

Sound, Ecology, and Politics

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Introducing “sound” as a category of analysis, Franziska’s project conceptualizes the affective and material “atmospheres” that shape political engagements, thus drawing attention to the ecological dimensions of normative principles and notions of political activism. Specifically, her project hopes to inspire responses to the challenges that dramatically changing climate conditions pose to communal living-together, moving away from anthropocentric notions of political agency without negating the importance of human influence and responsibility.

The notion of “atmosphere” serves as an important concept by interrelating material and immaterial aspects, and by refusing a simplistic and romanticized notion of “nature” as an entity separate from the human. Moreover, it appreciates that how humans react to environmental change depends on the specific socio-material atmospheres they live in, and that “reaction” as such involves nonconscious elements which can either strengthen or undermine democratic responsiveness. As a result, every political action or deliberation involves intersubjective as well as inter-corporeal, material, and affective forces.

The project unfolds in two parts. Both take sound to be composed of vibrations that act on, above, and below the audible register or pursue bodies and materialities prior to conscious recognition even as they assemble into perceivable expressions in human and nonhuman language or music. Moreover, both parts put various democratic political theory into conversation with sound studies literature, environmental humanities scholarship, and sound art.

Part 1))) *Democratic Activism*: Identifying delays as a central problem when irreversible effects to the climate and the need for cross-national action accelerate, this part investigates how sound’s intimate relation to slowness can increase collective sensitivity to loss and suggest a mode of agency that involves various species and earthy materialities in political outcomes without implying neat causality. It imagines a pluralist atmospheric politics which connects agents in decentralized networks, and which appreciates the nonconscious elements that inform normative commitments and institutional designs.

Part 2))) *Listening*: Mobilizing the body’s sensual register, this part develops an account of listening from the interinvolvement of humans with earthly materials and nonhuman animal voices. It features listening’s corporeal and nonhuman aspects, assuming that communicating bodies exist in wider relationships or atmospheres with other human and nonhuman agents. Within such atmospheres, listening becomes a form of touching, relying on a body’s sensitivity to shared

goals and exposing deliberate listening as but one invocation of a wider multifaceted interval between corporeal awareness and the expression of meaning in various forms.