

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Oxford Brookes University
Unit of Assessment: 35 - Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts
Title of case study: Sound Diaries
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p><i>Sound Diaries</i> impacts through expanding awareness of the roles of sound and listening in daily life. The <i>Sound Diaries</i> website acts as a repository, sketchpad and sandpit for research promoting a principally auditory investigation of the world we live in. Exploring the cultural and communal significance of sounds, <i>Sound Diaries</i> forms a research basis for projects executed both locally and Internationally, in Beijing, Brussels, Tallinn, rural Estonia and Cumbria; within local institutions in Oxford including Schools; and within cultural organisations such as Sound and Music, BBC Radio, Boring 2011 and MoDA (Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture).</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p><i>Sound Diaries</i> is led by Professor Paul Whitty (Director of the Sonic Art Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University) and Dr Felicity Ford (Early Career Fellow in the Sonic Art Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University). Paul Whitty has been employed by Oxford Brookes University since January 2003 as a Senior Lecturer (2003-2007), Reader (2007-2012) and Professor (2012-) in the School of Arts whilst Ford took on her post as an Early Career Researcher with the Sonic Art Research Unit in May 2013. During the research and development phase of <i>Vauxhall Pleasure</i>, (Anna Best & Paul Whitty; 2004-2011)^{1,2,3} and <i>The Domestic Soundscape</i>, (Felicity Ford; 2007-Present)⁴ a variety of field recording practices were developed. Exploring these practices led directly to establishing the <i>Sound Diaries</i> website.</p> <p><i>Sound Diaries</i> (2008- present)⁵ was developed as a collaborative online venture designed to disseminate strategies and research methodologies for recording everyday life in sound. The website acts as both an archive and a platform for a series of research projects curated by Ford and Whitty, and the projects assembled there represent themed sonic investigations into different aspects of daily life. Collecting sounds and texts together on the site rather than keeping them on private hard drives is a way of engaging the public continuously in discourses relating to the sonic documentation of the everyday.</p> <p>Some of the more significant <i>Sound Diaries</i> projects⁶ in terms of impact include:</p> <p><i>Vending machines of the British Isles</i> (2010-2011)⁷: this investigation explored the context of the vending machine and how the sounds of the everyday can engage a broad audience through popular media. It culminated in an appearance at Boring 2011 (http://lucypeel.com/2011/11/22/the-2nd-annual-conference-of-boring-2011/);</p> <p><i>Sound Bank</i> (2009)⁸: this exploration of field recording as a text based activity commenced in 2008, when the <i>Sound Diaries</i> site formed when Ford was inspired by the act of writing texts to accompany field-recordings on the <i>Sound Diaries</i> website to create an archive of sounds recorded purely in notation, drawings or words.</p> <p><i>Sonic Time Capsule</i> (2011)⁹: this project engaged the British Library UK Sound Map project and formed the basis of a themed session at the British Forum for Ethnomusicology 2013 hosted by the Pitt-Rivers Museum.</p> <p><i>Hûrd</i> (2011-2012)¹⁰: this project formed part of a body of work examining differences within the soundscape of the International wool industry. For the <i>Hûrd Diaries</i>, recordings created in Cumbria in January 2012, and in Estonia in May 2012 were presented in pairs with accompanying texts reflecting on the differences, similarities etc. of each pair, and on the cultural significance of such different sounds as Herdwicks running in Cumbria and smaller Estonian native sheep grazing underneath trees. This research activity underpinned the 'cultural exchange' theme of a British Council and MoKS funded residency in Estonia undertaken by Ford (also in 2012) and provided an invaluable online platform for Ford's sonic investigations concerning relationships between the UK and Estonian woollen industries</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. 'Vauxhall Pleasure (2004). Submitted to RAE2008, Oxford Brookes University, UoA67-Music, RA2, P Whitty, Output 4.
2. Arts & Humanities Research Council AH/E002331/1 'Vauxhall Pleasure [2]' Principal Investigator – P Whitty, Award value £38167. Final report available from Oxford Brookes University Research & Business Development Office
3. *Vauxhall Pleasure* (2009). Submitted to REF2014, Oxford Brookes University, UoA35-Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts, REF2, P Whitty, Output identifier 8660.
4. The Domestic Soundscape <http://www.thedomesticsoundscape.com>
5. *Sound Diaries* (2008- Present) www.sound-diaries.co.uk
6. Podcasts produced by Felicity Ford for framework:afield featuring Sound Diaries projects: <http://www.frameworkradio.net/?s=felicity+ford&searchsubmit=Search>
7. *Vending machines of the British Isles* (2010-2011) <http://www.sound-diaries.co.uk/previous-sound-diaries-projects/vending-machines-of-the-british-isles/>
8. *SOUND BANK* (2009) <http://www.sound-diaries.co.uk/previous-sound-diaries-projects/sound-bank/> http://www.bbc.co.uk/oxford/content/articles/2008/03/11/hub_feature.shtml
9. *Sonic Time Capsule* (2011) <http://www.sound-diaries.co.uk/previous-sound-diaries-projects/uk-soundmap-sonic-time-capsule/> <http://makingsoundobjects.wordpress.com>
10. *Hürd* (2011-2012) <http://www.sound-diaries.co.uk/category/recent-projects/hurd/> <http://thedomesticsoundscape.com/wordpress/?p=4001>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The continued development of *Vending machines of the British Isles*; *SOUND BANK*; *Sonic Time Capsule* (2011); and *Hürd* (2011-2012) through *Sound Diaries* has generated opportunities for public engagement through social media, popular conferences and events, exhibitions, and podcast and media appearances.

Vending Machines of the British Isles (2010-2011) was featured at "Boring 2011", a popular conference^{11a, b}, and subsequently in episode 60 of the cult technology podcast 'shiftrunstop'^{11c}. An installed version of the work also featured in the audio architecture exhibition in Beijing and London^{11d}.

When Ford devised *SOUND BANK* she was volunteering on BBC Oxford's cultural magazine show, "The Hub"^{12a} where she publicised the project in a short entitled "Sounds from Life". Additionally, a special edition of *SOUND BANK* was produced for a public gallery show in Reading called "Love is Awesome", and in 2009, Ford published records from December 2008 daily on her own website^{12b} as an advent calendar blog-post series. Site stats reveal that when *SOUND BANK* featured on Ford's site, there were 4,222 hits^{12c}. *SOUND BANK* also drew the attention of Rutger Zuydervelt, who asked Ford to contribute a text to "Take a Closer Listen"^{12d}, 250 copies of which were printed and distributed internationally. *SOUND BANK* archival envelopes were handed out to audience members during a soundwalk co-presented by Ford along with Peter Cusack and Pascal Amphoux as part of the "ARTEFACT" festival in STUK, Leuven in 2012^{12e}. Additionally, *SOUND BANK* featured in the lecture presentation Ford gave at that event^{12f}. Different outputs and incarnations of *SOUND BANK* have impacted across multiple platforms - local radio; gallery exhibition; web-based projects; books and festival event programmes; all underpinned by the research activity of writing textually about sounds on the *Sound Diaries* website.

In 2010, Ford attended a meeting about public engagement with the British Library's "UK Sound Map"^{13a}. *Sonic Time Capsule* was a themed recording project conceived through Ford's exposure to the concepts behind the UK Sound Map,^{13b} and recorded sounds were made available to the public via the map and an associated audioboo account required for contributing to it^{13c}. These sounds were in 2012 repurposed for a "framework:afield" radio show^{13d} foregrounding the key

issues around archiving field recordings for posterity in advance of a related presentation at the British Forum for Ethnomusicology's conference^{13e}. The show has been downloaded 250 times^{13f} as well as being broadcast on Resonance fm (UK); Concertzender (NL); Radio Nospace (Canada); Soundart Radio (UK); Radio Zero (PT); Radio Marš (SI); Radio Campus (BE); WGXC (US); and Radio Paisagem (Br). The recordings made for the UK Sound Map by Ford have to date received 11,348 listens on Audioboo.fm. and in May 2011 recordings from the project constituted 22% of all recordings submitted to the British Library UK sound map project.

Hûrd takes its name from a sound and textiles work presented by Ford in Cumbria in January 2012, and is part of a series of projects conducted by Ford under the KNITSONIK moniker^{14a}. These projects engage stakeholders in the working wool industry through creative uses of sound. Sound-based practices highlight the origins of woollen textiles in distinctive landscapes and social histories, and different strategies are used to draw shepherds, mill-owners and hand-knitters into related discourses. An exhibition held at Rheged arts centre in January 2012 - "Wonder of Wool"^{14b} - featured a hand-knitted speaker system covered in Cumbrian wool, entitled "Hûrd – A KNITSONIK™ PRODUKTION"^{14c}. Through these speakers, field recordings later presented on the *Sound Diaries* site were played - sounds largely originating from the same farms as the wool used to cover the speakers. "Wonder of Wool" attracted 2,850 visitors^{14d}, including a retired shepherd. She wrote to convey her positive feedback on the show - specifically mentioning Ford's work^{14e}. In May 2012, Ford used *Sound Diaries* as a platform for research during a British-Council funded residency in MoKS, Estonia^{14f}. Cumbrian recordings were paired with new recordings made in Estonia and presented on *Sound Diaries* with accompanying texts reflecting on their differences, similarities, and cultural significance^{14g}. This underpinned the 'cultural exchange' theme of the residency, providing an invaluable platform for Ford's investigations concerning relations between British and Estonian woollen industries; it also partially formed the basis for a commended ACE application submitted in 2012^{14h}. Sounds and ideas presented on *Sound Diaries* re: links between wool and landscape were repurposed to give a sonic dimension to the popular NOVEMBER campaign website¹⁴ⁱ. This has had over 100,000 hits since its inception in 2011^{14j} and Ford's baa-tone has been downloaded by over 200 users^{14k}.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

11. Selected examples of impacts from 'Vending Machines of the British Isles'

- a. <http://finalbullet.com/2011/11/20/boring-2011>
- b. <http://poddelusion.co.uk/blog/2011/11/30/boring-conference-2011/>
- c. <http://shiftrunstop.co.uk>
- d. <http://www.audioarchitecture.co.uk/localwhispers.html>

12. Selected examples of impacts from *SOUND BANK*

- a. http://www.bbc.co.uk/oxford/content/articles/2008/03/11/hub_feature.shtml
- b. <http://thedomesticsoundscape.com/wordpress/?p=828>.
- c. Site statistics 'The Domestic Soundscape'
- d. 'Take a closer listen', Rutger Zuydervelt
- e. <http://www.artefact-festival.be/2013/program/detail/60593>
- f. A City Shaped, Leuven. Artefact festival 2013.

13. Selected examples of impacts from *Sonic Time Capsule*

- a. Noise Futures Network Seminar, UK SoundMap, The British Library, 27th November 2009 10.30-13.00).
- b. <http://sounds.bl.uk/sound-maps/uk-soundmap>
- c. <http://audioboo.fm/users/69693/boos>
- d. <http://www.frameworkradio.net/2012/11/395-2012-11-04/>
- e. Virtual Sound Museums Digital Phonographic Archives as Sonic Time Capsules
- f. <https://archive.org/details/2012.11.04FrameworkRadio>

14. Selected examples of impacts from *Hûrd*

- a. <http://www.knitsonik.com>

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- b. <http://www.rheged.com/wow-wonder-wool-and-art-knit-and-stitch>
- c. <http://www.felicityford.co.uk/hurd-a-knitsonik-produktion/>
- d. Visitor numbers and comments from WOW exhibition at Rheged Centre, 14 January -15 April 2013
- e. Corroborative statement author 1: Retired shepherd.
- f. Corroborative statement author 2: MoKS residency letter of support, MoKS Program Coordinator
- g. <http://www.sound-diaries.co.uk/category/recent-projects/hurd/>.
- h. Corroborative statement author 3: ACE Artists' international development fund application letter of support, Country Director, British Council Estonia.
- i. <http://wovember.com/sounds-of-wool/>
- j. Site statistics 'Wovember'
- k. <https://soundcloud.com/felixbadanimal/baa-tone>