**Transcribed Presentations from ‘The Sounds of Criminal Justice’ (University of Sheffield, 13 October 2021)**

**From Knowable Subjects to Knowledge Producers?  Reflections on a Qualitative WhatsApp Survey of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (Dr Leila Ullrich)**

Thank you so much for the kind introduction and thank you so much to Arushi, Dave and Mark for the invitation, it's great to be here today.

Today I want to share some reflections from two qualitative WhatsApp surveys of Syrian refugees that I designed and implemented with the United Nations Development Programme in Lebanon starting in 2017.  But before I do that I first want to briefly consider to what extent this research relates to criminal justice because initially when I received the invitation I wasn't sure whether it did because the questions of the survey were shaped by other knowledge fields, especially development and humanitarianism.  But then when I read, when I read and listened to the WhatsApp messages received from Syrian refugees I realised that they always already operate in criminal justice spaces.  Whether these spaces are designated as public or as private, because they're always already criminalised and it's important here to know that Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 80% of them don't have legal residency.  And I think this story here by a Syrian Refugee illustrates this quite well.

*"While I was praying at the mosque, my motorcycle was robbed"* - so his motorcycle was stolen, all his papers were in the motorcycle, and then he managed to catch the thieves and he went to the police station, but *"****Although I caught the thieves, they considered me guilty.  The head of the police station refused to raise a criminal complaint and he arrested me for 24 hours instead.****Now I have no papers, nor an ID card.  When I went to the public security to get another ID card, they told me to produce a passport, but I don't have money to do that".*

So even though shunned by society the criminal citizen is still a subject with rights, unlike those who are considered illegal.  In fact, a crime cannot really happen against illegal refugees.  And of course the story also illustrates the kafkaesque qualities of the legal system, those who are illegalised are constantly asked to produce their legality in a system that feeds of the pretense of knowledge, if only you knew the legal regulations, you would not be illegal, if only you had the right qualifications, you would be able to earn a decent living.  But let's, let me turn to the survey for a bit.

So my idea of developing a qualitative WhatsApp survey grew out of a sense of frustration with the lack of bottom up and qualitative research with refugees in Lebanon.  Qualitative research is often dismissed as being too slow and too small scale to produce relevant knowledge. And then I realised there is actually a readily available tool to scale up such qualitative research, namely Whats App, for two reasons.

First, WhatsApp, with two billion users worldwide is the most popular messaging app, including among Syrian refugees, in Lebanon 78% refugees use WhatsApp.  And second, WhatsApp has the voice message function which facilitated a much more informal type of communication as we were able to send survey questions out as voice messages and more than 1000 people participated, sharing their perspectives and insights on their safety, their needs, their social relationships and ambitions and hopes for the future.

So the survey was driven by a quest for better knowledge.  Knowledge produced by refugees based on the premise that such knowledge will help to improve the situation.  And as such the survey also fits within a much broader decolonial participatory action research and reflexivity to in the social science that problematises the data knowledge binary and recognises, tries to recognise research participants as knowledge producers, they should be empowered as such.  And while laudable and important, the survey suggests that altering the conditions of knowledge production in itself won't help much, or may even make things worse if underlying economic, political and legal systems don't change.  Our respondents made clear that enough knowledge is already produced about the condition, both by them and by others, and that this knowledge is often used to make them more exploitable and then rationalise that exploitation marginalisation later.  So there were epistemic struggles in the survey.  Basically today I will talk not about the survey but about the noise of the survey.  So all the people who didn't answer the question, who tried to challenge or undermine the survey and it's questions, so that will be the focus today.

So these epistemic struggles I think lead us to ask deeper questions, not just about the unequal relations of knowledge production, but the role of knowledge in an unequal world.  And finally, I will consider whether sound or noise, when it bursts into the texts, can disrupt this vicious knowledge cycle and offer a different heuristic to understand the lived reality of refugees.

So I want to start by highlighting some of the ways in which I hope this survey will change the conditions of knowledge production and does the knowledge produced, compare to the conventional research methods that Arushi talked about.

So first the research method led to more listening, more than 1000 people participated in our surveys and the majority chose to reply with a voice message.  As such we could listen to many more voices, many more people, than we could have possibly interviewed.  The survey also gave us different insights into their lives, we could listen to background noises, crying children, shouting family members, bustling streets, and internation of their voices - are they angry, are they upset, are they frightened, are they sarcastic.  And secondly, I was tapped into the casual intimacy of WhatsApp communication to produce a much more informal type of knowledge.  If you are in Lebanon, if you walk in a minibus you will see people talking to their phones because they are sending WhatsApp messages to friends and family and they're very comfortable doing that, and that's what we benefited from in the survey, and I think there's also a bit more confidence in WhatsApp because it's used as end-to-end encryption.  And thirdly the survey nurtured what I call comfortable distance and the ethics of not interrupting, while scholars have lamented the distance that the digital research now imposed by the pandemic has created, it also benefits to distance.  The physical distance of the survey may have created a safer space in which ideas and perspectives could be more freely expressed, also away from the social desirability power dynamics and the potential of abuse of personal encounters between a researcher and vulnerable refugees.  The method made it impossible to interrupt the speaker or to steer their narrative towards the interests of the researcher.  Many respondents ignored the questions altogether and we'll learn a bit more about those respondents today, and they talked instead about their personal situation, or they engaged in much broader political analysis of the positionality of refugees within the world system.  Others vented their frustration, either through sarcastic comments or swearing, there was a lot of swearing, and as such the survey facilitated a much more, much more bottom up knowledge, a much more talking back to power.

finally the survey may have been a bit more inclusive of people who struggle with literacy or dyslexia because they could send voice messages, as well as a power to access communities, for example, communities who live in conflict or people who are displaced and who are on the move.  And of course the pandemic has now driven home the importance of doing remote type of research when it's simply not possible and not safe to face them in person.  admittedly the survey raises many ethical questions ranging from the way social media technologies create new structures of dependency as data is held and mined by corporate institutions - as most of you know WhatsApp is owned by Facebook.  Two, refugees dependency on UN for their survival and the UN of course was also the administrator of the survey.  But beyond research ethics our respondents problematised the role of knowledge as producing rather than improving their situation.  from their perspective, the underlying knowledge frameworks we are using, distribute resources away from people in need.  Our questions were framed within a development paradigm, for example, we asked "**what are the needs of your town**" which was alienating to Syrian refugees who not only felt that focusing on the needs of the town prioritises infrastructure over people, but also who felt that as refugees they weren't really part of the town to begin with.

"**Our needs as refugees are plenty, instead of investing millions of dollars in sewage, garbage trucks, municipalities and buildings that we build, and the public services which we build for the Lebanese, feel with the Syrian refugee.  You're asking about the needs of the towns, but the towns don't need anything.  The Syrian refugee is the one who's in need.  Enough with stealing**".

"**First, you're asking about the needs of this town, but I'm not from this town.**I'm only a Syrian refugee, but the Syrian refugee has nothing to do with the Lebanese affairs.  I even don't know what to say about the way he's being treated.  Just watch the news and you'll know how he's being treated".

"May god bless you.  We respect the fact that you're supporting us but we as Syrians don't benefit from the wall, nor from agriculture.  But the Lebanese are the ones that benefit.  **You're supporting the Lebanese people and not the Syrians.  You've aided the Syrians in the house rent but the Lebanese are benefiting from this money since they are the house owners**."

Of course the rationale of development is that investing in infrastructure and injecting money into the economy will benefit everyone but for many refugees this only reinforces  their dependency on exploitative employment and housing arrangements.  Yet people's epistemic resistance was not only directed against particular knowledge frameworks, such as development, but also against the role of knowledge in creating and justifying their oppression more broadly.  And I want to discuss a few ideas that some of our participants articulated  about the role of knowledge.

So first of all, many of our respondents would question our motives, the motives of the survey, because for them it was clear that lack of knowledge is not the problem.  One Syrian respondent told us "**The answer to your question is too obvious, and you know it more than we do.**  There's no future, for we're dying slowly here, and things are deteriorating".  Another respondent insisted "**You know that the situation in the camps is not safe at all**".

Refugees feel that they are, that their misery is well known and documented and that there are other reasons why the support is not forthcoming.  Indeed knowledge production is ubiquitous as development actors must demonstrate the impact to their donors and researchers need to publish for government metrics such as the REF, as we all know, needs assessments, household surveys, case studies, journal articles are incessantly churned out in a competitive funding landscape in which knowledge is a commodity.  Our respondents felt that this knowledge extraction does not necessarily make any decisions more transparent or accountable and is often used to justify the exclusion from vulnerability categories and thus from assistance.  Knowledge gathering becomes a way of normalising and rationalising injustice.  Indeed our respondents insisted that basically they dismissed knowledge that does not help to improve the situation as useless and self serving.  One Syrian woman called us out "What's the use of your studies if you can't provide us with safety...?"; another respondent said "You're asking about these issues, but are you going to help me?".  People also would point out that we also have your knowledge, they also have university degrees yet they do not translate into decent jobs for illegal refugees.  In fact some respondents challenged our epistemic authority precisely on those terms.

"**Most Syrians have degrees, so why aren't you allowing them to have jobs within their domains?  ...  Everyone knows that most Syrians have university degrees, but they're unemployed here.**However, your employees don't even have high school degrees but you still employ them, because you think that they're better..."

Being considered better has little to do with knowledge, even epidemic knowledge, but purely with the underlying legal and material conditions, such as citizenship and class.  And this all came together in the notion that knowledge is somewhat complicit in injustice.

"Thanks for the question, and I hope you'll get what I mean.  **We feel like a rabbit that its owner keeps feeding until it becomes fat, and the releases it in a forest full of lions that would feed on his flesh.  We left our country and faced so much trouble, and we feel like a commodity.**  We help out everyone but in the end we find ourselves on the street.  We've fled our country to find freedom, but we didn't find it.  **We've been in this prison for 5 years, and we can't take it anymore.**We offer services to everyone, and our pay can barely afford food and water for the kids.  You're asking us those questions, but are there any solutions?..."

So the idea is that all we do to feed them, collect data, distribute assistance, train them, only makes them more exploitable, like the animals that we, that we feed to eat them later.  And note also the reference to the prison, that alludes again to the criminal justice environment in which refugees exist even if they are ostensibly free.

Knowledge is always gathered for a purpose and when Said famously argued that the expansion of scientific knowledge production about the orient was exactly what laid the foundation for later military intervention and colonial occupation.  To make someone knowable is to make them governable and the conditions of global inequality, knowledge of the powerful, in a vicious knowledge cycle.  As Said argued "Knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and **profitable**; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly **profitable**dialectic of information and control" (Said, 1977, p36).  Power produces knowledge, but knowledge in itself does not necessarily produce power.  Of course that does not mean that those who hold power are the ones who actually create knowledge, knowledge is created by those who have to live with ?  or resist their power.  They are the ones, as Reeva has argued, who have to do the interpretive labour making sense of senseless bureaucracies as we saw in the first quote today, and making sense of the whims of the rulers, the landlords and their employers.  They have to produce knowledge to be able to survive, while the powerful can often afford to be ignorant.  But that recognition, that recognition of refugees as knowledge producers, and even the improvement of conditions of production, does not help when the knowledge is ultimately owned by the powerful, acquired either as a tribute or bought as a commodity  on the market.  Knowledge in itself does not empower the knowledge producer, in fact it may work to further exploit and oppress them.

And indeed much of refugee enforced migration studies has provided legitimacy for the containment of refugees, preventing them from moving from the global south to the global north, especially by creating the myth of difference, to many observed, portraying the new south/north migration after the cold war as fundamentally different from the movements, the refugee movements during the cold war that helped to justify restrictions on refugee movements and rights.  And of course, the main rationale of development in work in Lebanon is to keep refugees there and to prevent them moving to Europe.

So efforts to decolonise social science research, I think too often assume that knowledge, that the problem maybe lies in the conditions of knowledge production.  If refugees gained more recognition for their knowledge or were paid for it, research that works across massive power and wealth inequalities can still be beneficial.  Refugees know that they produce knowledge.  I'm not always sure they need that recognition, they actually know that.  The problem that our respondents in the survey raised is the knowledge often feeds into oppressive systems that makes refugees both exploitable, both super exploitable as a cheap and illegal labour commodity and at the same time actually disposable as surplus population and I think that, that quote, the story of the rabbit, highlights that contradictory position in which refugees find themselves quite well.  And yet, as argued knowledge is always a double edged sword, it cannot be produced and confined for singular purposes.

Behrouz Boochani wrote his novel from an island "No Friend but the Mountains" on WhatsApp.  Refugees in Lebanon use WhatsApp to warn each other of army raids and collectively mobilise for protests.  The October revolution in Lebanon in 2019 was triggered by government trying to tax WhatsApp users so control can always slip from those who own knowledge and who hold knowledge.  The rabbit even when released into a forest of lions, unlike a commodity is a living and thinking behind that may eventually run free.

And this brings me finally to the sounds of criminal justice:

* *The speaker is devastated, and her tone is rough.*
* *The speak keeps crying.  She speaks out of pain and grief.  She seems devastated and shattered.*
* *The speaker is talking in a serious tone.  He seems enraged.*
* *The speaker is yelling, and repeated the word 'horrible' many times.*

Our translators descriptions of some of the voice messages give you a bit of a glimpse of the emotional soundscape of the WhatsApp survey.  Sounds of despair and rage burst into the text and disrupt the production of knowledge.  But they also quickly become text themselves as you see on the slide.  Basically what we did was we translated sound into background noise and emotional register, two more columns that we added to our excel sheet, and part of the reason for this is that erm the voice messages were erratic, actually Lebanese and Syrian dialect, while the analysis needed to be in English, imperial language.  But I think also, for me it also raises more epistemological questions and I am really, I look forward to hear what you make of this, but in the survey we didn't really find other ways of making sense of knowledge other than just translating it into text so we, we basically translated it into another form of text and so I would be really curious to see how you've dealt with this.

So thank you so much.

**Listening to Power in Prison: Flashbacks** **(Dr** **Kate Herrity)**

Good afternoon everybody, thank you for joining us whether in physical form or digital.  I do have some sounds, but if I don't get to them it's not the end of the world.

Thank you very much to our signers and thank you very much Arushi, David and Mark for inviting me.

So today I'm going to talk about my doctoral research.  First I'll explain a bit about my project and where I'm currently at, before moving on to consider what that means for methodology and method.  I'm a little more scripted than I am usually to try and ensure I don't create any extra work for the signers 'cause I do have a habit of going a little bit off piece.

I've reorientated my talk a little bit in light of the last sessions of these wonderful talks.  I wanted to address some bits around quantology that I briefly touch on in my thesis because it's just a pleasing, thematic symmetry to that.  And then I'm gona go back to talk a little bit about flashbacks as a conceptual tool as well as the phenomenal as a means of bringing us back into the prisons to talk about the prisoners insight of symbolic power and violence.  And then I'll seek back into the main findings from my thesis which are around time, power and order, before finishing on some broader reflections.

So, as Lindsey mentioned my thesis used Aural ethnography.  I say I was there for over 7 months but in reality I was in and out of the prison for over a year.  I spoke to most people coming through the spaces in that time and then I used aural observations and a growing sense of the soundscape to inform interviews.  So I talk about that process of sense making and attunement in my contribution to our edited volume "Sensory Penalities", little plug for the book.  The time I spent in HMP Midtown, which obviously is not it's real name, is actually a local men's prison.  And I was helped by it's quite unusual architectural layout because it's unusually small so it's comprised of one main wing which enabled me to talk and reflect with the men and various members of staff and visitors on the soundscape in a way that left little room for confusion about whether or not we were all talking about the same space.  It's a particularly old prison, pre Victorian which possibly makes it Edwardian, sorry historians, and unusually for the prison it still uses a bell to mark out various points of the daily regime which is inscribed with the year it was built and opened, 1828.  I have a sound here, don't know if it will work, this may or may not be the bell [bell sound].  Quite quiet but there you go, cool, and a bit of shouting in the background.

So, briefly, when I talk about sound I'm not really talking about absolutely everything that can be heard, that would be a bit of a wide brief, rather I'm specifically talking about sounds that had, that were identified as having particular social significance in the space.  My main research question that I started out  with was "What does this soundscape mean, do, for and with and to the people who live and work in that community?".  And I want to make the point particularly right now given our signers that while we think of sound as being heard, it is of course comprised of vibrations so it can be felt also and for work specifically on the needs and experience of deaf and deaf prisoners please see the work of Dr Laura Kelly, I've included a link to her prison service journal article on that and that was the basis of her research.

So when I talk about soundscape I'm really talking of the aural components of the physical landscape.  And I'm, I use the interpretations laid down, or the definitions laid down by the British Standards Institute which informs architectural works and they describe the soundscape as being shaped and interpreted by expectation, experience, emotion, context.  So it's not just what we hear but it's what we imagine, it's the way in which we impose our expectations and our experience on those spaces and in that sense that very much reflects wider work on the "auditory imagination" from philosophy to to literary criticism which speaks about the ways in which the auditory imagination straddles internal and social external worlds, imagination and experience and so forth.

I do have a sound here of the kind of sound that you might be greeted by if you went on the wing [played clip].  There's also a little bit of traveller racism in the background there, you can't really hear it terribly well but I do have more, I can try and experiment with that and see how we go.

So the argument I want to make is that attending to sound, focusing on sound, extends our understanding beyond the peripheries of vision, as Marshall McLewen invites us to consider, we don't have ear lids.  And in extending our field of vision and understanding it also extends our understanding of space.  So Stretch explains that *"I was like: the block's getting smashed up...  I was only leaning on the wall... but I knew from the vibrations, cos there's different vibrations from music to damage"* (Stretch in Herrity 2021).  So while people are locked in they often have a better sense of what's going on around the prison than officers who ostensibly have free movement.  The fellas normally have a better idea of what's going down than they do, there's always a sense of being a bit on catch up.  And further to that in that sense, allows a conceptualised time in the way it's experienced in different ways.  So I was talking to a young man at Aylesbury which is one site, one of a couple of sites I used to test the methodology for my masters, and he said to me I was *"...dreaming of keys, I thought I was back in here!  But what was worse, was when I was back in I dreamed of the sounds of home, hearing my my brothers and sisters running about, kitchen sounds, breakfast being made... but when I woke up I was banged up"* (prisoner, conversation in HMPYOI Aylesbury).  And there's a sense in which sound there is operating in a symbolic means of placing him and remind him of his incarceration, where he isn't as much as where he is.  Banging is one aspect of the soundscape that has an elaborated meaning that extends far beyond what you might ostensibly imagine, whether it's irritation, joy, threats and I've got a sample of that too [played banging sounds].  You can't really hear that but never mind, I normally bang on the table but we don't want to do that today as it might wake you up a little bit.

So, what does that mean for methodology?  Well, there's been a lot of work of late about, there's been a lot of work of late on the potentials, the creative potentials for walking and movement, for eliciting different experiences, memories and so forth.  Maggie O'Neil in particular does a lot of stuff on that and I in now way want to devalue that or criticise that at all but rather I would point out that in English and Welsh prisons, characterised as they are by endless airlocks, gates, keys and bars, moving around freely is far more easily effective with staff, although there you're somewhat hamstrung by the relentless business and need to work in concert.  Though some use walking as a means of like stealing five minutes for themselves, so they'll escort people like to judicial review or legal, legal visits or something of that kind just to skive off for five minutes.  But, you know, that can be very important for them to just catch, I mean one woman officer I spoke to talks about just taking five minutes on the loo, bless her, quite earthy, not much is private in prisons of course, and even going to the toilet can be quite tricky and an unfortunately public affair.  I have a subtitle "Going for a shit sir"  because that was something that, you know the prisoners used to kind of emphasise the discomfort of the prison officers to invade their sense of private.

So really I want to talk  more about the potential for standing still in a place characterised by rushing to get nowhere at all.  So being still and calm creates a contrasting oasis of peace and the men repeatedly told me it was nice hanging around me because it was always calm, loud as I am, relative to the prison environment, not so much.  I don't shout which most people do in prison, aside from anything else it's like echo location, you know if you want John you don't go to find John, you shout.  And part of that's time and space but part of that is also just 'cause everyone shouts in prison, it encourages you to.  Unfortunately then of course it is often interpreted by outside people and criminal justice professionals as aggressive, but it isn't aggressive, quite the opposite actually frequently.  So I wanted to make that point that standing still presents an interesting sensory vantage point from which to assess the rhythms and routines of the prisons social world, not a part of and yet not quite separate from it's movements and machinations.  The sensory too invites mutual collaborations which shifts and reduces proximity between you and those you work with - what does that sound do, what is it, what does it mean - this forefronts their knowledge and their skills and interpretation which kind of plays around with those power relationships.

Another example of this is cognitive interviewing which is a long employed technique in the investigation of serious crime.  It's largely just for the more serious end and it has two foci at it's centre, one of which is the gaining of accurate and extensive information so it's more effective than conventional methods and hypnosis; and the other is of course it keeps the well being of the interviewee at its centre.  It works by encouraging them to take the driving seat, recollection usually relegates to the peripheral knowledge, incidental knowledge is forefronted, particularly sensory detail and that, in focusing and encouraging that encourages them in turn to talk about what they felt rather than their feelings.  They're presented then with a means of circumventing emotions which sidesteps doing additional traumatic harm to people who have already experienced trauma.  This is also a useful demonstration of course of the marked distinction between senses and emotions.  They are of course very different things but in our inadequate theoretical and linguistic vocabularies we frequently collapse the two.  And I'm quite used to being talked about as someone who's studying emotions and of course that's not entirely inaccurate in that the soundscape can provide a barometer for the social climate and can also provide a means for affecting emotion in this confined space, either heightening threat and tension or alleviating and dispersing it.  But nevertheless they are entirely separate things.

So now to hauntology.  Of course this is more about an ontological bearing but if you'll forgive me for being a little bit more basic, crass and literal for one moment, I want to talk about the literal haunting or what we commonly understand of in this way.  Often we think of, in haunting, visual apparitions, lady in white, Casper the friendly ghost, however, more literally testimonies of those claiming to have experienced a haunting are shot through with sensory detail.  Often a visitation is preceded by a sudden drop in temperature, a strange odour or sounds of footsteps.  The association for the scientific study of anonymous phenomena tell us that many haunting cases involve witnesses smelling unlikely or unusual smells with no obvious source.  The range is wide from the odour of flowers and perfumes to foul or putrid smells, though part of a wider set of symptoms of a haunting, unexplained smells on their own are sometimes interpreted as indicating a ghostly presence and further to smells, it's a bit cut off here, I don't know if you can see it, but I've got an artistic rendering of "the smelling ghost" which is the Yoruban pantheon of deities, just 'cause it's a picture as much as anything, I don't know much about it, I'm not gona lie.  Toop encourages us to think about sound or of sound as the temporal sense.  The sensory allows us to traverse time, space and ideas e.g. and actually quite significantly between phenomenology and constructivism.  So what I want to, and am concerned with doing, is really asking what this means for studies of prison, where people are haunted by the past, present and the future.  And what do we exclude from our ways of thinking when we impose the peripheries of vision, which of course culturally we are widely inclined to do whether in metaphor or other forms.

And so to flashbacks, reliving rich and vivid sensory experience, or intrusive sensory collections, of course this a hallmark of PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and various other traumas.  It's also the case that particular sensitivity to sound is the feature of various conditions and people having those are vastly overrepresented in our prison system so mental illness, neurodiversity, people on the autistic spectrum particularly struggle and I have encountered people like that in prison who find it very very difficult to cope with the intrusiveness of the soundscape because they can't get away from it, ever.  And so we can think about haunting in this more broader sense again.  So rather than traces of past activity and the rather more concrete or arguably more tangible nature of rich and vivid sensory recollections, they're informative in thinking about how prison spaces are experienced.  So if you think of prison as a place of violence and a place in which violence is done to the embodied, the incarcerated individual.  So Eleanor March draws explicit parallels between war zones and prison spaces in her studies of prison literature.  She contributed on this to our blog, "Sensory Criminology", and this was a piece of prisoner writing:

*The noise... So much noise... No noise like it I've ever heard!!  Chaotic, screaming, the noise... so much noise!!  I know, I know... I'm used to battle noise, well I've experienced it... Never get used to it, but this... It's different.  Cries of pain, Co dees shouting to each other, but standing face to face... Why are you shouting?  A young lad in the stairs, talking gobbledeegoop, he's gone over, BANGTHUDTHUMPCRASH down the stairs...  Blood everywhere all out on the floor, the screws shout to get inside our cells.  Spice apparently?  I don't know what that is!!  The noise doesn't bang with munitions in the air... This noise has a deadly, yet silent violence to it... An unknown enemy!!*

And what I've done here is try to overlay the sounds which I painstakingly extracted from the kind of concerto of racket that you get in prisons, but it's not really going to work I don't think but if I can just take this opportunity to remind you again of the soundscape [playing sounds].  So what we would normally hear is all of those sounds that I've played at various points overlaid so banging, the bell, people shouting, so on and so forth.

So, I'm on the last page.  In this context, or in the context of prison where there's little escape from it's sensory onslaught, the soundscape itself becomes a means of inflicting symbolic violence.  The bangs and clangs reinforce the sensory imprisonment of powerlessness, deriving additional potency from the broader cultural power of the prisons. So we all know what we expect when we hear the banging and clanging.  There's more direct and literal violence too, in the bangs and cries that keep people from sleep that rattle through the body and that serves a constant reminder of where they are as well as where and with who they are not.

If power is not merely relational but rather conveyed also through complex systems of signification, what then for our understanding of order which more commonly rests on acceptance of authority.  For my main thesis the foregrounding sound, listening to the rhythms and routines of prison social life provides a different lens for considering the bases for order.  People do not comply because there is a broad acceptance of authority and it's legitimacy, rather this has little bearing on the day-to-day.  People comply, cooperate and contribute to order because there is a comfort and safety in routine.  Order is a matter of survival, social and literal.  This weakens reliance on legitimacy as an explanatory concept for order, some of the most influential work in prisons studies emerged in the wake of the Strangeways Riots in the early '90s and the decency agenda that was laid out in the Wolf Report follow Strangeways.  The emphasis was on establishing reasons for concerted disorder and rioting such as in Sparks, Bottoms and Hayes problems of order, The Problem of Order rather.  In contrast I wanted to understand what Sam meant in the hustle and bustle of everyday prison life and what focusing on that told us.

And so, I ask you what foregrounding different aspects of sensory experience does for inviting you to imagine being in prison spaces.  I contend that doing this allows for quite different theorising about the basis for social cohesion in the prison social world.  And so I invite you all to think about how attending to the sensory and disrupting, undermining, the privileged position of the visual does for how we engage with the world and how we understand or how we go about knowing.  Or as Thomas Kuhn asserts, I would like to suggest that "The answers we get, depend on the questions we ask".

Thank you.

**Sensory Deprivation: Is Sound Enough?  A Reflection on the Potential and Limitations of Remote Research/Researching from a Distance (Dr** **Mark Brown)**

Thanks everyone, all the other speakers who have come before me and all the organisation which has gone into this, our first hybrid effort here at the Centre for Criminological Research.

What I want to talk about this afternoon is a piece of research that I did with three colleagues which ran as Lindsey noted, through the middle of the pandemic.  We were planning the research in March 2020 and it was due to be wrapped up by late June and in the end it ran through to January 2021, it was stretched out by the pandemic and a lot of things which we were intending to do we were unable to do.  And so this image on the cover slide is of a, of a classroom, a prison classroom in Pakistan.  As you can see there are some women in this education classroom and some children there and this was one of the sites, amongst many sites, that I was researching along with colleagues.

And so what we were undertaking was, as you can see on this slide, was a cross-national, multi-site, unintentionally remote research project which for reasons of importance of the research and funding cycles and so on had to go forward regardless of the fact that we were in the middle of a pandemic.

So what I'd like to do in this session is just tick through a quick summary of the project to give a sense of the scale of it, which I think was one of the important aspects of it and it's one of the things which in some ways, relying as we did much more than we had intended on what I would call just a kind of a, a listening channel, or a voice channel, allowed us to do a number of things, including obviously the Covid proofing of the whole exercise.  And so I then want to just tick through what potential this has, relying heavily on voice and listening, and remote research.  Because I guess this is one of the questions which is coming out of the pandemic, is to what extent we can, you know, use or proliferate those work arounds that we made during the pandemic and to what extent we can, they can become part of our post-covid normality.  I want to talk about some of the difficulties, the methodological challenges and so on.

So, let me begin here.  I'm not sure where your drop down menu is with the vision of the presenters but mine goes straight to a map that I have on the next screen.  But the map just points to the geographical location of the research and the geographical location is also shown on the slide, on the left hand side of the slide.  And so just as Leila was working for the UN Development Programme when she conducted her research, I was working as a Consultant to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, along with three other consultants to do a large scale evaluation of the whole strategic cluster evaluation of all the regional programming over a five to six year period in West and Central Asia.  And so it was a large effort, they had dispersed $270million over the course of it and they needed to know strategically how are we working in this region.  Does everything that we are doing in relation to crime, terrorism, drugs, alternative livelihoods, the whole box and dice, does it work, should we spend another $270million odd.  And so this is why it kind of had to go on during Covid time, because the next funding cycle begins, you know, basically in a few weeks from now.  So this is what the project was about.  We were working in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Islamic Republic of Iran and then right through the central Asian republics and we were also working with a regional programme for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries which came out of the Paris Pact Initiative which is all about sort of countering all of the drugs which are pouring out of Afghanistan.  So it was both country level, regional level, as in Central Asian region and then large regional level across the whole West and Central Asia.

So there were three delivery channels and I had conduct of evaluating one of these which was Sub-Programme 2: Crime, criminal justice, law reform and legal matters right across this region.  So this goes on everything from developing risk assessment techniques or strategies for violent extremist prisoners in Kurdistan to the provision of services in women's jails and Pakistan and so on.  And I had colleagues working on the borders area and one the drugs and prevention, rehabilitation, alternative livelihoods and so on.  And so we'd been using the OECD-DAC+ criteria which just for those of you who are familiar with evaluation, they will look very familiar, I will skip over because there's not much time.  That horrible acronym at the bottom [HRGD-LNOB-FBF] is **Human Rights Gender Disability Inclusion - Leaving No One Behind -** and beginning with the **Furthest Behind First** which were all of these sort of cross-cutting principles which we also had to think about all the way through evaluating this mess of effort.

To some extent we were able to rely on existing data sources and that was mainly done in this *Inception* phase of our methodology.  But as you can see from the right hand side, in terms of our stakeholder engagement, well countries were closed, borders were closed, offices were closed.  We relied on phone interviews, on Microsoft Teams and Zoom, on WhatsApp, on you know, all of these sorts of things.  Generally there wasn't enough bandwidth for the actual video side so this was really about a listening exercise and we interviewed 180 people over about 2 months, as well as using some other channels such as questionnaires and so on.  So this was a very heavily interview, focus group, reliant method because that was the only way that we could actually access people during the period.

So what were we doing?  And I'll just skip over some of these fairly quickly given the time.  We were using phone, WhatsApp voice, any of these things, just to interview people or to do focus groups.  One of the more interesting things I did a lot of in Pakistan was just holding a line open, and this is for ethnographic listening exercises, holding a line open in meetings and so people themselves were also isolated from each other and people would all be in these Zoom meetings and I would simply sit on an open line and be listening to the coordination which we could, I suppose divine, from the relationships between the different actors, between the, you know, the Director General of Police, the Director General of Prisons, the person from UNDP who was there, the person from UNODC who was there, the person who was doing the data analysis, and they would all be talking about, in this case in Pakistan it was about a rule of law reform programme.  And we also did a lot of debriefs with some national evaluators that we put on because, you know, at some level you need, and this was the sort of question I directed at Leila, how did you get those phone numbers, we actually needed to set up interviews, we needed to, and we needed translators, and so we had translators in Persian, Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Russian and some of the central Asian languages.  This actually had a huge benefit for us and I've tried to touch on some of those on this list on the right.  So geographical breadth - we were able to go from our sitting rooms right across that region.  And to interview 180 people is probably far more than was ever envisaged in the fieldwork which was planned which was for about two weeks for each of us, each of the four us to be actually in country.  Geographical depth is another thing though.  What it allowed us to do was to go places, as it were, where we couldn't have gone for our fieldwork.  Just in terms of the basic logistics of that, but also in terms of the security situation.  So I spent a lot of time talking to people, listening to people, interrogating, trying to understand what was going on Balochistan, which is a province of Pakistan that I would never have received security clearance to actually visit myself.  And my colleague, Debra Leeney, was working a lot in remote areas of Afghanistan where she herself in terms of livelihoods and crop substitutions.

In terms of conflict sensitivity, people who couldn't necessarily seem to be speaking and engaging with us, and you can see in Afghanistan at the moment where they've been flying people out who were seen to be working with international organisations and agencies and so on.  So conflict sensitivity, the protection of people was enabled far more through us being able to work on an interview level, our own personal security I've mentioned and the fact that we could actually access groups who were often sequestered away, you know, women particularly out of the public view and a lot of areas that we were looking at we could ask our national researchers to actually go into places and talk to specific groups of people, and that's where the debriefing came in as well.  So we were both listening ourselves, the four of us as the lead researchers, but we were also kind of listening one step removed as our national evaluators once they were free to move as the first Covid wave passed through, allowed us to have kind of I suppose an echo of what was being said, translated through them.

Practical difficulties, exhaustion and so on, I won't dwell on these given the time that we've got but this was an enormous amount of time, you know, so this project which was supposed to wrap up in late June and into July went all the way through to January and a lot of that was just because, you know, you try and get somebody on the phone and Kabul the line goes down, they can't work it out, they do want to speak to you so you're on for an hour and a half trying to work it out and then it just dies completely so a few days later you have to go back to try and work it out again.  So these technological channels are not always completely successful.

The questions that it raises, apart from being exhausted at the end of it from all of this interviewing and listening, there was a real sense that you did not actually have much of a sense of what was going on.  Because all you have ever done is listen to people talk.  And so on the right hand side there, the first point, I refer to this as what you're essentially generating is perceptual data.  And so how do you feel about this, what's your attitude to this, is this good or bad, is it working or not working, is it inefficient or efficient, does it match your needs or not match your needs, have you learned anything, have you not learned anything.  All of it is just perceptual data and in some ways when we talk about research triangulation all that we're actually leaning up with is triangulated perceptual data.  So we're triangulating an interview with a survey response with a questionnaire response.  And that, I think there are real problems in that.  And so on the left hand side it lists challenges with the sensory deprivation on there.  there is a sense that it's very difficult to kind of ground truth, what you're being told.  So you're talking to, you're getting fantastic access to a prison in Turkmenistan, which is enormously difficult to get into, and they're saying that they have this thing going on or that thing going on or the other thing going on but do they?  You've actually got no idea.  So the whole, the whole model is very much reliant on the acceptance of what you hear and in some ways, for some sorts of, for some questions that's more acceptable, you know, how do you feel about this.  You know Leila was asking "Do you feel that your needs are being met" or something like that.  Well that's fine but that's quite a different thing to saying "Do you actually have manuals for violent extremist prisoners and how they should be managed in their institution?".  And if the answer is yes well that's like maybe you do, maybe you don't, who knows?

We tried to do quite a lot of work on triangulating, but the problem is in less developed countries like Afghanistan or lower middle income countries, there's just not a data out there.  And it's actually quite difficult to support, to triangulate perceptual data with harder sorts of data.  And we tried to do that looking at satellite imagery of crops in Afghanistan for example, looking for poppy substitution but that's actually very expensive and we were trying to find other channels and I was saying to Leila before we started that I'd read her UNDP Report and we really looked at doing that but the problem that we found was that WhatsApp is used a lot in Pakistan and in Iran, Facebook messenger is used through the Central Asian republics, and we couldn't actually find a common channel which was going to work across all of them so it's I guess another thing.

So with just a couple of minutes to go, is a model of research from your seat in Sheffield or, we were in Sheffield, Dubai, Paris and variously in Serbia and other places, is this model worth expanding and turning into a more general kind of model for doing remote research?  And I think it's partly a question of understanding the trade offs, so in our case we were trying to do a high level, strategic, cluster evaluation of 22 different funded programmes which all had projects within them, and so we were really trying to build up to get a sense of the extent to which it worked, but whether it was also perceived to work and so.  So I think at that level, and given the amount of money that was going to be spent one way or the other, the costs, you know what we missed out on, that sort of ground proofing, were probably just costs which have to be borne.  We managed to research through Covid, but what we were able to say in kind of a more impact-related sense is probably far less than we could say in a satisfaction and attitude that sense.  It has certain strengths undoubtedly, we got into places we would never ordinarily have gone and, to the extent we were working at this high level with, and recognising the problems with our data, I think it was an acceptable trade off.  Would I design another project like this?  I think not.  Apart from the fact I don't want to do that many hours interviewing across a phone line, I think we really need to move back out of Covid and get back out into the field, you know, I don't really want to do another one of these projects until I can go back into the field again and I can go into offices and I can see what people have done and you know, we were working trying to do a case study in an orphanage in Bischkek in Kyrgyzstan where the young people are both at risk of being trafficked, but also at risk of moving into organised crime gangs and so there was fascinating opportunities but in fact we just couldn't find ways of actually researching that, you know, on a phone.

And so I think ultimately triangulation is going to be key to this, if we are using this listening, listening data, even if we can try and work out different approaches, not just interviewing but you know like those listening exercises, that offers some level of triangulation, just hearing how people are working but I think it's the major problem.  Subsequently if we had more time we would have probably tried to utilise that WhatsApp sort of approach, I've been working on another project which is also global and we're using a thing called Par-Evo which is a kind of an asynchronous story-telling approach where different people, who are unrelated to each other, who all are working in relation to a common phenomenon, build stories about how the world works.

So I think there are many, many opportunities for remote research and I suppose this was one attempt to try and think about whether proliferating a long-standing, insisting methodology was a solution to remote research.

Thanks.

*Note from the organisers: We are grateful to Katrina Edwards for transcribing these presentations.*