

The Positive Soundscape Project

A re-evaluation of environmental
sound

Souder Spaces conference, London Zoo, 14 March 2007

Team

Mags Adams – Social science, Salford

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Paul Jennings – Sound quality, Warwick

Chris Plack – Psychoacoustics, Lancaster

Aims

- To acknowledge the relevance of positive soundscapes, to move away from a focus on negative noise and to identify a means whereby the concept of positive soundscapes can effectively be incorporated into planning;
- The evaluation of the relationship between the acoustic/auditory environment and the responses and behavioural characteristics of people living within it.

Objectives

- To determine what individuals/groups perceive to be component parts of a soundscape.
- To determine how individuals value these components.
- To classify types of soundscape.
- To determine what factors constrain and influence the creation of soundscapes.
- To establish perceptual differences in soundscapes between normal and impaired (visual & hearing) subjects.
- To bring together artistic, social, psychological and physical science and manufacturing approaches.
- To engage and inform the public about the creation and perception of their local soundscape.

Method Highlights

- Soundwalks -> lab stimuli
- Focus groups -> design of lab expts
- Laboratory soundscape scales -> fMRI
- Soundscape sequencer toy -> artist commissions
- Favourite Sound of Anytown -> Policy report
- fMRI images -> soundscape exhibition
- ... and so on.

Pilot project

- Manchester, now
- Multiple simultaneous data collection
- Test methodologies, links, ideas, assumptions
- Art
- Soc sci
- Quantitative

Pilot – Quant - Warwick

- Free verbal response of subjects
- Analyse responses -> Extract dimensions in judgement
- Compare (rate) soundscapes in one dimension at a time
- Effect of context – visual stimulus, etc.

Pilot – Quant - Salford

- Record/reproduction – binaural, stereo, sound field
- Length of stimulus
- Bass level (masking / crowding)
- Source characterisation
- Synthetic soundscapes – real enough?

Further information

- If you'd like to find out more or receive news updates and research results from the Positive Soundscape Project, contact the project administrator, Joanne Leach at joanneleach@postmaster.co.uk