

Title

Peace, Sound and the Resonance of History

Subtitle

A Collaborative Walk from Tromsø's Telegrafbukta to Sydspissen

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Abstract

An itinerary is a dynamic spatial practice that connects places in sequence. In everyday mobilities, we follow familiar routes almost automatically, often losing awareness of our surroundings as movement becomes routine. In unfamiliar settings, we may explore more actively, but without the knowledge or context needed to fully understand what we encounter.

Drawing on the pragmatics of communication and environmental humanities, this short walk along Tromsøya’s southern shoreline is designed to encourage deeper engagement with place, grounded in local awareness, historical understanding and sensory experience. Meaning emerges through interaction with contextual cues: the spatial arrangement and built landscape of the area, multimodal signage, and the sounds and silences of past and present. Participants’ contributions add further layers of awareness. In this way, itineraries can function as collaborative practices of situated meaning-making.

Learning to attend to the intricacies of place within our mobility practices may help to foster a more reflective, peaceful and ethical attitude towards people, other living beings and the natural environment. This transformative potential affects both those who experience such walks directly and *in situ*, and those who later encounter these places from elsewhere and at different moments through forms of storytelling capable of transcending mainstream exclusionary imaginaries.

Keywords

peacebuilding, soundscapes, haptic geographies, heritage, future ancestry

Cover Image



Caption: Arctic placemaking map, [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Alternative text: Map of Tromsøya's southern shoreline, showing a green route for a peace and sound walk from "Start" near Telegrafbukta to "Stop" at Sydspissen. The path follows the coast with marked pause points for listening and reflection. Surrounding streets and neighborhoods are visible. Overlaid text reads: "What does peace sound like? Are we committed to caring for it for future ancestors?"

Filename: PeaceSoundMap_1439x1148.png

Creative idea/material/reflection

The initial inspiration for the walk was developed remotely. The route, map and guiding questions were prepared and tested the day before. The following afternoon, under a clear Arctic sky, a small group of academics participating in the Arctic Humanities Blended Intensive Programme joined us for the walk along Tromsø's southern shoreline. As facilitators, we introduced the site's historical and cultural backdrop, while participants remained free to engage with the landscape through their own observations and sensory impressions. The co-creation of meaning did not erase differences in perception and sensibility, but instead allowed multiple ways of experiencing and interpreting the walk to coexist.

We began at Telegrafbukta, at the edge of an urban park, with the fjord on one side and a street on the other, attuning ourselves to sounds, silences and the narratives embedded in both. This liminal place carries traces of a stratified global history. A simple concrete monument commemorates the Nobile expedition, an Arctic airship journey in 1928 under the auspices of the Italian Fascist Government, although Umberto Nobile himself was not aligned with Fascist ideology. The expedition, which aimed to land on the pack ice, ended in tragedy when the airship crashed, killing eight crew members. Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, who had previously flown over the North Pole with Nobile, disappeared while attempting a rescue mission, and other rescuers also lost their lives, bringing the total number of victims, whose names are engraved on the monument, to seventeen. Nobile survived, together with his dog Titina, but returned home in disgrace. The expedition reflects a period in which polar exploration was driven not only by curiosity but also by national pride and imperial ambition in the Arctic.

The walk was also a soundwalk, inviting participants to listen closely: to the wind across the water, footsteps on gravel, distant city rhythms, and the quieter echoes held in the landscape. Listening extended beyond sound into an ethical practice, recognising relationships to land, respecting different ways of knowing, and making space for perspectives often marginalised. Part of this attentiveness involved an awareness of the indigenous Sámi people of Sápmi, whose presence continues to shape the region's cultural and ecological understandings.

The principle of *allemannsretten*, Norway's right of public access to nature, was also evoked. This right to roam combines freedom with responsibility, encouraging movement across the land while calling for respect. In this context, it underscored how shared spaces can foster shared understanding.

As we moved toward Sydspissen, the route unfolded as a layered landscape where natural beauty and dark heritage coexist. The shoreline offered open views, shifting light, and the steady presence of sea and sky. At the same time, the area bears traces of a more troubling past. In June 1941, the German occupation established a detention camp here, holding political prisoners and Jewish people from the Tromsø area. Today, there are few visible remains, but an information board installed in 2022 marks the site, with a QR code linking to a short film that connects this local history to the wider context of the Second World War.

Participants contributed their own observations and ways of sensing, shaping an experience that remained open rather than prescriptive. Awareness of the difficult histories recalled by the

information board did not diminish the positive experience of the walk. The fair weather and the sounds of people walking, jogging and playing, mingling with gull cries and distant industrial droning, contributed to a shared perception of a place invested in peace. After a long day spent indoors during the BIP, the walk was welcomed as an opportunity to clear our minds and appreciate the circumstances that had brought us together.

This collaborative approach, grounded in place-based awareness, historical acknowledgment and sensory engagement through walking and listening, can serve as a model for peace itinerary building, fostering deeper connections between people and the environments they move through. More generally, such walks can reposition spaces that appear peripheral as meaningful sites of encounter and reflection, not only for those who experience them directly but also for those who later engage with their narratives.

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