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Researching Place during a Pandemic: Unintentional Ex Situ Listening

BETHAN MATHIAS PROSSER

University of Brighton

ABSTRACT

Research practices were adapted and adjusted to continue researching place during the global pandemic. This paper explores this pandemic impact through reflecting on the researcher's experiences of carrying out doctoral place-based research during 2020. Whilst developing a socio-sonic-mobile methodology, a key adaptation has been to configure technology differently to enable remote research. These conditions force the researcher into an extreme 'unintentional ex situ' position. Within these methods and emerging practices, the mediating technology and 'unintentional ex situ' researcher positionality is entangled in complex ways. In order to explore this entanglement, a sound collage was created from the behind-the-scenes audio material recorded whilst carrying out research remotely. The reader is invited to listen to this Unintentional Ex Situ Listening sound piece before critical reflections are shared about participatory, remotely-supported research practices. Applying the idea of audio recordings as 'self-reflexive narratives' (Anderson and Rennie 2016), three journeys are identified from the researcher's experiences of making and listening-back to this sound piece: the research, methods and research practice journeys. The sound collage is offered as a way of sonically exploring the ideas and dynamics surrounding 'in/ex situ' in research and opening up questions about the impact of the pandemic on research practices.

KEYWORDS

Place, Listening, Research Practice, Pandemic, Methods

Introduction

During the global Covid-19 pandemic, we were all been forced to adapt, adjust and change to varying degrees.[1] Within UK academia, adaptations included moving to online teaching and finding safer ways to carry out research that minimise risk, to us and others, and adhere to shifting lockdown restrictions. As we continue adapting and adjusting to different crises, how can we begin to understand the impact of the pandemic on research practices? And specifically, for those interested in place, how has researching place during a pandemic changed our research practices? This paper will explore these questions through examining and reflecting on the researcher's experiences of carrying out doctoral place-based research during 2020. This PhD project uses listening activities to explore residential experiences of urban seaside gentrification and displacement injustices on the UK south coast. A digital pivot was undertaken in order to carry out sensory research with residents living in three seaside sites from July-November 2020. Combining mobile and sound methods, a socio-sonic-mobile methodology has been developed that was responsive to changing lockdown restrictions and sensitive to a range of

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participant circumstances. Residents undertook individual listening walks or listening-at-home activities supported remotely by the doctoral researcher, which generated material and formed the basis for online or telephone follow-up interviews. Therefore, in this case, one of the main adaptations was the use of technology to enable enforced remote research, which positioned the researcher 'unintentionally ex situ'.

Within these methods and emerging practice, technology and the 'unintentional ex situ' researcher positionality are entangled in complex and interesting ways. To explore this entanglement, I created a sound piece from the behind-the-scenes audio material recorded whilst carrying out research remotely. I offer this sound collage as a way of bringing alive this 'unintentional ex situ' listening practice and researcher positionality. This paper draws out reflections on pandemic research experiences from the perspective of the researcher and raises questions about the mediating role of technology, participatory dynamics and researcher positionality in sensory and place-based research. Before offering this listening opportunity to the reader, I will position this research practice within existing literatures of sound and mobile methods (new mobilities paradigm, acoustic ecology, sensory ethnography and sound art). I will then provide an overview of my socio-sonic-mobile methodology that was adapted for researching place during a pandemic. The reader is invited to listen to the Unintentional Ex Situ Listening sound piece, which aims to take listeners through a sonic journey of the research methods and plays with the continuum of 'in/ex situ'. A transcript and text description of the piece is included to aid accessibility for all readers and recognise aural diversity (Drever 2019). This will be followed by reflective discussion that examines the piece as a 'self-reflexive narrative' of the researcher (Anderson and Rennie 2016) and how the participatory aspects of the research were enhanced by the pandemic conditions. Discussion will be structured around three journeys: the research journey; the methods journey; and the research practice journey. Concluding remarks will summarise the reflective learning we might gleam from these sonic explorations on the impact of the pandemic on place-research practices.

Place-based sensory methodologies

Methodologies that focus on researching place through the senses have a long history of positioning the researcher 'in situ'. This includes sensory ethnography (Pink 2009), acoustic ecology (Schafer 1994; Westerkamp 2002) and urban ambiance studies (Thibaud 2013). In the early stages of developing a socio-sonic-mobile methodology for investigating urban seaside gentrification, my doctoral project focused on the use of soundwalks as a way of exploring residents' experiences of their changing neighbourhoods. This section will therefore provide an overview of these foundational literatures from which a Covid-induced digital pivot has been made. Looking at sound and mobile methods, I will discuss the continuum of 'in/ ex situ' within research practices as well as the notion of field recordings as 'self-reflexive narratives' (Anderson and Rennie 2016).

This doctoral research project is informed by the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller and Urry 2006) in the way it conceives of place, approaches the topic of gentrification and utilises methods. Following in the lineage of Doreen Massey (2005, 141), place can be understood as 'the coming together of the previously interrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing' and bound within this is an 'understanding how 'things' in movement combine to constitute place and the perception of place' (Pink 2011, 34). In methodological terms, a distinctive feature of mobile methods is the idea that movement itself might somehow be fundamental to finding out things (Smith and Hall 2016, 156). Walking interviews are increasingly used to explore the link between self, place, and how places are created by people's movements (Evans and Jones 2011, 850). Walking interviews situate the research, most often both the

research participants and researcher, in context within the physical and social space of the study (Fincham et al. 2010, 4-6). Walking through the sites under investigation brings proximity to the topic as well as creating an informal environment that allows participants to recollect and articulate their experiences (Fincham et al. 2010, 2). Mobile methods crossover and complement sensory approaches. Walking is 'necessarily multisensory' (Murray and Järviluoma 2019, 5) and considered an embodied practice that creates multiple readings of the city (Certeau 1984). Within mobile methods, researcher and participant positionings can be situated across a continuum of 'in/ex situ' with a variety of technology usages for capturing data, which includes drawing maps, audio-recordings, photos and/or audio-visual and geographical information systems (GIS) taken by participants or researchers.

Soundwalks hold a degree of synergy with mobile methods, using the practical methodology of movement to re-localise our listening perspectives (Chapman 2013). Soundwalks as a research method offer an intriguing mix of 'simplicity and complexity' (Behrendt 2018, 252). In its broadest sense, they 'combine a specific form of human mobility – walking – with a specific way of sensory attention – listening' (Behrendt 2018, 252). There are a variety of soundwalk purposes and practices within the field of sound studies, which has witnessed renewed interest since the sensorial turn and corresponding notions of embodiment and emplacement (Bull 2018; Gallagher and Prior 2014, 267). Many of the foundations of soundwalks were laid by the World Soundscape Project providing an epistemology in listening, methodological toolkit, terminology, different listening practices and soundwalks (Bull 2018, xxii; Schafer 1994; Westerkamp 2002). Within acoustic ecology, soundwalks aim to increase people's awareness of their own sonic environment (Arkette 2004, 160; Bull 2018, xxii). More recent developments that combine sound and mobile methods include urban ambience studies commented walks (Thibaud 2011) and sensobiographic walking (Järviluoma 2021).

Taking into account all the variations that have developed within research and arts-based practices, Frauke Behrendt (2018, 252) argues that overall soundwalks constitute a 'spatio-temporal, embodied, situated, multi-sensory and mobile practice'. This focus on being physically situated is common throughout soundwalk approaches. When used to generate, for example, knowledge through ethnography or art practice through field recordings, there is commonly a focus on sensing the environment through the researcher/practitioner being physically 'in situ'. This relates to wider onto-epistemological underpinnings for place-based sensory research, such as discussed by Sarah Pink (2011) when exploring notions of embodiment and emplacement within a theory of place:

> Thus, we might start thinking of the body as part of a total environment and recognise that the body provides us not simply with embodied knowing and skills that we use to act on or in that environment, but that the body itself is simultaneously physically transformed as part of this process. (Pink 2011, 347)

Within Pink's approach, multi-sensoriality is integral to both taking part in research and a researcher's craft, including the idea of the emplaced researcher (Lacey et al. 2019; Pink 2009, 2; 2011). Soundwalks within arts-based practice similarly place an emphasis on what can be generated through bodily sensations (Brown 2017; Mohr 2007; Westerkamp 2002). Isobel Anderson and Tullis Rennie (2016) are sound artists who purposefully create narrated audio recordings to make explicit the presence of the recordist. They view field recordings as 'subjective, expressive, meaningful and personal to the recordist, rather than purely objective documents of sound environments' (Anderson and Rennie 2016, 222). Chiming with Pink's

emplaced ethnographer, they prominently place the recordist physically in the 'field' and approach field recordings as 'self-reflexive narratives' (2016). Audio capture of soundwalks are therefore documents of their makers, which they argue is an alternative form of knowledge (Anderson and Rennie 2016, 224). Making explicit the capturing process raises interesting questions about the intersection between sound walking and technology, which will be explored through reflecting on 'Unintentional Ex Situ Listening' sound piece.

Given this focus on being physically situated as a researcher/practitioner within sensory place-based methodology literatures, how can we make sense of research that is forced to be undertaken remotely? Researching place in a pandemic necessitates negotiating national lockdown restrictions as well as university policies that limit travel, fieldwork and face to face research activities. The only way to carry out research in this context is from afar, using configurations of technology that connect with people and places separate from our own researcher location. These specific research conditions challenge the notion of fieldwork and conventional positionings of the researcher 'in the field'. The extreme 'unintentional ex situ' researcher positionality engendered by the pandemic has so far been relatively absent in existing discussion within place-based sensory methods literatures. There are many examples in creative, mobile and participatory approaches of researchers removing themselves from the research activities in order for participants to have more control, power and/or creative time away from the researcher (Mannay 2016; Pauwels 2010). This includes photo voice (Wang 2006), participatory video (Butcher and Dickens 2016) and participatory mapping projects (Herlihy and Knapp 2003). In this doctoral project, the pandemic forced the development of what might be deemed 'participatory soundwalks', supported remotely by a researcher to explore a resident's relationship to a place. The practical dynamics of this removed researcher positioning will be discussed in the next section, before using the *Unintentional Ex Situ Listening* piece to further explore questions of 'in/ex situ' practices.

Unintentional Ex Situ Listening Methods

This section details the socio-sonic-mobile methodology developed within this doctoral project, which draws on the above sound and mobile method. This methodology is guided by a participatory ethos (Bergold and Thomas 2012), which helps us pay attention to researcher and participant positionality, roles and relationships. Listening and sound are threaded throughout the research process, making all forms of listening explicit. Figure 1. lays out the key components and procedures of this method. It shows the points of convergence and the areas of choice for participants. There are four parts that all participants experience: a deep listening exercise, an immersive listening experience away from the researcher, a way of capturing this experience, and detailed discussion with the researcher about the experience. There are two main options that a participant chooses: the type of listening activity and how they capture their observations about the experience.

In addition, the participant chooses where they do the listening: either the route taken around the neighbourhood as a listening walk or where in their home they listen. As part of the decision over capturing tools, participants also decide what technology to use, for the capture and to communicate with the researcher. Enabling participants to have these choices in the data production is part of the participatory ethos of the methodology. But it also creates the requisite flexibility for conducting research within a pandemic, allowing activities to take place during varying states of lockdown restrictions and perceived risks of movement. Whilst being responsive to government policy, it supports participants to make their own assessment of risk, allowing those shielding or uncomfortable with walking around the neighbourhood to

participate from their home.

Twenty-two seaside residents were recruited across three neighbourhoods in Brighton, Worthing and St Leonards-on-Sea through a mixture of online social networks and targeting streets with a postcard mailshot. For more accessible communication purposes, I refer to this soundwalk method as a listening walk. The listening walk option was chosen by nineteen residents, roughly split in half between option A and B (see Figure 1). Three residents chose to do listening-at-home activities and recorded their observations themselves. This has amounted to: 10 commented walk audio recordings, 17 participant recorded audio recordings, 235 participant photos, 53 participant video recordings, 22 pages of drawings and five pages of notes.

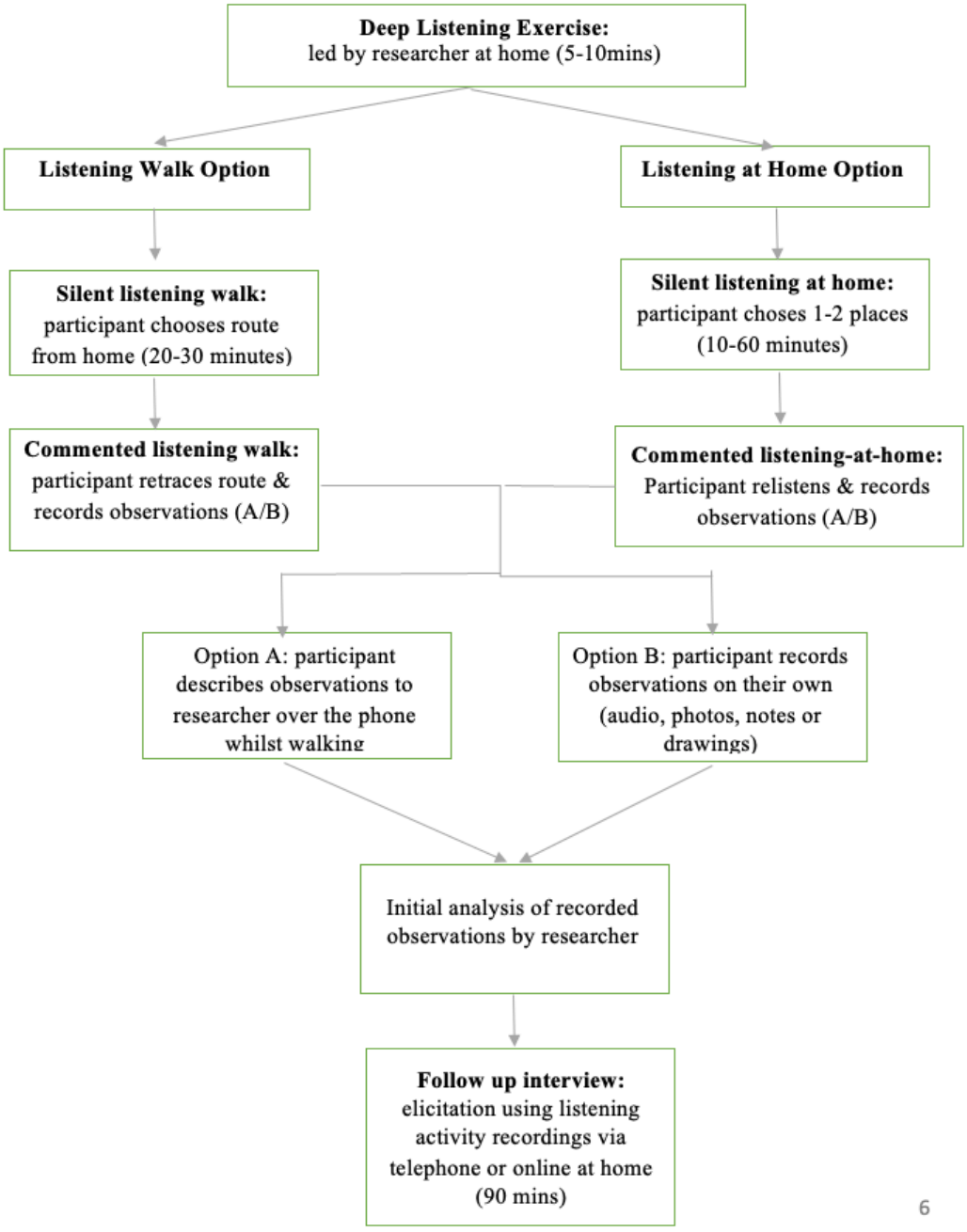

Figure 1. Listening-Walking-Elicitation Method

Balancing accessibility for participants and the need to record data for elicitation and analysis purposes was a challenge in developing the method. Figure 2. shows the technology set up. The equipment and software options were developed using the principle of supporting participants to make use of technology they already use and therefore familiar with. This was a way of minimising risks over data security as well as maximising accessibility. Technology is always part of research practice, but it is often an understated companion in the form of a Dictaphone or laptop. The specific pandemic conditions therefore created different technological configurations, which in this project I was completely dependent on and therefore significantly impacted my research positionality and practice. The distinct qualities of sound walking as a 'spatio-temporal, embodied, situated, multi-sensory and mobile practice' (Behrendt 2018, 252) still hold for the research participant, but are mediated by technology for the remote researcher. Playing with the continuum of 'in/ex situ' positionings is one way of exploring this mediation through technology, which the sound collage and reflective discussion explores from the perspective of the researcher.

The practices that emerged from being in an extreme and 'unintentional ex situ' position as a researcher are entangled with the technology that enables and mediates this positionality. This also extends what can be considered 'the field'. In an attempt to explore this entanglement, and keeping listening at the heart of the project, I created a sound piece titled Unintentional Ex Situ Listening. It uses audio recordings that can be considered behind-the-scenes material. Samples have been clipped from audio recordings which do not make up the core research 'data' analysed in the project but are still part of the field recordings. The 'field' in this project extends from the participants' neighbourhoods through into the researcher's domestic space. Absent from Figure 2. are the places within which the technology operates. Participants' devices moved between their homes and their neighbourhoods, whilst 'my laptop' remained static throughout, located in my domestic space that had been transformed into my lockdown academic workspace. This sound collage includes the sounds of the technology (e.g., dial tones and distortions), my own voice with anonymised participant voices (taken from distorted recordings or layered) and the intermingled soundscapes of participants' rooms and my own (where the interviews took

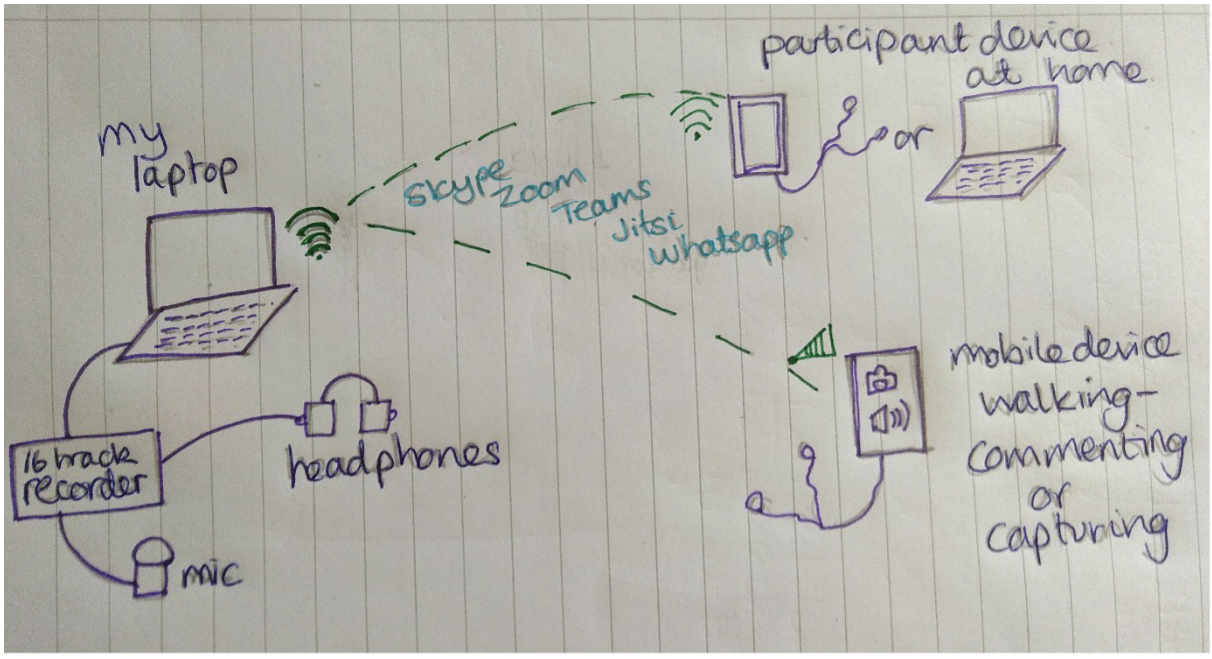

Figure 2. Drawing of researcher & participant technology (drawing by author)

place).

Drawing on Anderson and Rennie's (2016) idea of field recordings being 'self-reflexive narratives', the piece is created as a linear narrative. I have purposefully made use of my researcher voice to guide the listener through this narrative. It takes the listener through the sequence of the method from the deep listening, through the listening walk (option A) and interview. In this way the flowchart visualisation in Figure 1 has been used as a score, which the piece aims to bring alive. This piece and the following reflective discussion share the researcher's experiences of researching place remotely during a pandemic. Although necessarily entangled with the participants' positionalities and experiences, within the scope and purposes of this paper, I focus on the researcher's perspective rather than the participants.

Unintentional Ex Situ listening sound piece

You are invited to listen to the sound piece by clicking on the link below:

https://soundcloud.com/user-334536613/ex-situ-listening

A transcript and description of the audio is included in the Appendix as well as included in stamp-marked comments on SoundCloud.

Reflective discussion

Listening to this sound piece with the accompanying score (Figure 1), there are two main parts to depict methodological progression. Part One (00:00 – 01:52) is the deep listening exercise and commented listening walk option A. Part Two (01:53 – 05:16) is the follow up interview. There is a clear difference in the amount of space given to the visualisation of these parts in Figure 1. and the amount of time given to these parts in this 'audiolisation'. Five boxes (Figure 1) were required to adequately depict all the different elements of the listening activities and only one box to communicate the well-known interview method. Yet when explored using a self-reflexive narrative approach to field recordings (Anderson and Rennie 2016), Part One takes only 1.5 minutes in order to illustrate the limited involvement of the researcher in these activities and also the intensity of experiencing listening walks remotely. It was only through creating this piece that I was able to sonically explore these 'unintentional ex situ' researcher dynamics and better understand the research practices that emerged for researching place during a pandemic. This section will therefore apply the idea of self-reflexive narratives to critically reflect on this creative process. Three journeys are identified and discussed in turn: the research journey, the methods journey and the research practice journey.

The research journey

Research design is an involved process including in-depth planning, care over ethical considerations, negotiation of ethics committees and the generation of multiple planning artefacts (e.g., ethics applications and interview schedules). This is illustrated in the beginning invitation of the sound collage 'to close your eyes' (00:00-00.08), which is sampled from a pre-recorded deep listening exercise made for a pilot workshop. The tone is calm, measured and deliberate, but we then hear a change in the background atmosphere for the next question. This question is sampled from a listening walk recording made before a Brighton resident took to the streets to silently listen on their own. From my voice recorded using a typical researcher's piece of equipment, an audio recorder (Zoom H2n), we shift to a voice recorded using the same recorder, but this time connected to headphones, a multi-track recorder (Zoom R16), two laptops (mine and the participant's) and Zoom software. The introduction of this technology (as illustrated

in Figure 2) is made clearly audible as we next hear the beginning Skype calling tone (00:26), which is followed by a series of different dialling tones and a phone interference sound.

This beginning sequence illustrates my researcher experience of moving from the planned and controlled through anticipation to immediate stumbles and exasperation with the technology not working and/or participants' different uses of it. In this sampled instance, the failed Skype call made through the laptop was to a participant in St Leonard's who resorted to phoning me on my mobile due to software issues. This broke us out of my carefully arranged set up. Part One continues with this feeling, progressing through another jauntier Skype tone into a chorus of hellos. An upbeat tempo moves us through these greetings, my prompting questions and a roar of distorted participant observations, before an abrupt quiet and tentative goodbye. Listening to this first part, we are made aware sonically of the raw, messy form that 'data' presents itself. Our careful research design is disrupted by the unplanned and unintentional as we try to operationalise our methods.

Part Two, in contrast, moves into a calmer atmosphere where my researcher voice is more present and the tone of interactions friendlier and relaxed. It starts with the now familiar Skype-calling tone (01:53-01:58), but the sounds of technology are less explicit throughout. The technology is made audible mainly through my own voice: narrating sharing the screen (02:10-02:20), leaving the call open during the break (02:27-02:30) and mentioning screen fatigue (04:32-04:35). During the break section (02:28-04:30), we hear the sounds of more familiar research technology, that of shuffling paper and scribbling pen. These sounds illustrate the progression through the research stages of starting to organise material and make sense of it. These sounds in this way 'audiolise' the 'initial analysis' box in Figure 1. as I circle important pieces of 'data' that I wish to ask the participant about and analyse in more detail.

We can therefore see the progression through these two parts as illustrative of the research journey. As a researcher we move from careful planning, anticipation and messy 'data' collection into sorting, organising and analysing. But what does this mean for understanding the impact of the pandemic? How does a focus on 'in/ex situ' dynamics' help us understand research practices? In this case, the entanglement of technology and being 'unintentionally ex situ' has led to artefacts of the research journey that we may not otherwise have had. Conducted in person, the research would have captured our greetings, my guiding narration and, if captured during a walking interview, the environmental distortion sounds. It is less likely to have captured the behind-the-scenes material, such as the technology fails or the scribbling of notes. But more importantly, a focus on these non-research sounds prompted by thinking about 'in/ex situ' brings this material and dynamics into view (earshot). The heavyweight mediating role of technology within these pandemic conditions makes us more aware of particular aspects of our research practice. The pandemic conditions disrupt conventional ways of researching place and creates new awareness, in the same way that 'de-familiarisation' techniques are used in creative methods to generate knowledge (Mannay 2016). It sharpens our critical senses and opens up opportunities for deeper reflections on our own research practices. Whilst the research journey discussed in this section points to universal and broader aspects of researcher experiences, the next journeys will look in more detail at dynamics specific to this doctoral project to draw out such critical reflections.

The methods journey

Methodologically, the progression through Parts One and Two depicts the movement from participatory listening to more conventional interview tools. The technological stumbles and chaotic distortion sonify how the process is less under my control as a researcher during the

listening activities. I am led by the participants in their choice of activities, where they listen, routes they take, what they decide to capture and what technology they chose. The participant takes up the position of being situated in the place being researched and the technology enables this place to be extended out and connected to my distant location. The participant is therefore physically exposed to the environmental conditions of that place, moving outside through their neighbourhood. Due to the project focusing on urban seaside gentrification, this frequently involved participants walking by the sea, on the beach and encountering high winds. These conditions can be heard in the quite painful distortion (01:15-01:46) which makes for uncomfortable listening.

As a researcher, listening through my headphones to participants walking in their neighbourhoods felt intense, which this distortion represents. There were many aspects to this listening experience that were out of my control including the nature of the soundscapes walked through and the behaviour of the technology. The distortion clips are sampled from a listening walk in Worthing on a very windy day. However, on a similarly windy day along the same strip of beach, another participant sounded clear and undistorted. Listening back, there is an intermingling of different types of roars and rushing sounds surrounding the participant's voice. To my ears, I feel I can make out the sound-sources of waves, wind and also something computer-generated and machine-like. The technology is also making itself heard. In amongst all of this, listening back makes me remember how I pushed my headphones into my ears and closed my ears to try and make out what the participant was saying. This 'unintentional ex situ' listening was an intense sensory experience that remains vivid.

Part One helps us therefore explore what it is like to give up control when researching and utilise participatory methods. The pandemic adaptations made my methods more participatory, which had positive impacts on my research findings. I was made to be more reliant on residents being situated in their neighbourhoods because I could not be, making their knowledge and experiences central to understanding gentrification processes. Often when participants pointed out a sound, asking hopefully 'can you hear that?', the technology did not allow me to hear that sound-source. This made the elicitation element of the method even more crucial to generating knowledge about experiences of urban seaside gentrification. Moving into Part Two, we can hear the elicitation and interviewing techniques. This includes my commentary on asking more questions about 'living by the sea and some more about the sounds and changes in the area' (04:39-04:47) and the sharing of a video as a reminder (04:50-04:52). The technology used for online interviewing effectively enabled this elicitation. Less frantic than in Part One, the different parts of the interview are made clear in my narration. This reflects the re-assertion of control by the researcher within an interview process as I lead and decide on the questions and structure.

The break part of the interview would usually be viewed as unremarkable in an interview schedule. However, it is a significant section in this sound college, lasting two minutes (02:28-04:30). The samples that are layered in this section could be considered non-research sounds as the recorder was left on out of convenience rather than with any recording intention. Yet these two minutes of layered break samples can help us think about 'in/ex situ' dynamics of research. As already discussed, the 'field' is extended by the technology, which raises interesting time-space questions about what constitutes place methodologically and conceptually. During Part One, the combination of environmental conditions and technology behaviour created distortion, resulting in an intense sensory researcher experience. During Part Two, this takes on a different dynamic, which is represented by the break. After the first door sound, we hear the 'Coo-uu' of one participant's wife calling to them followed by other domestic sounds from

both the participants' homes and my own. We hear doors opening and closing, which makes prominent the sense of being in private indoor spaces. We also hear the sounds of children's TV, revealing family homes, as well as the intimate close slurping sound of drinking. This section therefore makes audible the ways our domestic spaces are connected and intermingled through the technology.

This break section also points to a researcher unconventionally carrying out interviews in their own home. The use of our private spaces would usually raise ethical concerns pre-pandemic. Yet enforced working from home has disrupted our customary understanding of research settings and our corresponding research practices. The next section will delve further into these pandemic-impacted research practices by looking at the third journey identifiable in the sound piece.

The research practice journey

In this final identified journey, I will reflect on the research practice that have emerged in response to the pandemic whilst facilitating this specific method. As discussed, Part One is intended to feel more intense, messy and chaotic. This reflects the experimental feeling with which these methods were first undertaken. Just as the pandemic and first lockdown hit the UK, I was due to begin recruitment for group in-person soundwalks. Without knowing how long the restrictions and pandemic would last, the digital pivot was intended as a stop-gap. Viewed as temporary, these adaptive methods were undertaken with the awareness that they might fail. However, as we settled into the daily rhythms of living with Covid-19, it became apparent that these tentative experiments would need to constitute all of my fieldwork.

In Part One, we hear the phrase 'can you hear me?' repeated twice (00:56 and 01:20). This phrase became a common trope in our everyday pandemic lives as many people moved to meeting through online platforms such as Zoom and Teams. The tone taken when sharing a screen and asking what the other person can see (02:10-02:19) are phrases that have become more commonplace as we increasingly use this technology. Consequently, the sound collage moves from the tentative into repeatable phrases to reflect the way my research practice moved from experimental to rehearsed procedure. When listening back to the audio recordings and deciding what to sample, it became apparent that there were frequently repeated sounds. The different software dial tones became increasingly familiar. The phrases I used to guide participants also became more consistent. Even considering the unexpected nature of data collection (as discussed in the first journey), repeating the method 22 times created a particular way of doing things. Consequently, changes mediated by the technology to my research practice were unavoidable.

At a basic level, I gained more competence with the technology, which is depicted in the decrease in explicit sounds of technology in the sound collage. We are more likely to hear the sounds of technology and notice technology when it is not working for us, as expressed in the frustrated sigh in Part One. In this respect, I became more entangled with the technology, more accustomed to wearing headphones, pressing the right buttons and navigating whilst talking. It started to become less noticeable, perhaps like a Dictaphone in a conventional face-to-face interview, or a pen when writing ethnographically. Something shifted, from the disrupted unfamiliar to the mundane every day. The technology worked to facilitate the process in effective ways. For example, being able to share a map to plot the participant's listening walk route and sharing media that they had captured as a recollection tool.

As my research practice developed, I became more comfortable and crucially more able to

develop good relationships with my participants despite the physical distance. Participants themselves became more comfortable with the technology as the months passed from July to November 2020. In my initial technology review, I prioritised participants using software they already had and envisaged using a number of different platforms. But Zoom became the dominant software that most people recruited were already using. Interestingly, this was not differentiated by age as might have been assumed pre-pandemic (Matthews et al. 2019; Seifert et al. 2018).

As we reach the end of the sound collage, we hear my commentary on 'technology is a funny thing' followed by laughter and warm goodbyes (04:56-05:16). This sonifies the connection I was able to make with participants, which was facilitated by the method. Participants were given a degree of power and control over the listening activities, positioning them as experts of their neighbourhoods. Often participants readily took on the role of tour guides or journalistic reporters, whilst I eagerly took on the role of a restricted researcher hungry for information about the places they knew so well. By the time we met online or on telephone for the interview, there was therefore a more relaxed tone to proceedings.

Consequently, underpinning these dynamics, is the importance of a participatory approach, which I was able to apply to listening methods. My research practice developed through giving a degree of control over to my participants, necessitated through trying to research places remotely during a pandemic. The 'in/ex situ' dynamics and entanglement with mediating technology raise interesting questions about what are deemed privileged positions of knowledge when researching place. As a researcher, I placed continued importance on the physically situated and privileged position that residents could take, whilst I was forced to stay static by my laptop. Reflecting on this entanglement reveals my researcher desires to use my senses without technology mediation. But the ability of this project to generate rich findings about gentrifying neighbourhoods without being physically present as a researcher challenges these common research assumptions, strengthening the possible roles of technology in future participatory research.

Conclusion

Critically reflecting on the overall research, methods and research practice journey identified through both creating and listening back to this sound collage, I have been able to explore the entanglement of technology and being 'unintentionally ex situ' as a researcher. The first journey suggests there are universal aspects to the researcher experience that persist in spite of the pandemic impact. However, the idea of the researcher being 'unintentionally ex situ' creates opportunities for reflecting anew on our research practice. Framing the audio recordings generated in this project as 'self-reflexive narratives' (Anderson and Rennie 2016) has allowed critical reflections about the second identified methods journey. These reflections bring out the participatory dynamics of this method and the shifting control a researcher has over the unfolding research process. But most distinct to understanding the pandemic impact are questions raised about what constitutes 'the field' in place-based research that is remotely enabled through technology. Being remote creates intense and potentially disorientating sensory researcher experiences whilst also creating unconventional connections between researcher and researched domestic spaces. These all have implications for our understanding of place both methodologically and theoretically.

The final research practice journey shows how this sonic exploration has allowed me to identify shifts in my research practice. As both myself and participants became accustomed to the technology, my practice shifted from being experimental to rehearsed procedure. There are many

aspects that have not been able to be explored within the scope of this paper, namely how existing technology-related and media studies can help us understand our changing research practices and participants perspectives, experiences and positionalities. However, identifying the significance of a participatory approach in all of these journeys opens up questions for future inquiry on place-based methodologies. Why do we privilege the status of being physically 'in situ' in knowledge production and why do we feel the need to occupy this position as researchers? How can we further understand the mediating role of technology and its entanglement with 'in/ex situ' dynamics? The pandemic disrupted these customary research practices and created alternatives that may help us renew our research practices moving forwards.

Appendix: Unintentional Ex Situ Listening sound collage transcript

Part One: Listening Walk

[00:00:00]

Researcher voice: So, if you're sitting comfortably, I invite you to close your eyes.

[Background room noise hum starts and quality of voice changes, feels like the speaker is at a distance]

Researcher's voice: and then starting to become aware of the sounds around you. What can you hear?

Researcher's fingers: Click-click

[Background humm increases with a scuffle and shuffle of an object next to the mic]

Skype: De-dwunk-de (start up tone)

Skype: Dhudub dhudub dhudub dhudub wwyeer (heartbeat pulsing of calling tone followed by not answered end tone)

Researcher's voice: Ohh

[scuffle and shuffle of an object next to the mic]

Researcher's phone: dededezzzzzz (interference) dum dum duuum dum dum duum dede (musical ringtone)

Researcher's voice: Ohgh (exasperated sigh)

[clunk, scuffle and continued interference)

Researcher's voice: Hello (tentative)

A participant's voice: Hello (muffled words)

Researcher's voice: Hiya.

Researcher's voice: Is that, can you hear me again ok? Um, so yeah. So where are you now? Do you mind, um, retracing your steps or going for a little bit of the walk whilst you talk to me?

Skype: Dum de dum – de- (jauntier but distorted calling tone)

A participant's voice: Hello? (muffled through phone)

Chorus of voices: HelloHello|Hi|Oh hi|How you doing?

Researcher's voice: So do you want to start retracing your steps? So where are you now, are you outside your house? (distorted echo increasing)

Can you hear me okay?

A participant's voice muffled by loud uncomfortable distortion: whudjzsshhmm|that's something I| quite umm|whudjzsshhmm|quickly|whudjzsshhmm

Researcher's voice: Yea?

A participant's voice muffled by increasing loud distortion roar: WHJSZHZHZHZ|by steps|WHJSZHZHZHZ|walking along|WJWHUMWHJ

[crackling rushing sounds behind]

A participant's voice muffled by loud distortion roar and crossed wires sounds: ZHSHZHSHZHS|feels quite quiet but|ZHSHZh

[distortion stops and sudden quiet]

Researcher's voice: Bye, bye (tentative)

A participant's voice: Yea (awkward short laugh)

[quiet clunk]

Skype: dje-wjuum (end call tone)

Part Two: Follow Up Interview

[00:01:52]

[quiet computer click]

Skype: p-p-p-puwm (starting tone) dumm-de-dumm de-dum-de (jaunty calling tone with beat behind)

[clacking picking up sound]

Researcher's voice: Hello?

Chorus of two higher pitched voices: Hi|hi

[child's indistinct 'wooo' in background]

Researcher's voice: How you doing? |gone through, listening to the recordings and I've got a

kind of crib sheet of questions|

Researcher's fainter voice: I wonder if I can...?

[quiet room humm]

Researcher's fainter voice: Yeah, I might just shaa-re screen rather than share a particular screen. Okay. So hopefully can you see...?

A participant's voice: Cool

Researcher's voice: So hopefully, can you seeee…?|Right I'll stop sharing the screen|

[faint dull computer thud]

Researcher's voice: Right I'll err, stop sharing the screen?| Uh, so it's ten to three now, if you want to take, like till just after five to..?| I'll leave it on (awkward laugh)

[background humm, scuffle of object, creaking of chair, faint distant clatter, chirping of birds]

Distant echoey voice: Coo-uuu

[background humm, scribbling and scrawls of pen mixed with scuffle of turning, faint shuffles and plods, click-clack of door handle and clack of door opening and closing,

background humm increases, faint and louder slurps, distant conversation turning into shriller higher pitched and mechanical voice, scribbling and scrawls of pen continue,

chirrup of birds starts up and keeps a regular rhythm, distant distorted wafting music with mechanised singing, deeper distant conversation,

dull computer bluup,

distant distorted wafting music with mechanised singing continues,

thud thud of footsteps, scuffle, clank, scrhuch-schruch, bash-clack

click-clack door closing, scuffle thwack nearer to mic, creeeak-creeeaack of chair

echoey twack twack, scuffle-shuffle, scrawl-scribble]

Closer echoey voice: hm-hm-hm-hm-hm-humm-humm-humm-hm

Researcher's voice: It's helpful just because the other whole screen fatigue, it's good to just have a break for a minute. And also it gives me a chance to kind of tick off what I've kind of| And, um, I wanted to ask you after a break a bit more about living by the seaside [scuffle-shuffle of papers] and some more around the sounds and changes in the area| So I've got actually, I've got up the video that you did of the-

A participant's voice: Yep

Researcher's voice: So I could just play that quickly to remind you|this uncertainty and limbo we have to live with now, which is

Chorus of two voices laughing

Researcher's voice: Oh, thank you. (laughter) Yeah. Technology is always fun.[00:05:00]

Researcher's slightly echoey voice: Brilliant yes, well stay safe in these strange times. And er, thank you again-

Chorus of interspersed voices: Yea |Yea se ya|Bye|Bye-bye|See ya|Bye|Byyye|Cheers|Bye

Skype: dje-wjuum (quiet end call tone)

A final participant's quieter muffled voice: Bye then, thank you, bye-bye

Skype: dje-wjuum (louder end call tone)

Click-clack

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Bethan Mathias Prosser has recently completed her PhD project funded by the ESRC South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership. Her PhD project investigated urban seaside gentrification on the UK South Coast, using listening to explore residential experiences of displacement injustices. Research interests include listening and sound, urban injustices, relationships to place and community-engaged and participatory methods. Bethan holds an MSc in Social Research Methods from the University of Southampton, an MA in Migration and Studies from the University of Sussex, and a BSc in Philosophy and Politics from the University of Bristol. She also has a background of working in the community and voluntary sector and community-university partnerships and continues to work in collaborative community music projects.

Email: b.m.prosser@brighton.ac.uk