

Pioneer study on *solastalgia* employs sound as a research tool and launches podcast for listening to the landscape along with its stories

Each podcast episode by Land Body Ecologies tells an intimate true story from a local community across the globe to highlight how ecosystem health and mental health are interconnected

The first of five stand-alone episodes will tell the story of Finland's longest river, and two sisters' journey as they reflect on how the damming of the river shaped their lives

Land Body Ecologies (LBE) is an interdisciplinary research project exploring *solastalgia*, a concept that sheds light on mental distress specifically caused by environmental change. LBE connects collaborators in a range of fields – from human rights, medicine or psychology to arts, design, sociology and ecology – across a network of hubs, located in Finland, India, Kenya, Thailand, Uganda and the UK. The hubs across the first five sites bring together land-dependent and indigenous communities at the forefront of today's environmental crisis and land rights issues. In the UK, LBE is a resident of the Wellcome Hub, a dynamic research space within Wellcome Collection, Wellcome's free museum and library in the heart of London. Amidst these communities' varied and layered lived experiences, LBE employs design research, storytelling and artistic approaches as ways to reach nuances and deepen the exploration of human experiences and relationships with the environment, offering an alternative to the current dominant, data-driven discourses.



Land Body Ecologies team members recording sounds of the hydropower station that sits on the river Kemi, Finland, 2022. © Invisible Flock.

As part of this exploration of artistic methodologies, on 22 June 2022 Land Body Ecologies will launch *The Free River*, the first of a five-episode podcast series that will share stories of communities affected by environmental change. The podcast is co-produced with arts studio Invisible Flock and sound artist Chris Watson, whose award winning recordings have often accompanied David Attenborough's narratives around the planet. Fundamental part of the practices of both Invisible Flock and Watson, sound, in this podcast, transcends the role of

documentation and unfolds as artistic expression. *“People shared their stories with us, but so did the landscape: we listened to the human voices and their experiences, but we also listened to the world around ourselves,”* says Victoria Pratt, Invisible Flock Creative Director.

The Free River tells the story of Kemijoki, Finland’s longest river that cuts across the country’s northern region. As the first hydroelectric power station was constructed on the river between 1945–1949, the damming of the river Kemi represented a death blow for a salmon-fishing culture that was centuries old, and changed forever the course and balance of this powerful thriving river and ecosystem. The story is grounded in the experiences of two sisters. A generation apart from each other, they both reflect on how the damming shaped their work and lives. In the episode, they journey through the land as they strive to understand the lasting suffering caused when the hydro dam was constructed across their family home and silenced their river. *“For some people, it was hard to talk about their own personal losses, as it’s simply not what people do back where we come from.....So, when they could not talk about their losses, some could talk about the salmon. They could talk about what was happening from the salmon’s perspective: how it must have been awful for the salmon when they could no longer swim up their home river and how they could no longer access natural waters. It was easier to talk about that,”* as sociologist Outi Autti recounts in the podcast.

Each episode of storytelling is paired with another side of the same story – a B-side where the landscape, then, speaks for itself. Sounds captured in the environment are turned into sound art, and musical expressions unearth from the land. As Watson describes, *“the sounds of ice fracturing under the surface of a frozen river is contrasted by the stillness of the Arctic air above, and finally broken by the mechanical growl of hydroelectric turbines disrupting the flow of the river and changing the entire ecosystem.”*

The following episode, due to be released in August, will feature the bee keepers of Mau forest, in Kenya, land of the Ogiek people. The Ogiek have cared for the Mau forest by living symbiotically with animals, flowers and trees that grow there, and the bees, for the Ogiek, transition between the physical and their spiritual territories. The episode will tap into the issues of conservation that led to the Ogiek being evicted from their own forest, and the impact this causes both on the people, as well as in the honeybees, whose population is in constant decline, without their caretakers. Future episodes will feature stories from land-dependent and indigenous communities based in Thailand, Uganda and India.

Land Body Ecologies Podcast will be available from 22 June on Spotify, Google Podcast and Apple Podcast, as well as on www.landbodyecologies.com/podcast. Each episode will be available in English as well as in its respective local language – in the case of *The Free River*, the episode will be released in English and Finnish (separate audio tracks).

The podcast is produced by Invisible Flock, Chris Watson and Land Body Ecologies, as part of the Land Body Ecologies’ two-year [residency at the Wellcome Hub](#).

For images and other media enquiries please contact: press@landbodyecologies.com.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Listings information

Land Body Ecologies Podcast

Episode 1: The Free River

Release date: 22 June 2022

Available online on www.landbodyecologies.com/podcast, as well as on Spotify, Google Podcast and Apple Podcast.

About Land Body Ecologies (LBE)

We are a global interdisciplinary network working to understand and engage with the lived experiences of land trauma among marginalised communities. Our research is rooted within communities at the forefront of today's environmental crisis and land rights issues. Through long form collaboration, we seek to understand the traumas endured when the land suffers, exploring the deep interconnections of mental and ecosystem health.

Our team is a global collective of artists, expert communities, researchers, designers, conservationists, technologists and activists from fields including psychology, arts, human rights, sustainability, sociology, design and medicine. Sited in critical landscapes, our network brings together land-dependent and indigenous communities. Looking at solastalgia through the lens of these communities allows us to place lived experiences at the forefront of understanding solastalgia, and, together, to explore the complex and fragile relationship between psyche and land.

Land Body Ecologies is centred on the following locations:

Arctic North Hub, Finland – anchored by Waria and Oulu University

Bannerghatta Hub, India – anchored by Quicksand

Bwindi Hub, Uganda – anchored by Action for Batwa Empowerment Group

London Wellcome Hub, United Kingdom – anchored by Invisible Flock and Minority Rights Group International

Mau Forest Hub, Kenya – anchored by Ogiek Peoples' Development Program

<https://www.landbodyecologies.com/>

About Solastalgia

Solastalgia addresses the mental distress specifically caused by environmental change, where one's home environment and sense of place is being violated. Environmental Philosopher Glenn Albrecht created the term *solastalgia* in 2005, based on the emotional impacts of large scale coal mining on individuals' well being in New South Wales, Australia, where he is based. In 2015, the term was included in the medical journal *The Lancet* as a contributing concept to the impact of Climate Change on Human Health and Wellbeing. More recently, the term *solastalgia* was also published in the United Nations' 2022 report by the IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In Albrecht's publication *Earth Emotions* (2019), *solastalgia* is identified as one of six conditions he defines as land-based sicknesses, or *psychoterratic* diseases, emerging from our changing relationship to our natural world.

Unlike the more commonly recognised term *eco-anxiety*, which relates to the sense of global dread and lack of control over the current and predicted future state of human-induced climate change, *solastalgia* is rooted in a lived experience of place, and bound within how one defines their home, their land and identity.

About The Wellcome Hub Award

The two-year, £1 million Hub Award grant supports transdisciplinary teams to explore creative and innovative approaches to health research and engagement. The Hub at Wellcome Collection provides a base for the teams to perform rigorous, creative research and to stage scientific and artistic experiments, data-gathering and public events.

www.wellcome.org

About Invisible Flock

Invisible Flock is an arts studio that operates at the intersection of art and technology. Invisible Flock builds, develops and produces high quality public and digital art that can be experienced by large audiences all over the world. The work is developed through rigorous research and processes co-designed with expert communities, placing local and global in dialogue. Invisible Flock infiltrates many sectors to have a creative impact on ecology, politics, health and society.

Current and recent projects include *Aurora* (2018) a multi sensory installation about climate change that re-flooded a disused reservoir in Liverpool; *Inaudible* (2019 – present) exploring human elephant conflict and its effects on fragile populations and ecosystems; *The Sleeping Tree* (2020 –), a long form, immersive, sound and light experience connecting audiences with the distant ecosystems in collaboration with LEAP (Landscape Ecology and Primatology, Bournemouth University), SOCP (Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme) and FKL (Leuser Conservation Forum), commissioned by Brighton Festival and also realised as a publication; and *Out From the Flood* (June 2020 –), a collaboration with Subzero that will result in the creation of an online generative data visualisation exploring environmental data being measured at the Oulanka Research Station in northern Finland.

www.invisibleflock.com

About Chris Watson

Watson was a founding member of the influential Sheffield based experimental music group Cabaret Voltaire during the late 1970's and early 1980's. Since then he has developed a particular and passionate interest in recording the wildlife sounds of animals and habitats from around the world. As a freelance composer and sound recordist Watson specialises creating spatial sound installations which feature a strong sense and spirit of place.

His television work includes many programmes in the David Attenborough 'Life' series including 'The Life of Birds' which won a BAFTA Award for 'Best Factual Sound' in 1996, and as the location sound recordist for the BBC series 'Frozen Planet' which also won a BAFTA Award for 'Best Factual Sound' (2012). Watson has recorded and featured in many BBC Radio 4 and World Service productions including 'The Wire' which won him the Broadcasting Press Guild's Broadcaster of The Year Award (2012). His music is regularly featured on the BBC Radio 3 programme 'Late Junction'. He has also worked extensively for RTE Radio 1 on series such as 'Sound Stories.'

In 2013 Watson received a Paul Hamlyn Composers Award. His installations have been commissioned by international galleries and festivals such as Sheffield Millennium Gallery, Opera North in Leeds, The National Gallery, London, The Louvre, Paris, the Aichi Triennial in Japan and Unsound in Kraków.

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