Centre, UNSW).

Connecting ablist work practices

This project examines the social, cultural and familial dimensions of academic work practices from a disability studies and feminist perspective. By doing so, it aims to situate the interdependencies of workers with disability in relation to other workers. The overarching aim of this project is to question the ideal of the independent worker by exploring the ways in which all workers, in different ways, are dependent on social and familial support. As such, the project will be adding a critical new dimension to disability studies in its interrogation of ableist work practices and norms as well as locating this contribution with feminist research on the public/private distinction and work/life balance.

The project applies a cultural studies methodology to the analysis of listening. In other words, it reflects on how macro social institutions like the academy listen to (or appropriate) the demands of social movements by examining how these claims shape everyday practices. It also seeks to explore how people (workers) listen to the enabling constraints of institutions.

My initial plan was to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews with academic workers with expertise in either disability studies or cultures of work. The interview questions will ask them to describe how friends or family contribute to professional practice. This aspect of the project was inspired by discussion with a colleague with a disability, reflecting on how she depends on her sons to pick up papers on the weekends and the ways in which this direct family support enables her to do her job. My suspicion is that, while the situation of academic workers with a disability has important specificity, this discussion also speaks to the interdependencies of academic workers more broadly.

However, feeling some obligation to live up to the call for experimental proposals for innovative methods, I also have some more creative/tentative ideas for

participatory action research. The first is to use Second Life as a site in which research participants can create the university that they would ideally like to work in. This would be a way of capturing their suggestions for how academia could 'better' listen to changing social norms and expectations at the level of practice. There are some obvious limitations with this approach; particularly the time commitment it would require of participants and accessibility issues.

I would also like to apply this approach to an analysis of disadvantaged jobseekers. There are numerous studies criticizing Centrelink for the overly bureaucratic ways in which it engages with clients. Rather than replicating these findings, I would like to conduct focus groups with lone parents and people with disability affected by welfare to work reforms in which they rewrote Centrelink letters and used role-playing to demonstrate how they would ideally like staff to respond to them. Again, the point is to capture their suggestions about how this institution could better listen to their needs and expectations. However, there are some ethical issues here. If possible, it would be appropriate to pay participants for these focus group sessions because these disadvantaged jobseekers are being asked to act as policy officers.