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ARTICLE

Listening to Europe's migration 'crisis': The discursive, affective and imaginative responses of audiences to BBC Radio 4 broadcasts

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Abstract

Whilst geography has a long tradition of examining geopolitical discourses and imaginaries in media and popular culture, audiences remain understudied. A preoccupation with the site of representation is coupled with a disciplinary bias towards analysing visual media and culture, which obscures alternative ways of knowing, representing and engaging in the world. This paper redresses these imbalances by exploring radio and its capacity to shape audiences' geographical imaginations. An innovative 'playlist-diary' method is used to reveal how listeners hear, interpret and imagine BBC Radio 4 broadcasts on Europe's migration 'crisis' between 2014 and 2019; a novel approach which answers calls for geographers to engage with sounds and methodologies of listening, and better understand audience responses to journalistic storytelling on migration. The paper makes a significant conceptual contribution to the field by illustrating how listeners hear broadcasts in discursive, affective and imaginative registers, and by identifying the pivotal role of refugee voices and stories in forging a politics of recognition; that is to say, how and under what conditions radio journalism collapses discourses of 'us' and 'them', expands imaginative communities of belonging, and leads to instances of identification and connection between listeners and refugees. It therefore pushes beyond research that focuses on discursive and affective invitations in media by uncovering how radio shapes audiences' geographical imaginations around migration and regulates fields of perceptibility, recognition and relatability with people on the move.

KEYWORDS

BBC Radio 4, geographical imaginations, listening, migration, playlist-diary method, radio

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Radio plays a critical role in broadcasting geopolitical stories into audiences' geographical imaginations. Europe's migration 'crisis' of 2015 was no exception, dominating news bulletins and broadcasts as the continent witnessed the largest movement of refugees since 1945 from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea (Crawley et al., 2018). Contrary to print and television journalism which use written narratives, photographs and moving images to construct a story of migration, radio relies on sounds and the spoken word, inviting listeners to imagine spaces, places, and people heard over the airwaves. Although geographers have discussed the imaginative power of radio (Pinkerton & Dodds, 2009), they have stopped short of exploring empirically the medium's capacity to shape listeners' geographical imaginations. Indeed, Pinkerton (2014, p. 64) laments 'this kind of conceptual work on radio remains in the margins of the academy'. This paper makes a significant contribution to geographical knowledge and understanding by exploring how radio broadcasts on Europe's migration 'crisis' are heard, interpreted and imagined by listeners.

The paper is informed by Said's (1978) seminal text, *Orientalism*, in which he introduced the concept of imaginative geographies to capture how distant and proximate people and places are represented in ways that reflect the desires, fantasies and fears of their authors (Gregory, 2009a). These representations circulate in cultural media, such as novels and travelogues, which shape popular perceptions of the world. Gregory (2009b, pp. 284–285) emphasises they 'can have extraordinarily powerful effects', noting 'the geographical imaginations deployed to wage war, conveyed through travel writing, or mobilised in popular culture and politics'. However, the role of radio in shaping geographical imaginations has attracted marginal interest, and few have explored the impact of imaginative geographies on audiences or how audiences participate in their co-construction. This is true of critical and popular geopolitics, and media and migration studies, which have both privileged the site of representation over audiencing (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2019; Dittmer & Bos, 2019).

This research therefore moves beyond studies that focus on narratorial and affective invitations in media to consider audience responses to BBC Radio 4 broadcasts on migration. The BBC is Britain's leading public service broadcaster and Radio 4 is the corporation's flagship speech radio network with news, current affairs and cultural programming. Significantly, it is the most popular non-music station, attracting 10 million listeners weekly (RAJAR, 2022), which adds weight to Pinkerton and Dodds' (2009, p. 16) claim that 'radio listening ... is part of the daily fabric of many people'. Exploring how listeners respond to Radio 4 journalism answers recent calls for geographers 'to develop broader sonic sensibilities' (Gallagher et al., 2017, p. 620) and understand how geographical imaginations are shaped by the audible, as well as visual, realm (Watson, 2023a).

The paper begins by reviewing relevant literature and detailing the methodology before proceeding through a three-step analysis that: first, demonstrates how listeners hear broadcasts through the interpretative frames of BBC journalism and their own positionalities, which condition how they interpret, imagine and affectively respond to Europe's migration 'crisis'; second, documents how listeners value broadcasts predicated upon the personal stories and voices of refugees, which are critical to eliciting emotional and affective responses, and determining a politics of recognition; and third, illustrates how radio shapes audiences' geographical imaginations and realises its potential for imaginative and emotional identification with people on the move.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Situating radio and audiences in popular geopolitics and media studies

The role of media in the production and circulation of geopolitical discourses and imaginaries is a central focus of popular geopolitics, a subfield of critical geopolitics which treats geopolitics as 'discourse, as a culturally and politically varied way of describing, representing, and writing about geography and international politics' (Tuathail, 1998, p. 3). Research to date has analysed a range of media, including magazines (Sharp, 1993), newspapers (MacFarlane & Hay, 2003) and films (Dodds, 2005), documenting the ways in which they construct geopolitical narratives and imaginaries. However, visual media and culture have commanded most attention, replicating the traditional ocularcentrism of geographical enquiry.

Notable exceptions are Pinkerton (2008; 2014) and Weir (2014; 2020), who explore the history, geopolitics and materiality of radio. Pinkerton (2014) highlights the geography of radio, connecting people and places, occupying spaces of broadcasting and reception, and shaping geopolitical imaginations. Weir (2014) reimagines radio as an assemblage of

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human and non-human components, answering Pinkerton and Dodds' (2009, p. 10) call to examine 'broadcasting infrastructure and technology'. However, geographical studies of radio have stopped short of considering radio listenership, which mirrors a trend in popular geopolitics of neglecting audiences. Dittmer and Gray (2010, p. 1667) suggest that popular geopolitics has 'typically abstracted away the pleasure, thrills, and tragedy from people's experiences of popular culture and media', leaving it 'abstract and disembodied—literally devoid of people' (Dittmer & Bos, 2019, p. 57). Bos (2018) offers a welcome corrective in his research on audience engagements with video games, yet few have taken up Dittmer and Dodds' (2008, p. 448) invitation to develop 'more sophisticated understandings of audiences' and better understand how 'representations of the world are made intelligible and meaningful in an everyday setting' (Dodds, 2006, p. 119).

Nascent interest in audiences in popular geopolitics builds on a much longer trajectory of work in media and cultural studies. Although theorisations of audiences are contested, research coalesces around the nature and significance of audiences, the power and effects of media, and sites and processes of meaning formation (Livingstone, 2015). Hall (1980) famously argued that producers encode a text with messages before audiences then decode a text by interpreting it in different ways. Research has since revealed audiences to be diverse and contradictory in their decoding practices with interpretations shaped by identities and socio-cultural contexts. Early work focused on audience reception of television and BBC television in particular (Ang, 1991; Morley, 1980); however, the 'fascination with mass audiences absorbed in national broadcast television' was historically contingent and has since been supplanted by epistemological and methodological questions around locating and studying audiences in a digital, multi-media world (Livingstone, 2012, pp. 4–5). Nevertheless, traditional media, like radio, continue to have significant reach and popular appeal, and careful empirical work is needed to reveal the contexts and parameters in which meaning is made (Livingstone, 2008).

2.2 | Radio: Affects, sounds, and voices

Emerging popular geopolitical interest in audiences parallels a theoretical shift towards more-than-representational geographies which foreground the body as a site of analysis. Discursive maps of meaning have been recognised as embodied maps of feeling with the power to provoke, unsettle and 'move' audiences in emotional and affective registers. Pile (2010, p. 7) suggests 'emotional geography emphasises the significance of expressed emotions while non-representational theory emphasises the importance of inexpressible affects'. This has clear application to research on the power and effects of media. In his research on commercial radio, Tebbutt (2006, p. 859) identifies a need to move away from narrative 'messages' in broadcasts to listener 'moods' and 'perceptions', characterising the body as 'a site of a multiplicity of potential responses'. Pinkerton and Dodds (2009, p. 10) agree, pointing to future work on radio audiences and the 'affective impacts' of broadcasts. This paper therefore heeds calls to engage with listeners and explore radio's affective, as well as discursive, power.

It also seeks to examine the imaginative power of radio, sharing Pinkerton's (2014, p. 63) contention that repeated references to radio's 'visuality', 'power' and 'magic' suggest there is something specific in its appeal to the imagination which is worth probing further. Connections between sounds and imaginations have long been recognised in the world of music. Botstein (1995) considers the impact of classical music on audiences and argues that stirring musical scores 'created an experience of the visual and emotional imagination' (Botstein, 1995, p. 588), while Smith (2000, p. 615) concludes that 'music is integral to the geographical imagination'. The application to radio, which encourages 'visual and spatial imaging in response to what we hear' (Squire, 2003, p. 294), is compelling. Bolls and Lang (2003, p. 34) explore listener responses to radio advertisements and suggest 'listeners may indeed "see" it on the radio'. This resonates with Peters (2018, p. 2) who emphasises 'the visual imagery made possible through listening' to offshore pirate radio. Interestingly, in the preface to her book, Wissman and Palis note 'an even deeper investigation into the imaginative geographies of listening to radio could easily fill another book' (Peters, 2018, p. viii), an invitation to which this paper responds.

In addition to sound, voice is an essential component of speech radio with the capacity to shape listeners' geographical imaginations. McCormack (2013, p. 129) characterises radio as 'an affective technology of the voice' that amplifies sonic atmospheres through rhythms of speech and turns of phrase, and sparks imaginative thinking. In addition to individual voices with different accents, tones and modulations, broadcasters, such as the BBC, also develop a brand through the production of a collective voice. The BBC's Empire, Overseas and World Service have attracted significant interest as prisms through which to investigate the construction of the BBC's 'Voice' over time, recognisable for reliable, objective and impartial international broadcasting: 'the true but unbiased "Voice of Britain"' (Robertson, 2008, p. 465). Attending

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to questions of voice is particularly critical to radio representations of migration given that voice plays an important role in determining the identity and status of refugees in journalism.

2.3 | Media and migration studies

Thinking about who is heard in radio, in what capacity, and to what effect brings into focus the interdisciplinary field of media and migration studies which is characterised by two strands of research: media representations of migration and audience responses to mediations of suffering. The former has attracted most attention, with numerous studies exploring how print and photographic journalism visually and discursively portray refugees as 'victims' or 'villains', 'entrepreneurs' or 'threats' (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2019; Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Crawley et al., 2016). Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017, p.3) coin the term 'journalism-as-bordering' to capture how media representations have the capacity to regulate imagined communities of identity, citizenship and belonging. The act of speaking is critical to this process as voice 'constitutes the speaker as a human being' (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 16). The routine erasure of refugee voices and perspectives therefore has the potential to mislead audiences into a 'triple misrecognition of refugees as political, social and historical actors' (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 1).

Yet most research stops short of considering audiences. Georgiou (2018) explores how migrant voices are framed in European media sources, but does not consider audience interpretations of those voices. Similarly, Chouliaraki and Stolic (2019) analyse news images of refugees but only speculate on whether different visual framings invite contrasting affective and discursive responses. By contrast, audience responses to mediations of suffering have attracted critical attention: Seu et al. (2015) explore UK public responses to humanitarian and international development communications, whilst Kyriakidou (2015) investigates Greek audience reactions to news stories of natural disasters. Although not focused on the subject of migration, these studies offer important insights into different styles of witnessing and the complexities of audience reception. A recent exception is Xu and Zhang's (2023) study of audience responses to a Chinese Central Television (CCTV) documentary about Europe's migration 'crisis', which highlights the agency of viewers to interpret, scrutinise and resist state media narratives. By exploring listener responses to BBC radio broadcasts, this paper makes a valuable contribution to interdisciplinary research in the field which to date has privileged visual media and ways of seeing over aural media and ways of listening.

3 | THE 'PLAYLIST-DIARY' METHOD

Sonic methods are a growing but 'marginal interest' in geography (Whittaker & Peters, 2021, p. 130). Gallagher and Prior (2014, p. 267) suggest that when geographers have engaged with sound, research has been 'methodologically conventional', reliant on traditional techniques of data collection and analysis. This paper therefore offers an innovative intervention through the design and implementation of the 'playlist-diary' method.

First, a digital playlist of 12 broadcasts was curated on the audio hosting platform *SoundCloud*. The 12 broadcasts were selected from a sample of 172 broadcasts identified in a larger research project examining narratives and soundscapes of migration across Radio 4 programming between 2014 and 2019 (Watson, 2023b); a period characterised by an escalating number of refugees in Europe and a heightened focus on migration around the Brexit referendum. The selection of broadcasts was guided by an ambition to reflect Radio 4's diverse news, current affairs and cultural output, loosely trace a story of forced migration to, and refugee settlement in, Europe, and capture subtle and overt appeals to listeners' geographical imaginations. Shortened clips were created for a minority of broadcasts to keep the playlist at a reasonable length of 2 h 20 min; however, care was taken to ensure that editing did not significantly alter their meaning. Figure 1 provides an overview of the playlist and the thematic focus of each broadcast.

Second, participant diaries have been used to great effect in environmental research on personal energy consumption and behaviour patterns (Reid et al., 2011), and held exciting opportunities for a popular geopolitical study of media and audiences. A reflective diary was therefore designed for listeners to record their responses to the playlist with a single page devoted to each broadcast. Figure 2 includes a screenshot of the playlist and diary, which together provided an innovative way of capturing radio listenership.

To test the feasibility of the method, a pilot study was initially conducted with 20 colleagues, friends and family. However, the almost immediate onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdowns necessitated adaptations to my original plans for audience recruitment and exploration of everyday geographies of listening. Therefore, I used

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Broadcast Title	Content of Broadcast	Original Broadcast Date	Broadcast Length (minutes)	Full Programme or Clip
1. Emma Jane Kirby - *From Our Own Correspondent*	Travelling onboard an EU search and rescue ship	14.02.2015	5	Clip
2. *The World Tonight* - Migrants attempt to break into the Eurotunnel	News report on migrants at the Eurotunnel	28.07.2015	8	Clip
3. *Crossing Continents* - A Mediterranean Rescue	Experience of a search and rescue mission at sea	03.08.2015	28	Full
4. *The World Tonight* - Special report on migrants in Calais	News report on lived experiences of the Calais camp	23.12.2015	15	Clip
5. *The World Tonight* - Riot police clash with migrants in 'jungle' camp	News report on demolition of the Calais camp	29.02.2016	13	Clip
6. *The Untold: Child Rescue*	The story of a smuggling attempt from Calais to Britain	02.05.2016	28	Full
7. *The Listening Project* - Zahra and Yousif	Children of Iraqi refugees in conversation	14.04.2017	4	Full
8. *iPM* - Part I: Migrants go to Greek school	Living in the Oinofyta camp in Greece	31.05.2017	9	Clip
9. *On Your Farm* - Refugees and Bees	A Syrian beekeeper in Huddersfield	14.01.2018	13	Clip
10. *Ramblings* - Reigate, Surrey	Walking with the charity *Refugee Tales*	26.05.2018	9	Clip
11. Jenny Hill - *From Our Own Correspondent*	The story of a Syrian refugee in Germany	30.06.2018	5	Clip
12. *A Point of View* - Imagine	A child refugee journeying to Europe	29.07.2018	10	Full

FIGURE 1 Digital playlist of broadcasts.

snowball sampling to digitally recruit a second wave of participants through my pilot cohort who were retrospectively recruited into the final sample. Recruitment was based principally on age and radio listening habits. The target was 20 Radio 4 listeners aged 45–65 years and 20 non/occasional Radio 4 listeners aged 20–65 years. This reflected my intention to recruit the 'average' Radio 4 listener—defined as 56 years of age, balanced equally by gender, from ABC1 social classes (BBC, n.d.), non or occasional Radio 4 listeners, and younger listeners. Radio 4 listeners were defined as listening to 3 or more hours per week, whilst non or occasional listeners were defined as listening to less than 3 hours of Radio 4 per week. Pilot study participants were asked to recommend two people who met these criteria, and overall, I recruited 51 listeners, based in the UK, balanced evenly by gender, aged 20–65. Figure 3 provides an overview of the final sample who were given 2 weeks to complete the study.

This context means there are limitations to the methodological approach. The sample is small in size, negating claims to representativeness, and highly educated, with all having A-Levels or higher. To some extent, the sample's biases do, however, reflect the social characteristics of Radio 4 listeners. The study's timing in 2020 means that participants were asked to listen retrospectively to reportage on Europe's migration 'crisis', which may have influenced their responses. Moreover, it is a simulation of radio listenership, which does not capture everyday geographies or practices of listening. Nevertheless, the playlist-diary method is novel and offers an innovative way of exploring how radio shapes listeners' geographical imaginations.

A thematic analysis of the diaries was conducted to assess listeners' discursive, affective and imaginative responses and a coding framework was devised to analyse emerging themes. This was informed by a close reading of the diaries and ranged from comments on the discursive content of news reports to the voice and tone of contributors, emotional impact of broadcasts, and role of sounds in sparking geographical imaginations. It was an iterative process of re-reading the diaries, identifying patterns and anomalies, and extracting illustrative quotations. It is important to note there were no significant differences in responses by age or radio listening habits, and listeners are therefore introduced simply using pseudonyms. The paper now turns to the findings of my analysis.

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Table 1: Playlist Details and Reflective Diary

Programme	Broadcast Title	Date of Broadcast	Length of Broadcast	Full Programme or Clip	Where you listened	Reflective Diary: Your Comments
From Our Own Correspondent	Emma Jane Kirby on board a Frontex ship	14/02/2015	5 minutes	Clip	At home sitting in living room	My immediate reaction was one of unease and concern- for the people having to endure these journeys to those patrolling the waters, carrying out a really difficult task. It was almost like listening to an historical novel being read on the radio – so evocative in describing the smells, heat and sounds of the conditions on board. It could almost have been describing a slave ship from Africa or a famine ship from Ireland. I soon got a bit lost in the statistics being quoted and feel the report lost the sense of human tragedy as the relentlessness of a problem was described in which it appeared Europe's politicians had no solutions to offer.

FIGURE 2 Playlist-diary method.

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	Total	Radio 4 Listeners, aged 45-65	Radio 4 Listeners, aged 20-34	Non-Radio 4 Listeners, aged 20-65	Occasional Radio 4 Listeners, aged 20-65
Number of Participants	51	20	3	20	8
Gender	31 F 20 M	10 F 10 M	3 F 0 M	12 F 8 M	6 F 2 M
Age		17 aged 50-64 3 aged 65+	3 aged 20-34	22 aged 20-34 6 aged 50-64	
Level of Education		18 Bachelors degree or higher 1 A-Level or equivalent 1 Diploma	2 Bachelors degree or higher 1 A-Level or equivalent	18 Bachelors degree or higher 2 A-Level or equivalent	8 Bachelors degree or higher
Employment		7 Retired 5 Self-Employed 3 Full Time 3 Part Time 1 Student 1 Unemployed	1 Full Time 2 Students	1 Retired 1 Self-Employed 8 Full Time 3 Part Time 6 Students 1 Unemployed	1 Self-Employed 3 Full Time 1 Part Time 3 Students

FIGURE 3 Listenership study sample.

4 | INTERPRETATIVE FRAMES OF LISTENING

The listener diaries reveal two interpretative frames through which broadcasts are heard and imagined: the institutional frame of the BBC and the biographical frame of listener positionalities. Livingstone (1998, p. 5) refers to 'interpretative frames' in her research on television audiences as a means of discussing, theorising and understanding the 'sense-making process'. Although she mobilises them in a slightly different way, the idea of 'frames' is useful for conceptualising the contextual factors which shape audiences' interpretations of media. However, they are not entirely rigid or distinct. Livingstone (1998, p. 5) considers them to be 'heavily overlapping' and audience responses to Radio 4 broadcasts similarly reveal overlaps between the two frames of listening. Nevertheless, for clarity of analysis, the following discussion addresses each in turn.

First, listeners hear and interpret broadcasts with an expectation of balance and impartiality, signalling an awareness of the BBC's editorial imperative to produce truthful, accurate and impartial journalism (BBC Editorial Standards, n.d.). This is perhaps unsurprising given the BBC's status in British society and culture, and contractual relationship with audiences through the licence fee, which underline its presence in public imaginations (Born, 2005). However, listeners diverge over what they think balanced and impartial reporting sounds like. This is evidenced by contrasting responses to Radio 4's evening news programme, *The World Tonight*, from 28 July 2015, which features a report on the Eurotunnel. Francesca writes:

> Highly inflammatory and combative language and tone, so it sounded like an invading army was attempting to breach the UK's defences … I felt angry when Nigel Farage came on to 'up the ante' as the report felt completely one-sided and sensationalist … it feels like the BBC had gone full '*Daily Mail*'.

Francesca critiques the discursive representation of migration as an invasion that threatens the UK's safety and security. She considers the inclusion of Nigel Farage from the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) to undermine the BBC's claims to balanced reporting, suggesting it reminded her of tabloid journalism. Her response resonates with Felicity who critiques the broadcast's 'security framing/perspective' and categorisation of people as 'migrants (notably not called refugees)'. Like Francesca, she comments on the editorial selection of contributors, asking rhetorically, 'why was a rep from UKIP interviewed but no other political parties (other than the PM)?'. Her conclusion that the BBC offers an 'unbalanced report', however, contrasts with Colin's response:

> I could imagine … the sense of lawlessness of the migrants and their complete disregard for property … Having personally witnessed migrants trying to board a Eurotunnel train that I was onboard, the broadcast brought back memories of that evening when migrant youths were running across the countryside and climbing over the train.

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Colin re-articulates imaginaries of criminality and disorder because the broadcast sparks memories of a personal experience. He echoes the portrayal of threatening 'migrant youths' and does not question the broadcast's political representation. His response resonates with Sophia who considers it a 'neutral and impartial account' and feels 'troubled by the extent and severity of the situation'. These divergent interpretations to the same broadcast highlight the complexities of audience responses and suggest that balance and impartiality are contested ideas rooted in the subjectivities of listeners whose responses are conditioned by personal values, experiences and preconceptions.

Divergent reactions to *The World Tonight's* report on the Calais camp from 29 February 2016 confirm this is not an isolated example. Samuel writes:

> Factual account of clash—not judgemental. Bulldozers ploughing through jungle—feels brutal ... Neutral reporting on a riot.

Samuel is sympathetic to the portrayal of a standoff between police and migrants, which he considers 'factual' on the basis of its 'neutral', non-judgemental tone. However, the report sits uneasily with Michael who questions its narrative framing:

> Posited as an equal conflict between police and immigrants—but how can this ever be equal? 'Impartiality' apparently means not condemning the approach, just watching it. How can tear gas vs rocks be fair?

Michael critiques the representation of an 'equal conflict' and questions the BBC's understanding of impartiality, which he believes falsely privileges spectatorship over justifiable condemnation. Grace interprets it differently again:

> Image of heavily protected police with tear gas and rubber bullets against migrants with stones portrayed clearly the power dynamics in the clash. However, ... as the journalist described the clash, he described the gas as coming towards 'us', which placed him—and by extension the listener—as on the side of the police and not the migrants. This was possibly not deliberate, but if so, this might be even more telling about the unconscious biases of the report.

Grace praises the broadcast's account of an unequal power dynamic but calls out where the journalist physically stands to report from as a subtle marker of 'unconscious bias', aligning him, perhaps inadvertently, with the force of the state. These responses demonstrate that while listeners articulate their responses in a vocabulary of BBC journalism, they disagree over whether broadcasts achieve balanced, impartial reporting.

Listeners routinely articulate their responses in a language that reveals an awareness of the BBC's mission—established by its founder John Reith—to inform, educate and entertain (BBC Editorial Standards, n.d.). This is evidenced in responses to *iPM*, a news programme predicated on listener stories, from 31 May 2017, which reports on a Greek refugee camp:

> Leave this feeling uplifted and hopeful. I also feel better informed.
>
> (Amelia)

> Very informative program.
>
> (Colin)

> Felt I learned a lot.
>
> (Clare)

These listeners articulate their responses in Reithian terms, commenting on the broadcast's educational value, which hints at a public consciousness around what BBC programmes are expected to deliver. Whilst the substantive focus on migration precludes responses that consider broadcasts entertaining, listeners note when they enjoy or dislike a programme, suggesting audience reception of BBC radio is an affective, as well as discursive, process.

The second interpretive frame through which listeners hear broadcasts is the biographical context of their own positionalities. This chimes with Livingstone's (2017, p. 66) finding that audiences' 'situated biographies' influence their

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interpretation of media. Personal experiences and memories shape listeners' imaginative responses, as evidenced by reactions to *Ramblings* from 26 May 2018, a programme predicated on conversations recorded in the British countryside:

> I go walking in Surrey, so I was able to visualise this through the heat haze.
>
> (Ruby)

> I have been to Reigate so means I'm able to put myself in the surroundings.
>
> (Felicity)

Listeners are able to imagine the geography of the broadcast because they have previously seen it, which suggests connectivity is shaped by past encounters and remembrances.

Listening through a filter of personal experiences similarly conditions engagement with the subject of migration, as evidenced by Amelia's response to *iPM*:

> Loved the bell, feels like getting my own children up. Tired kids waking up for school.

Hearing a familiar sound and activity prompts self-reflection and establishes a sense of proximity with refugees. This capacity for relatability and understanding is confirmed when Amelia writes:

> Reminder that many are middle-class well-educated families
>
> ('People like me'.)

Imaginative geographies of distance and difference are collapsed in a realisation that refugees are recognisable and relatable human beings (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). This is also evidenced in responses to *On Your Farm*, a programme about rural life, from 14 January 2018. The broadcast features Dr Ryad Alsous, a beekeeper and former Professor of Agriculture from Syria who now lives in England. Grace reflects:

> Found the conversation about the university slowly closing during the war very affecting ... as awful as this is, it's always easier to imagine the situation of someone who started out in a position close to yours.

Grace connects with Ryad through the university as a shared point of relatability, prompting her to imagine being forced to abandon her studies. This mirrors Isabella's response to *Crossing Continents*, a documentary series, from 3 August 2018. This edition records a Mediterranean search and rescue mission and prompts reflection on her family's history of migration:

> Effective in exciting my compassion for these people who really are just like us and indeed just like my ancestors who fled from poverty in Ireland to the UK, USA and Australia.

Isabella is empathetic towards refugees in the documentary who are re-cast as 'people like us'. This propensity to spark self-reflection is again evidenced by responses to *iPM*:

> Makes one feel so humble and grateful for what we have compared to these children.
>
> (Ben)

> Left with a feeling of gratitude for the life I and my family have.
>
> (Camilla)

The act of listening and story of migration foster introspection as listeners reflect on their comparative circumstances. Occasionally, however, there is an undercurrent of despondency to responses:

> Sad to be in a privileged position and not being able to do anything.
>
> (Hazel, *TWT Calais*)

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> Feeling of helplessness ... when faced with the size of the problem.
>
> (Lucas, EJK's *FOOC*)

Affective responses are shaped by listeners' positionalities, which, given the global geographies of migration and displacement, are often predicated upon markers of inequality and distance. But rather than concealing feelings of helplessness and disempowerment, listeners are honest about their level of engagement. This is evidenced by Daniel's reaction to *The Untold*, from 2 May 2016, a documentary about a smuggling attempt from Calais to Britain:

> Feel shocked by my lack of involvement and empathy for the human story and situation. When I feel that I am having my emotions manipulated by the reporting I switch off emotionally ... I do feel guilty having such feelings.

This sense of 'compassion fatigue' (Moeller, 1999) is unusual within the sample, but suggests not all respond positively to journalistic attempts to engage audiences through human storytelling. It shares similarities with Kyriakidou's (2015, p. 226) 'detached witnessing' as a form of audience reception characterised by emotional disengagement from a subject of suffering. Seu (2015, p. 665) argues that some proactively 'switch off' as a self-protective mechanism if they think media representations are 'playing with their feelings ... with manipulative or exploitative intentions'. Daniel's honesty and reflexivity resonates with Chloe's response to *The World Tonight* from 23 December 2015:

> Makes me realise that we do try and avoid the reality of knowing what is happening.

Here, Chloe acknowledges a tendency to sidestep media representations that are distressing or disturbing, which supports Seu's (2015, p. 665) finding that audiences sometimes engage in a 'loop of self-reflexive reactions to their own reactions'.

The counterpoint to this is that broadcasts lead other listeners to feel dissatisfied with their life and career choices, evidenced by Audrey's responses to *iPM* and *Ramblings*:

> I was impressed and admired the volunteers and envied their feelings of fulfilment from their role.

> Admired the volunteers who made that possible as well as envying their sense of fulfilment and satisfaction at helping.

Repeated use of 'envy' suggests a degree of unhappiness and disappointment with her own situation and circumstances, reaffirming that the diaries can reveal as much about the listener as their interpretation of broadcasts. Together with expectations of BBC broadcasting, this biographical frame conditions a sense of relatability and connection with refugees, and acts as a crucial foundation upon which geographical imaginations around migration are built.

5 | REFUGEE STORIES AND VOICES

The diaries reveal that refugee voices and stories are critical to how listeners respond to radio representations of migration. The majority prefer hearing refugees speak directly, rather than mediated through a journalist, which re-casts refugees as tangible and relatable human beings, rather than silent and undifferentiated 'Others' (Crawley et al., 2016; Malkki, 1996). This confirms empirically that the performative act of speaking is vital to imbuing refugees with recognisability and re-appearing as people with voices, pasts and futures 'belonging to a political community' (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 16).

Hearing refugees speak makes them seem 'real', which suggests voice is an important determinant of humanity. This is exemplified in responses to *Ramblings*, which is presented by Clare Balding and features four named refugees—Cam, Osman, Rashid and Lee—who describe their journeys to the UK, experiences of detention, and the positive impact of the charity *Refugee Tales*:

> Effective in making them seem very *real* and *human* as opposed to distant statistics.
>
> (Isabella)

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> The refugees interviewed were given space to speak in their own voice, which really *humanised* them.
>
> (Francesca)

The inclusion of their voices counters media representations that silence and portray refugees in abstract, numerical terms. In the broadcast, Osman describes being detained in Gatwick where he first met Celia, a volunteer with the charity:

Osman: When they go to detention, really, I lose everything inside my health. And then that day, it was black day for me. I don't like to be detained because I'm no crime. First time I meet Celia, that lady, she's changed my life, you know. She gives me hope.

[Voice breaks, sounds of crying].

Clare: Oh bless you Osman.
Osman: But still. Life is hard because I can't be free person to live in this ... as human being.
Clare: It's one thing hearing their stories but also observing the way Rashid and Osman are with each other because as Osman got very emotional there and a tear started rolling down his cheek, Rashid just put his hand out and touched his shoulder and then found a tissue and silently handed it to him.

Listeners have an affective response to this exchange, which illustrates how radio can establish connections between refugees and listeners, and expand imaginative communities of belonging:

> Welled up a bit along with Osman when he was talking about how his life was changed.
>
> (Emma)

> Made me tearful listening to the emotions of Osman and his friend Rashid.
>
> (Amelia)

Both have an embodied reaction to the break in Osman's voice and mirror his emotional state by crying along with him. The power of voice to connect through affective and emotional registers is reinforced by Zoe who writes:

> I felt very emotional and sad about the personal story.

Radio's predication on voice speaks to the intimacy of the medium and plays a key part in shaping listeners' affective moods (Tebbutt, 2006). Listeners also praise Balding's empathetic interaction with refugees who are given space and time to articulate their stories. By contrast, listeners are critical of *A Point of View: Imagine* from 29 July 2018, a programme which features a weekly reflection on a topical issue. This edition is presented by children's author Michael Morpurgo and invites listeners to imagine they are a child journeying to Europe:

Michael: Close your eyes for a moment. And imagine that you are a child alone. You have no place you can call home. No community. No family. All you have are memories ... You are hiding from danger. Fleeing for your life. All you can do is put one foot in front of the other ...

Morpurgo's isolated voice and narration sits uneasily with listeners who critique his language and tone:

> Forcefully descriptive and emotive ... narrated with dramatic tones in his voice which again made the whole thing sound a bit over the top.
>
> (Clare)

> Sounded like a church sermon and lacked the warmth and authenticity of broadcasts featuring interviews with people who are sharing their real experiences.
>
> (Sophia)

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Listeners accuse Morpurgo of being 'dramatic' and a poor substitute for the 'warmth' and 'authenticity' of interviews with refugees. Unlike Balding, Morpurgo's distance from those he speaks about prompts listeners to comment on his performance and vocal delivery as an inauthentic communicator. Although perhaps well intentioned, Morpurgo falls victim to Goodman's (2010, p. 104) conclusion 'it is now through the global media mega-star that the subaltern speaks'. That is, a celebrity author who *replaces* and *speaks for* refugees is read as an unwelcome intervention and illustrates how audience reception of a recognisable public figure turned mediator of suffering is unfavourable.

This nuanced debate around who communicates stories of migration is reaffirmed by mixed reactions to *From Our Own Correspondent* (*FOOC*), a current affairs programme predicated on the spoken monologues of journalists. Retelling individual stories of migration succeeds in establishing a connection between some listeners and refugees. This is evidenced by Amelia's response to Jenny Hill's dispatch from 30 June 2018, which features Ali, a Syrian refugee living in Germany:

> Personal story makes it feel *real*, I am completely drawn into Ali's world and am rooting for him.

Hill's skilful storytelling helps Amelia feel immersed in Ali's world to the extent that she is figuratively cheering him on. However, most listeners prefer hearing directly from refugees:

> Not hearing the voice of the individual in question made it hard to be personable or have the emotions toward them.
>
> (Ella)

> Would have been more powerful to hear ... from Ali himself.
>
> (Felicity)

These comments echo responses to Emma Jane Kirby's dispatch from 14 February 2015:

> Failed to make me really empathise ... it lacked emotional power. No input from migrants themselves.
>
> (Jacob)

> Spoken like an audiobook ... which makes the desired effect lost somewhat.
>
> (Stephen)

Empathy and emotional connection are therefore closely linked to hearing refugees speak and *FOOC*'s reliance on the voices of journalists alone hinders some listeners' engagement with its subject matter.

Listeners reveal the power of refugee voices to rework representations of migration and establish a politics of recognition (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017), which is illustrated in responses to *On Your Farm*:

> I forgot he was a refugee. He was an expert in bees and very interesting.
>
> (Ruby)

> Interview allowed Ryad good space to tell his story.
>
> (Daniel)

The simple act of naming Ryad in the diaries illustrates how listeners identify him as a human being. Hearing Ryad articulate his story also has an affective impact as evidenced in responses to the following exchange with presenter Caz Graham:

Caz: Could you share with me some of the emotions you had when you had to leave Syria?

[Long pause, with emotion]

Ryad: I can't.
Caz: That's too difficult.
Ryad: I can't.
Caz: Yeah. I understand. It's too difficult.

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Like *Ramblings*, this interaction 'moves' listeners in affective registers:

> Really taken aback, made my stomach drop, when she asked what emotions he felt leaving Syria and then there is this huge pause and you can hear him choking up. Really emotional.
>
> (Felicity)

> I teared up when he was unable to talk due to emotion.
>
> (Scarlett)

Interestingly, listeners comment on the prolonged pause and catch in Ryad's voice, suggesting it is not just speech but *silences* in radio that can provoke embodied responses. These corporeal reactions confirm Kanngieser's (2015, p. 81) observation that 'sound does not just connect things; it changes them'. There is a clear transference of affect over the airwaves as listeners are physically moved by the dialogue, illustrating how bodies are 'moved, changed, affected' by what they hear (Gallagher, 2016, p. 43).

Less clear is the extent to which affective responses translate into action with only a fifth of listeners describing subsequent behaviour or future intentions:

> Makes me want to look into whether there are volunteering opportunities to help out.
>
> (Graham, *Crossing Continents*)

> Being a teacher myself I loved this podcast. I even looked up this charity online!!
>
> (Gabriella, *iPM*)

> Googled *Refugee Tales* and the detention centres out of curiosity afterwards.
>
> (Emma, *Ramblings*)

These responses corroborate Chouliaraki and Stolic's (2019, p. 311) hypothesis that media representations have the potential to 'touch upon people's emotional and activist sensibilities'. They also support Lacey's (2013, p. 163) contention that listening, as a form of attentiveness to others, can be 'a pre-condition for political action'. The study's format, which demanded proximity to a computer or tablet, perhaps accounts for these actions. However, the digitisation of radio facilitates mixed media engagement, creating further opportunities to translate affectivity into action.

Yet there are limits to how well refugee voices and stories are received. Free-flowing conversations are often disjointed, which exposes limits to the palatability of people's voices. This is evidenced in divergent responses to *The Listening Project* from 14 April 2017, a programme predicated on conversations recorded across the UK. The broadcast features Yousif and Zahra, the children of Iraqi refugees. Whilst Sarah praises 'a very natural conversation with the two talking over each other', Clare is 'annoyed … that Zahra was speaking over Yousif' and admits the interruptions 'became really jarring'. Connection is therefore conditional on listenability and the inclusion of refugee voices does not always translate into an inclusive politics of belonging.

Moreover, exposure to multiple voices across different broadcasts makes listeners realise that people are not always likeable, and can be contradictory. This is evidenced in responses to *Crossing Continents* which features three Eritreans—Mohammed, Agnes, and Heptom—who explain why they are journeying to Europe. Grace reflects:

> Presented a very nuanced picture of those crossing the Mediterranean, particularly in its inclusion of the man who had lied to his wife to come to Europe, and its focus on the fact that many of those on board were motivated by economic factors. It complicated the image we sometimes have in the west of refugees as completely helpless, and without agency, but also blurs the lines between what some media paints as the dichotomy between those refugees with their lives in immediate danger and those travelling for economic reasons. It puts a human voice to those economic reasons, but at the same time highlights that the human voices behind these reasons might not always be likeable.

Hearing multiple voices reveals mixed motivations behind migration which can change over the course of protracted journeys (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Heptom is simultaneously 'pushed' by conflict in Eritrea and 'pulled' by career opportunities in

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Europe and, as Grace observes, these mixed rationales challenge neat divisions between 'migrants' and 'refugees'. Heptom's confession that he concealed his departure from his family sits uneasily with others:

> Feeling really quite negative about him—however bad things are, why would you leave your kids.
>
> (Amelia)

> I was shocked [he] hadn't told his wife.
>
> (Audrey)

Questioning and condemning Heptom's actions illustrates how refugees are expected to 'enact particular scripts' (Hyndman, 2010, p. 454), and confirms that the humanisation of refugees means some people are not always likeable. This is not to undermine the necessity of including refugee voices in media, but to highlight the critical importance of doing so if coverage is to be representative of humanity. Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017, p. 19) argue that refugees are 'entitled to speak about their reasons for leaving and their aspirations—whether we accept these or not is precisely the matter of debate we are not currently having'. However, these diary extracts demonstrate that the exclusion of radio and audiences from academic analyses of migration reportage means instances of critical debate are inevitably missed.

6 | RADIO AND GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATIONS

Stories and voices of migration on Radio 4 are not just interpreted and felt, they are also imagined, which provides compelling empirical evidence of radio's capacity to shape geographical imaginations. Over two-thirds of listeners evidence an imaginative response, describing being able to 'picture', 'see' and 'imagine' spaces, places and people in broadcasts. Conjuring up imaginative geographies in the mind's eye confirms that listening is an active process as audiences participate in the co-production of imaginaries. Interestingly, two participants equate radio and listening with novels and reading:

> Like listening to a historical novel being read on the radio—so evocative.
>
> (Francesca, EJK's *FOOC*)

> I picture the people and scenes vividly, as I might having read a novel.
>
> (Lucy, *The Untold*)

Both comments recall Shingler and Wieringa's (1998, p. 76) observation that 'just as the written page can evoke strong visual impressions for its reader, radio's sounds, voices and music can similarly create vivid pictures in the mind of its listener'. Rigid distinctions between the visual and aural are blurred in the acts of listening and imagining as audiences supply the imagery themselves. They respond to sounds and voices by picturing the physical appearances and spatial surroundings of interviewees:

> I can picture the Syrian man's animated and enthusiastic face.
>
> (Henry, *On Your Farm*)

> Gives you a vivid mental picture of the awful, dangerous conditions.
>
> (Ben, EJK's *FOOC*)

Repeated use of the term 'picture' captures the visuality of radio and confirms McLeish's (1978, p. 1) contention that radio 'can stimulate the imagination so that, as soon as a voice comes out of the loudspeaker, the listener attempts to visualise the source of the sound and to create in the mind's eye the owner of the voice'.

To say that geographical imaginations are shaped by radio is not to deny the multi-media age in which audiences live. Listeners reference multiple media when describing radio's imaginative power, which reminds us that listening is not divorced from other media engagement. This is evidenced by Abigail's response to *The Untold* when she admits, 'I was visualising the child who drowned and washed up on the beach', referring to the image of 3-year-old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi. Similarly, in response to Kirby's dispatch for *FOOC*, Philip recalls 'a scene from the Dunkirk film', which

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demonstrates that when faced with the disorientating and unfamiliar, listeners turn to the memorable and recognisable, drawing on a range of sources and imagery.

Broadcasts often prompt listeners to make imaginative connections across space and time, relating contemporary migration to past histories and geographies. This is evidenced by Hayley's response to Hill's dispatch for *FOOC*, which translates a local account of refugee settlement in Germany into a comment on the country's national response to new arrivals:

> Amazing that Angela Merkel is still Chancellor of Germany given that she has implemented such an open immigration policy in recent years. She seems determined not to let history repeat itself in Germany and that is impressive. I know that's not exactly what the news report is about but it's what I got thinking about while and after I listened to it.

The broadcast lingers in Hayley's geographical imagination and prompts reflection on Germany's past and present response to refugees. Francesca similarly engages in expansive thinking, looking ahead to future impacts of migration:

> Good reminder that it will be a number of years (and perhaps a generation) before we will understand the range of outcomes from the movement of people during this period.

This propensity to move imaginatively between spaces and times is reaffirmed by Victoria who wonders about the contexts from which refugees are fleeing:

> My mind drifted to what must their lives be like in their home countries that this is their only option.

Whilst this tendency to draw imaginative connections might be a reflection of the educated sample, it points to the capacity of radio to inspire geographical imaginations that operate across spatial and temporal scales.

Journalists' use of imagery and descriptive language is critical to evoking listeners' geographical imaginations. This is exemplified by responses to *The World Tonight* from 23 December 2015, which features a report from Calais by journalist Andrew Hosken:

> ***Hosken:*** Skies of battleship grey above. A sprawling shantytown of tents and little shacks below. But it's probably best to describe 'the jungle' by its ever present, slightly strange and rancid smell to give you a real idea of the place. The smell of burning rubbish, stagnant puddles, rotting food, excrement, body odour, the salt of the English Channel not so far away and the chemical toilets in need of emptying. That's how I would describe *Eau de Jungle*, the scent of desperation.

Listeners respond to Hosken's storytelling and quote specific words and phrases that activate their mind's eye:

> Excellent descriptive language to help the listener imagine the camp conditions, especially his use of the five senses. The phrase 'the scent of desperation' stands out.
>
> (Colin)

> The language around smell ... was very powerful, particularly the use of 'the scent of desperation'. It was very evocative and created a very vivid picture of the place.
>
> (Grace)

Listeners respond to Hosken's appeal to their senses, which help them picture the camp's spatiality and materiality:

> Painted a clear picture of the sights and smells of the Jungle.
>
> (Simon)

> Paints an excellent picture of what the jungle looks like and is very evocative, makes me imagine really well a brown squalid and dishevelled camp.
>
> (Lily)

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These responses highlight the power of radio to represent space and influence perceptions of it, revealing imaginative geographies to be multi-sensory. Sounds are a critical catalyst to this spatial thinking and imagining:

> Audio in the broadcast (e.g., the sound of the musicians in the camp/the sound of hammers and new shacks being constructed) made me more able to picture the environment in my mind.
>
> (Elizabeth)

> Popping sound from tear gas grenades and the description of throat and lungs being affected is striking and helps listeners imagine the situation vividly.
>
> (Liam)

Imaginative geographies are shaped by sounds which 'produce space and are produced by them' (Gallagher et al., 2017, p. 621). Audio recordings and descriptive language combine to evoke a sense of place, construct the camp in the minds of listeners, and immerse them in its sights, sounds, and smells.

Imaginative geographies are also transportive as listeners are extracted from their surroundings into spaces and places in broadcasts. Again, sounds are triggers to experiential listening, which dismantles imaginaries of 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there' by immersing listeners in lived experiences of migration. This is illustrated in responses to *Crossing Continents*:

> Amazement: I feel like I experienced a 'live' rescue mission.
>
> (Justine)

> Background noises and vivid descriptions almost made me feel like I was on the boat.
>
> (Henry)

> Giving out the lifejackets—it almost feels like I'm there.
>
> (Samuel)

Immersive reportage with place-based sounds that evoke the motion of waves and affective atmosphere of the boat leads listeners to feel like they are experiencing a search and rescue mission first-hand. The broadcast functions like a field recording, capturing the space/time of the journey and re-producing it in listeners' geographical imaginations. In other words, listeners respond to the broadcast's invitation to 'suspend disbelief—to imagine that they are in the place where the recording was made' (Gallagher & Prior, 2014, p. 275). Repeated use of the term 'feel' highlights a need to better account for the embodied and experiential dimensions of radio and listening. Imaginative distance and (in)difference between listeners and refugees are collapsed by multi-sensory broadcasts that transport audiences into 'worlds' conjured over the airwaves. This is significant because it suggests that radio has the capacity to turn migration from an abstract and intangible geopolitical story into a visceral experience comprehended, imagined and felt by listeners.

7 | CONCLUSION

This paper makes a significant empirical and conceptual contribution to geographical knowledge and understanding by demonstrating how BBC radio sparks audiences' geographical imaginations around Europe's migration 'crisis' and regulates fields of perceptibility, recognition and relatability with refugees. It takes seriously Gallagher and Prior's (2014, p. 269) observation that 'important insights are being lost as a result of the routine erasure of sound' and forms part of the effort to amplify radio and practices of listening in geography. The paper answers Dittmer and Dodds' (2008, p. 453) call to escape 'the methodological cul-de-sac' and explore how audiences make sense of geopolitical discourses and imaginaries through the novel 'playlist-diary' method: an innovative solution to studying audience engagements with radio and podcasts which advances interdisciplinary debates about how to explore the power and effects of sonic media. Geographers will note the exciting potential to situate the method 'in place' and explore everyday geographies of listening to better understand how spatialities of reception shape audience interpretations.

Three key findings about listeners' discursive, imaginative and affective responses emerge. First, listeners engage critically with the discursive content of broadcasts, listening attentively to questions of language, imagery and representation, and commenting on the editorial selection and framing of contributors. Strikingly, most express a preference for personal

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stories of migration self-articulated by refugees who re-appear in geographical imaginations as human beings; a key finding which confirms the Arendtian view that voice is 'instrumental in endowing the refugee with personhood and historicity—and hence with the potential for recognition' (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 16). This paper develops existing work that hypothesises the *potential* for journalism to produce particular audience responses by demonstrating how and under what conditions broadcasts lead to instances of relatability and recognition between listeners and refugees: essential precursors to imagining Europe as 'a more inclusive and open community' (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 20).

There are, however, instances where some listeners express irritation with or disapproval of refugees who articulate mixed motivations for journeying to Europe. This nuances research which considers the simple inclusion of refugee voices a precursor to inclusive audience responses. Rather, listening emerges as a complex process that resists straightforward correlations between representations and audience interpretations, and is affected by confounding variables such as listener positionalities and expectations of BBC journalism. That said, instances of critique perhaps provide additional evidence of listeners identifying refugees as relatable human beings who are contradictory, flawed, and not always likeable. This reaffirms the necessity of including refugee voices and stories in the media if coverage of migration is to be representative of humanity and a catalyst to inclusive ways of 'seeing' and imagining.

Second, listeners describe being able to picture spaces, places and people in broadcasts, which evidences radio's imaginative power. This propensity to turn sounds and voices that enter the ear into geographies pictured in the imagination suggests radio can realise its potential for establishing imaginative identification with others. There are clear instances of perceptibility and recognition, which collapse distinctions between 'us' and 'them' and re-cast refugees as 'people like us'. That is, radio elicits among some listeners, 'a leap to the realization that "this could have been us", what Arendt calls the "imaginative mobility" of the mind' (Villa, 1999, p. 18 cited in Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2019, p. 320). Again, this is not a universal response as some express a frustration with or dislike of refugee voices and stories, and others resist overt attempts to evoke empathy and understanding. Nevertheless, in successfully evoking the geographical imaginations of a majority, radio participates in the affective work necessary to expand imaginative communities of belonging and forge meaningful connections with others.

Third, listeners highlight the affective impacts of radio, demonstrating that broadcasts are felt, as well imagined, that silences and pauses can provoke striking affective responses, and that listeners are transported experientially, as well as imaginatively, to immersive 'worlds' over the airwaves. Listening is revealed to be an embodied and multi-sensory practice which stretches geographical imaginations beyond the purely visual or cognitive realm. Instances where listeners write they 'teared up' or their 'stomach dropped' expose how radio can 'move' audiences in emotional and affective registers, and how aural representations of migration 'can "speak through the body"' (Madge, 2014, p. 181). Some listeners are taken outside of their immediate surroundings, transported through live, in-situ journalism which suggests sonic representations are embodied as well as discursively interrogated and imagined. Methodologies of listening to radio journalism on migration can therefore reveal new epistemologies of understanding migration and radio must be added to academic analyses if we are to fully understand how a politics of recognition emerges.

These connections between sounds, voices, affectivity and imaginations have significant implications for media representations that privilege politicians over refugees (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2019). They suggest the silencing of refugees may translate into a lack of positive affectivity in audiences; a disinterest in or distrust of people on the move, who cannot vocalise their stories or experiences. This has the potential to support exclusionary policies and practices of migration management, given that audiences who remain unmoved by what they hear are unlikely to critique or engage with the politics of migration. Carter and McCormack (2014, p. 320) argue that 'affectivity is part of the moving ground from which thinking—including thinking critically about geopolitics—emerges and is cultivated'. Put simply, affect can be a catalyst to geopolitical thinking and intervention, and this affectivity does not have to be profound or graspable; it can be 'a sense of corporeal disquiet, a knot in the stomach, a visceral unease' (Carter & McCormack, 2014, p. 320). The smallest affect, feeling, or emotion expressed or left unarticulated in the diaries may be enough to spark future engagement with, and challenge apathy around, the subject and protagonists of migration. Not all radio journalism will achieve this outcome, but in failing to study radio and listeners altogether, we miss how the aural connects with geographical imaginations in ways that may begin to re-work unequal relations of power.

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