**Postgraduate student Symposium: Soundspace**

18 May 2015

The Graduate School | Queen’s University Belfast

Hosted by Recomposing the City

**ABSTRACTS and BIOGRAPHIES**

**Conor McCafferty (Creative Arts). ‘Mapping Sound Maps: Precedents, practices, future paths’.**Sound mapping practices and projects have proliferated around the world in recent years. They offer a critical alternative to the emphasis on noise and noise pollution in current policy, scholarship and practice. Their multivalent character suggests new insights across disciplines: the study of urban sound; practices of (collaborative) sound art; sound in architectural and urban design; urban pedagogy; and urban data and policy work. In attempting to contextualise such a heterogeneous field, this paper will chart a path through multiple creative, theoretical and technical fields. Threading through this multidisciplinary literature, I will touch upon developments in sensorial urbanism, the geospatial data revolution in the digital arts and humanities and what Georgina Born recently described as the "veritable avalanche of scholarship devoted to the interconnections between sound and space" (Born 2013). Concurrently, the paper will draw on an initial dataset of approximately 100 sound maps, attempting a sonic illustration of the early research findings.

*Conor McCafferty is a researcher, artist and curator based in Belfast. He is currently pursuing a PhD, titled 'The Acoustic Mapping of Cities,' with the Recomposing the City research group.*[*https://twitter.com/comccaff*](https://twitter.com/comccaff)

**Andrew Harrison (Creative Arts). ‘Expressing a Belfast State of Mind: Urban Imaginaries and Sound Art’.**Following on from Cornelius Castoriadis’ description of the imaginary significations being ‘the laces which tie a society together and the forms which define what, for a given society, is “real” and James Donald’s classification of the city as an ‘imagined environment’, this talk aims to outline how urban imaginaries are both a creative resource and a conceptual language that artists can utilise to engage the audience in an abstract dialogue about place. If the site of listening to acousmatic music that’s concerned with the real world is located “in the same place as creativity itself: where reality and imagination are in continuous conversation with each other in order to reach beneath the surface of life experience” as Hildegard Westerkamp suggests, then how listeners imagine a city or a place is the key mechanism that informs how they react to and interpret any work that seeks to draw upon the well of symbolism associated with that place*.* For the sound artist, finding the sounds that have symbolic resonances with the imaginaries held by the listener is the key to creating sound-led works that successfully engage with place on a conceptual level.

*Andrew Harrison is a composer and sound artist based in his hometown of Belfast, Northern Ireland. His most recent work is concerned with exploring the imaginaries of place related to Belfast. He is currently in the first year of a PhD at the Sonic Arts Research Centre, Queen’s University Belfast.*

**Rita Farrell (Architecture). ‘In-Between Spaces: The study of traditional Irish soundscapes in Belfast'.**An aspect to sound that is often looked at but becomes insubstantial to creating place not specific to its space is ‘performance’. Performance is an anticipation of sound which entertains us and brings about interactions with not just the sound itself but also becomes a stimulus within the audience e.g. through song and dance. ‘Sound is materially invisible but very visceral and emotive’, and therefore it is hard to physically measure.

From my own experience within the world of traditional Irish music, the sound and making of the music is fundamentally down to material. Traditional music is unique in the fact that it is almost always ephemeral due to the nature of ‘the session’ usually held in pubs. The interconnection between the static element of the public house in terms of architecture and the ephemeral sound of traditional music creates an ‘in-between space’. The architecture and the performance are intertwined through the sound of a space, building upon the already established soundscape. Essentially, the performance of the space itself – the reaction of the space in conjunction to the raw, unedited sound of the music is what makes the architecture successful in drawing in punters and musicians.

*Growing up in London, Rita Farrell moved to Belfast in 2009 to start an Undergraduate course in Architecture. She is currently studying towards a Master's in Architecture at Queen's. At the age of 11, she started the Uilleann pipes and has won several major competitions across the world. Through teaching and performing Rita has played in many unusual and acoustically challenging spaces. Through her interests Rita hopes to eventually pursue a career in architectural acoustics.*

**Isobel Anderson (Creative Arts). ‘Sound Mapping Beyond the Grid: Alternative Cartographies of Sound’.**Soundmaps have recently gained popularity as a platform to engage communities with their surrounding soundscapes and urban architectures. However, they have also received criticism with regards to their effectiveness in gridding sound and its personal significance (Ceraso 2010; Waldock 2011; Ouzounian 2014). What is often overlooked, or even omitted, in soundmaps, are memories, emotions, thoughts and associations, a criticism also made of traditional Western cartography in general (Wood 1992, 2010; Caquard 2013).  In this paper, I refer to the invisible characteristics of lived experience as ‘“in-between-spaces’spaces”, and I argue that soundmaps will only truly document these spaces if we adopt a more imaginative approach to cartography, mapping beyond the grid.

Drawing from projects that already embrace these concepts, including my collaborative project with Fionnuala Fagan, *Stories Of The City: Sailortown* (2012), this paper explores forms of soundmapping that expand the online gridded soundmap platform. Not only do these examples map the invisible ‘“in-between spaces” of personal relationships to sound, but also the unseen spaces of urban architectures. Sound is intangible, ephemeral and invisible in nature, and therefore possesses profound potentials to map invisible geographies, which might otherwise lay silent. This paper argues that we will only bring voice to these other layers of experience if we embrace cartography as a creative and potentially empowering platform.

*Isobel Anderson is a songwriter, and sound artist from Sussex, currently studying for a PhD at The Sonic Arts Research Centre in Belfast. Her practice explores constructions of place through voice, language, walking, performance and field recording. Isobel’s work has been broadcast on BBC Radio 2, 6 Music, and Radio 3, and performances to date include The San Francisco Tape Music Festival, Glastonbury’s Acoustic Stage, and the Open House Festival.*

**Elen Flügge (Creative Arts and Architecture). ‘Personal Sound to Public Practice’.**Soundbites from a process bridging theories of personal sound space to creative practice in sonic arts. How might sound spaces be parsed in terms of individual hearing perspective? What critical listening practices for public space can be drawn from sonic arts?

*Elen Flügge is interested in individualized audition and silent sound art. Her undergraduate work (Bard College, NY) explored music and language perception; her MA in Sound Studies (UdK, Berlin) focused on auditory culture and sonic arts. Doctoral research on listening practices for urban space is set to start this fall at Queen's University.*

**Portia Ellis-Woods (English). ‘“A map in sound”: Developing features programming, as demonstrated in *This is Northern Ireland*’.** Following the employment of regional writer Sam Hanna Bell, the BBC Northern Ireland features department prospered. Before World War Two the lack of writing experience for scripted radio programmes was noted in a *Report on Regions* in 1936. Bell’s employment in 1946 attempted to solve this problem, fostering a creativity towards features programming, after the end of the War. One particular example of early features writing for radio was *This is Northern Ireland* (1949). It was originally commissioned as a celebratory programme for the BBC NI’s Silver Jubilee; having initially established radio services in Belfast in1924.  Receiving high praise from the press, both in Northern Ireland and across the United Kingdom, this programme was repeated in the subsequent years, testament to its timeless quality and standard. *This is Northern Ireland* incorporates dramatic scenes being acted out by players to demonstrate examples of arts in the region. Writing from Louis MacNeice, John Hewitt, Graeme Roberts, W.R. Rodgers and Roy McFadden are all quoted in Bell’s script. Situational sounds, or actuality, from across the six counties, is recorded to showcase Northern Irish life, both in the urban areas within the ship yards, and in the rural landscape of the countryside. Interviews with local people are coordinated to communicate the everyday life of residents in Northern Ireland. One example captures a fisherman discussing his daily duties. Pioneering the development of features programming demanded innovative scripting skills whilst also mastering sound. This paper will elucidate the relationship between developing programming for radio, taking into consideration the efficacious sound deployed, and its treatment in a certain space. Bell had achieved a successful script, both in the structural aspect, but also by combining the actuality recordings being true to their space.

*Portia Ellis-Wood is in the second year of her PhD which centres on the BBC NI community radio archives in Cultra, located at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Analysing their vast array of sound recordings, scripts, and documents the project brings together programmes in the radio archive and critically examines them in relation to their cultural history. The PhD draws together a commentary on what has been commissioned by the broadcaster, who influenced the programming, and the relationship between the urban and rural setting within Northern Ireland. It will predominantly address arts, literature and drama programming from the establishment of the BBC in Northern Ireland in 1924 until 1956.*

**Antonis Stylianou (Architecture). ‘Public Sound Installations’.** Looking back at Kevin Lynch’s essay *The Possible City* (1968), he argues that “our possible city must therefore have certain characteristics: adaptability coupled with a sense of past and future continuity, equalization of opportunity; a diversity of species, habitats and ways of life. It must be open and responsive, experimental and engaging. These are crucial qualities for the future”.

Introducing installations in public sites is a way of dealing with space, by adding another element to its character and seeking for the public to interact with the installation itself, as well as the space it occupies. Particularly sound installations can challenge this relationship by adding to the aural environment – the *soundscape*, either by blending with it or by creating juxtapositions that can alter the perception of *space* and/or its definition to *place.* Using sound as one of the basic tools for re-constructing and re-imagining the contemporary city, spaces can gain a new meaning in people’s everyday life and add to the accomplishment of these qualities. Architects need to turn back to the contemporary city, investigate and question the forgotten space, and establish new strategies for re- developing these sites. Thinking space as “a uniformly extended material to be modeled in various ways” and collaborating with sound artists, the architect can uncover hidden qualities and experiences to experiment with, introduce innovative ideas and use these to give the forgotten a new meaning and use.

*Coming from a musical and art background, Antonis Stylianou studied Architecture at The University of Sheffield, and is currently a final-year postgraduate student in Masters of Architecture at Queen’s. His passion in architecture, music and art has led to organising various musical events which introduced new ideas about sound/music in space and how these are perceived by the audience. The Humanities Research Dissertation in the MArch course has given Antonis the opportunity to examine how sound affects the perception of public space, through a number of case studies where architects and sound artists worked together.*

**Aonghus McEvoy (Creative Arts). 'Voices within the Urban Soundspace'.**Drawing from fieldwork undertaken in Belfast this talk will present personal investigations of the city’s sonority, focusing on the voice as an element of the sounding environment. From public address systems to overheard and fleeting conversations the voice acts as an acoustic manifestation of the body, making sense of, and performing relationships to, space and place. Influenced by the work of artists such as Henri Chopin, Bob Cobbing and Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia I have focused upon listening to the sonority of these situated voices and investigating the implicit narratives and histories they present. This talk seeks to focus on the voice as an overlooked but essential element towards understanding the urban environment.

*Aonghus McEvoy is an artist and musician currently completing a Phd which explores ethnographic studies of environmental sound in Belfast City. Aonghus is a musician and artist who utilizes composed and improvised music, collage, sound poetry, installation, text, and field recordings to explore the implicit narratives and latent surreal aspects of everyday life.*

**Diogo Alvim and Matilde Meireles (Creative Arts). 'Trigger Place: A game of sound and architecture'.** Architecture is inseparable from sound. Through resonance and reverberation, sound interacts with buildings contributing to the creation of an atmosphere. It creates in the present the qualities that affect our perception of the spaces, and helps configure the image (the memory) we keep of it. Sound happens in time and is never fixed, it keeps changing, it keeps happening, and so it is constantly compromising architecture, the way we perceive it, the way it affects us, the way it keeps happening. Architecture, as sound, keeps happening. It is constantly changing and being created by the things that happen in it, the things we perceive in it, the things we happen in it. Thus, a site-specific sound art work can also be a work of architecture - an event that changes architecture because it changes its sound, its use, and the collective memory of its history. It creates different images, recognises different meanings, catalyses different ideas.

To illustrate this we will talk about *PLAY* - a multilayered site-specific performance presented at the Belfast Festival in October 2014. The project was developed through the collaboration between sound artists Diogo Alvim and Matilde Meireles, with the participation of experimental filmmaker Richard O’Sullivan. It was specially conceived for the annex of the Physical Education Centre at Queen’s University Belfast, composed of two squash courts and two racquetball courts, and built between 1969-1971 - around the same time that Edward Krasinski and Alvin Lucier created some of their groundbreaking works. The sounds of the squash court succumb to the acoustic phenomena extrapolated in Lucier’s Vespers and I am sitting in room. On the other hand, Krasinski is evoked through the activation of the space with a never-ending horizontal line that intersects all things, levelling divergent layers of reality, and revealing unexpected connections. Two squash players trigger the events that will be developed throughout the performance. They initiate a dialogue with the far-reaching resonances of the space, inviting the musicians to play a part in the game as well.

***Diogo Alvim****(Lisbon, 1979), studied architecture and composition in Lisbon. Currently finishing a PhD in Composition/Sonic Arts at SARC focusing on the crossings between music and architecture. He has presented his work in several events in Portugal, UK, France, Germany, Slovenia and Brazil. He often collaborates with other artists/performers and writes music for dance and theatre.*

***Matilde Meireles****is a sound artist whose work explores the conceptual and creative crossover between visual arts and sound encompassing areas such as site-specificity, soundscape and design. Her works have been exhibited in Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany and Brazil. Also she collaborates with Aidan Deery to form the field-recording duo bunú.*