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## Sounding places: an introduction

*Karolina Doughty, Michelle Duffy and Theresa Harada*

### **More-than-representational approaches to sound, place, and experience**

Research on sound and music in cultural geography has emerged in the wake of growing attention to more-than-representational aspects of social and spatial practices. This framework offers significant theoretical and methodological openings into our everyday worlds, for, as Anderson and Harrison (2010, p. 8) point out, ‘what is being described here is a concern with and attention to emergent processes of ontogenesis, how bodies are actualised and individuated through sets of diverse practical relations’. Originating in the 1990s with Nigel Thrift’s (2008) work on non-representational theories at Bristol University’s School of Geographical Sciences, more-than-representational theories have had a significant impact on various disciplinary fields, especially that of cultural geography, and these theorizations continue to evolve. Currently, there is an ongoing discussion of the paradoxical naming of such conceptual tools, (here we refer to the non-, the more-than) and criticisms that the prefixes that seek to overcome the reductionist constraints of representation through their negation of representation, are strangely undermined and ineffective by their vagary (Harrison, forthcoming). Harrison in relation to the indeterminate neutrality of ‘non-’ exhorts that ‘marrow must be added to its bones, heat to its blood’ (forthcoming). It is here that we agree that these theories not only enable us, but compel us to make a contribution to the literature that seeks to understand the politics of everyday life. For the authors of this volume, more-than representational theory offers a rich framework and a generosity of approach; ‘an umbrella term for diverse work that seeks to better cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds’ (Lorimer 2005, p. 3).

One of the aims of this book is to contribute to the development of theoretical and conceptual application of these approaches which involve a stronger focus on the spaces across which everyday life unfolds. For those of us exploring the sonic world—a world often difficult to capture in text form—the more-than-representational helps us to conceptualize, capture, be affected by and

affective in our studies of the ‘not-quite-graspable’ (Vannini 2015, p. 6). Thus, in bringing this collection of works together, we wanted to provide a space for emerging work from scholars interested in the intersection of the sonic and the spatial, works that play, interrogate and experiment with our experiences of music, sound and place.

There is a significant and extensive body of literature providing detailed overviews of non-representational and more-than-representational theories (for example, Anderson & Harrison 2010; Boyd 2017; Lorimer 2005; Thrift 2008; Vannini 2015). As this literature affirms, non- and more-than-representational theories are integral to current thought in the social sciences, humanities and the creative arts, yet it is the spatial inflection that allows a radical rethinking of relations between the human and non-human (Boyd 2017). Here we provide an overview of how we see these approaches inform the writing of those presented in this volume. What is so exciting about Thrift’s initial proposal to consider ‘*the geography of what happens*’ (2008, p. 2, emphasis in original) is the challenge it offers in terms of identifying and seeking to understand the relationships that constitute life—that this is about movement, modes of perception (thought, precognition, pre-individual), emergence, intensities and encounters. Moreover, and in ways that resonate with the work of Bruno Latour (1993) and others questioning the supposed hierarchy of nature, more-than-representational theories turn around our pre-conceived ideas about the ‘order’ of the world. Instead, we can ‘redefine what counts as an actor’, that an actor is ‘made up of all kinds of intermediary spaces which cannot be tied down to just one . . . the world is jam-packed with entities’ (Thrift 2008, p. 17). As Anderson and Harrison (2010, p. 14) explain, this frees up how we conceptualize the world because non- and more-than-representational theories do not ‘limit *a priori* what kinds of beings make up the social . . . everything takes-part and in taking-part, takes-place: everything happens, everything acts’. Yet, this also challenges us in our doing of more-than-representational research.

Vannini (2015) tackles the methodological questions raised by a more-than-representational approach, making clear that we are attempting to consider events, relations, doings, affective resonances, and backgrounds, because ‘these five forces reverberate across the lifeworld, informing and shaping each other, unfolding in more intricate patterns as new research directions are revealed’ (p. 9). This in turn suggests, as Tim Ingold notes, that what is called for ‘is in the nature of an experiment: it is a matter of trying things out and seeing what happens’ (2015, p. viii). Thus, we need to be brave and take risks without fully knowing where we will end up, an attitude that Lorimer (2015) identifies as very much a part of a more-than-representational praxis; ‘a suppleness, plasticity, and eclecticism . . . that produces artful variants and offshoots of creative practice’ (p. 181). How well this resonates with music and sound practices! Yet, this also raises ‘the thorny issue of how to explore and experiment’ with what sound is and how it works (Wood *et al.* 2007, p. 868).

Unlike the formalist approaches to musical spatiality that is represented through scores and analyses most often reliant on graphic representations (Born 2013), a more-than-representational approach aligns itself well with how music

and sound is created and/or experienced. Music and sound, by their very nature as events, reconfigure space and time (Thrift 2008); or, as philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch (2003, p. 93) poetically explains, ‘music is not calligraphy projected into space, but a lived experience analogous to life’.

A focus on sound and music requires us to shift our ways of thinking about the world. Indeed, as Steven Connor (1997, p. 206) points out, ‘the most distinguishing feature of auditory experience [is] its capacity to disintegrate and reconfigure space’. As many of the authors in this collection suggest, sonic processes and practices have the power to affect, and this is something initially sensed, not necessarily known (Moisala *et al.* 2017). So, what we are attempting to do in our explorations of the sonic world is capture how experience, feeling, emotion and affect have ‘the potential to reconfigure listeners’ relationships to place, to open up new modes of attention and movement, and in so doing to rework places’ (Gallagher 2015, p. 468). Therefore, in devising this collection we posed the question: if we tune our analytical attention towards the aural background of a range of everyday spaces, what does this bring to our understanding of the more-than-representational registers of sound and sonic atmospheres?

## The contents of the book

The book is loosely organized into four parts. Part I is devoted to explorations of the role of sound in the making and experience of places. The chapters in this section consider the way that our connections to place, community, history and identity can be brought into being, challenged or re-appropriated through sound. From the forceful crash of waves and the pull of ocean currents to the echoes of a familiar faraway landscape, sound encompasses and flows through bodies in unpredictable ways to contribute to our connection to places. Sound moves us and we are moved by sound. An attention to sound makes visible the intangible and sensorial landscapes of cognitive thought, emotional and affective resonances and the sonic aura of the body itself. In Chapter 2, Michelle Duffy, Angela Campbell and Richard Chew invite us to seek out the sensual, embodied and unexpected elements of encounters with place, in order to capture emergent and evolving place-meanings. They explore processes of knowing place through art practice, specifically in this case a single rendition of the folk song ‘Flash Jack from Gundagai’ during a workshop at Narmbool, located on the traditional land of the Wadawurrung outside the town of Elaine in Victoria, Australia. They take up McCormack’s (2013, p. 11) call to ‘learn to be affected’, so that we might reconnect and rediscover our relationships in/with/of place. The chapter shows how sensory attunements to place can be generative of what they call ‘place-story’, as a way to glimpse differing yet connected senses of place. In Chapter 3, Alexandra Kaley, Chris Hatton and Christine Milligan explore the experiences of sound by people with intellectual disabilities engaged in care farming activities. They show that attending to the various sounds that form part of place-experiences helps us understand how sound influences people’s individual sense of belonging or alienation within different settings, as bodies have different ways of processing sonic experience. The authors argue for an

attention to sound within therapeutic spaces, such as those of care farming, to better create the kinds of auditory environments that enable users to feel comfortable and ‘in place’. Mor Shilon explores in Chapter 4 how differential narrations of ‘noise’ give a route into understanding the feelings, emotions and actions that have contributed to the planning process for the expansion of Ben Gurion International Airport. Shilon argues for a more dynamic understanding of urban planning, acknowledging the affective relations that are implicated within planning processes, for instance by paying attention to the figurations of sound within such processes. She calls for an ‘understanding of the role of sound in the various and ongoing ways by which people sense and experience place and the planning processes that shape place, as well as the atmospheres that emerge and in turn affect planning processes and impact socio-spatial relations’ (p. 49). Chapter 5 continues the exploration of the constitution of urban public spaces as continuously performed and contested. In his study of breakdance at the Porta Venezia subway station in Milan, Fabio Bertoni considers urban space as a ‘resounding heterotopia’ realized through processes of re-appropriation and tactical use of space. He argues that bodily ‘practices and sounds, at the same time, cooperate in the re-appropriation of a heterotopic territory from the scalar and planned use of the space, and oppose each other in the construction of alternative use, atmosphere and rhythm’ (p. 60). In the final chapter of Part I, Chapter 6, Jon Anderson and Lyndsey Stoodley immerse themselves in the sounds of the sea and the surf. In listening to ‘hydro-logics’—a focus of attention on the water world—the authors make a commitment to thinking critically about the heard environment and being open to how it might change the way we know the world, in this case specifically the ‘place of the surfed wave’. In the chapter, Anderson and Stoodley explore the soundworlds of surf spaces, as an important element in how surfers know the sea and navigate the waves.

Part II explores the different ways that bodies, movements and environments are intertwined through sound, and the role of sound for the creation of inclusive environments. Lived experiences of sound are constituted differently according to the dispositions, orientations and histories of the body. At particular times and in particular places, sounds can generate feelings of being in or out of place. The lived experiences of sound offer ways to understand how bodies orient themselves in the world and how the tenuous and fleeting are as important as the stable and enduring for considering the impact and importance of sound for inclusive social and material spaces. In Chapter 7, Owain Jones, Luci Gorell Barnes and Antony Lyons offer an ecology of narratives about water and sound that embodies the spirit of non-representational theory in the way that it weaves episodic, collagist and impressionistic accounts into an overall effort to give voice to the multiple becomings of water. They seek to ‘present examples of the sound-voices of water, and also examples of “speaking” of, to and for, water in everyday life’ (p. 77). In Chapter 8, Sheryl-Ann Simpson also advocates listening and giving voice to the auditory elements of landscapes. Her exploration of ‘rural quiet’ brings to the fore multiple sound stories that highlight the complexity and diversity of rural experience, and what makes rural places ‘home’ for people. In Chapter 9, Daniel Paiva and Herculano Cachinho

share their collaborative exploration of soundmaking practices in everyday life together with 12 anonymous participants. They argue that ‘human bodies can be seen as simultaneously semi-conductive and value-governed, as their sonic presence manifests itself as a feedbacking filtered by temporary mood states, and personal and collective ethics on soundmaking’ (p. 110). The foregrounding of the affective body in sonic experiences of space is carried on in Chapter 10 by Karla Berrens. She particularly engages with the role of sound within haptic space, in an investigation of the spatial experiences of people with visual impairments. Her consideration of listening as potentially disorienting and painful for deaf-blind and blind or partially sighted people highlights the way that different bodies have different abilities to pick up and decode sensory information, a theme that is also taken up by Kaley, Hatton and Milligan in Chapter 3. In the final chapter of Part II, Chapter 11, Nesrin El Ayadi takes us on an autoethnographic exploration of identity and belonging through listening to the linguistic diversity of place. Again, sonic experience provides a window to the diverse embodiments and social positionalities that matter in negotiations of belonging, and which influence encounters with the spaces and sounds of everyday life.

In Part III of the book, the affective politics of sound are considered. That everything is political is a common mantra within the social sciences. The affective politics of sound refers to how sound is mediated by the body to confirm or disrupt understandings of the world. It proffers a view that by its very nature sound is a subversive and under-explored force that can mobilize bodies towards or away from possible futures. In Chapter 12, Anja Kanngieser and Rory Gibb introduce the concept of data sonification, showing how the conversion of data into sound is being used in the sciences and in the arts to communicate stories about the world and its surrounds. The chapter offers a range of examples of the sonification of data, from classic notions of listening to the natural environment, to artistic sonifications of climate data, and the scientific approach of physicists and astronomers in their capture of vibrational waves, to show how sound influences the world we know. Also exploring a sonification of sorts, Ryan Bird discusses geopolitical sound and performance in Chapter 13. Here, the focus is on performances that combine music, digital technology and audio-visual art with the communication of political agency. In his experimental approach to the research, Bird engages with notions of sound, harmony and individual agency. Leonie Tuitjer provides in Chapter 14 a consideration of the affective force of sound as part of the project of the nation. The chapter discusses two examples of sonic interventions by the Thai government during everyday movements through the Bangkok transport system, in order to theorize how sonic affects, as involving both embodied reactions of motion and emotion, influence the modulation of power (p. 185). In Chapter 15, Karolina Doughty continues the focus on the presence of music across the spaces and situations of everyday life, exploring musical interventions in public space from the perspective of musical cosmopolitanism. The chapter considers whether an understanding of sonic experience as visceral (Waitt *et al.* 2014; Duffy *et al.* 2016) can help us rethink the potential of music as part of the performance of cosmopolitanism in everyday life. In the final chapter of Part III, Chapter 16, Kaya Barry explores the

collective atmospheres of hostel dormitory rooms, showing how ‘Instances of unexpected yet banal sounds, such as snoring or rearranging one’s belongings, bring to the forefront a range of social negotiations between individuals and the collective space’ (p. 209).

Part IV expands on methodological approaches to utilizing sound. Utilizing sound to enrich methodological practice is a growing field of knowledge. There is a diversity of research approaches that seek to harness the power of sound to optimize deep understandings, yet these clearly highlight paradigmatic boundaries and the challenges of going beyond conventional methods. The more-than-representational elements of sound within the research encounter offer ways to explore not only the sounds themselves but the silences, rhythms and pulses that punctuate them through an attention to the unspoken and felt resonances of bodies. In Chapter 17, Candice Boyd offers what she styles as an interlude, a point of departure and an opportunity to reflect on the practice of sound making (p. 214). Organized around five quotes from Erin Manning’s (2016) *The Minor Gesture* as thematic provocations, Boyd meditates on the notion of musical improvisations as therapeutic practice.

In Chapter 18, Theresa Harada engages with the methodological challenge of doing more-than-representational research. She suggests an approach of embodied and expanded listening as a process of listening with the whole body. Harada provides examples of how audio-visual and audio data might be approached with attention to the body of the researcher during the period of analysis, paying attention to the ‘intangible non-verbal forms of communication, sighs, sounds and groans as well as embodied memories and imaginings for understanding how bodies are permeated by affect and how this in turn permeates other bodies, things, movements and memories’ (p. 226). In the final chapter of the book, Chapter 19, Catherine Wilkinson and Samantha Wilkinson highlight the way that sound permeates bodies through movement both physically and emotionally, up close and from afar. They explore how ‘tuning into’ place through music and sound helps us understand a range of intimate experiences through which places become meaningful for individuals and communities. In order to highlight how sound is a meaningful ingredient in the microgeographies of place-making, they examine the curation of accents and songs associated with place by the community radio station KCC Live.

Taken as a whole, this collection brings together the work of scholars who share a desire to grapple with the more-than-representational registers of encounters and engagements with sound in the makings of places and situated experiences around the world. The book contributes to the ongoing efforts across the interdisciplinary field of sound studies and auditory culture to theorize the role of sound in assembling various forms of social life—in the forming of communities and places of belonging, in habitual bodily practices, in movements and rhythms, in the performance of culture and identity in places, and in the emotions, affects and sensory experiences that weave the sonic into mechanisms of sociality in general.

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