

The Positive Soundscape Project

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The Positive Soundscape Project is a multi-disciplinary investigation of soundscape perception which started in October 2006. This paper communicates the aims and design of the project and discusses some early results. The project seeks to develop a rounded view of human perception of soundscapes by combining methods from several disciplines. This will involve a move away from measuring sound just as noise. In this respect artistic and ethnographic conceptions of the soundscape are more advanced than mainstream acoustic ones. (While acoustics is tentatively moving away from LAeq as the sole descriptor, artists have interpreted soundscape perception as multi-modal and multi-dimensional from the beginning.) Thus, the PSP work uses methods from sound art, acoustic ecology and social science as well as techniques from acoustics, psychoacoustics, physiology, neuroimaging and sound quality. The project has an unusual design in that there is a two-way exchange between the different disciplines. For example, an artistically conceived 'soundtoy' will be used to stimulate discussion in social science focus groups and to inspire laboratory psychoacoustic experiments. A pilot investigation of an urban soundscape in the UK has been conducted and preliminary conclusions will be drawn on the benefits and problems of an intensely inter-disciplinary approach.