

A Guide to Making an Episode of Surviving Society Presents: Material Crimes

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1. Treatment

The treatment is meant to be a skeleton plan of your episode. Remember: **less is more!** Think of it as an overview of the scenes in a play or a movie.

The treatment will help you think through:

- How to play with the “true crime” genre. Try to be reflexive and critical, rather than sensationalist.
- How your episode will sound - whose voices will feature, what sounds will ‘score’ your infrastructural story, and what additional news/archival materials will you include.
- What moods/feelings/tempo you want for each section - this will ensure your episode is sonically varied, keeping it gripping. It will also guide how you might interview people.

Again, less is more! Your treatment will change based on the interviews, sounds and experiences accumulated while making your episode. If your treatment is too detailed, you may not be able to really “listen” to the material you collect. You will also make more work for yourself.

2. Recording interviews and collecting additional sound clips

2.1 Interviews

- Place your recording device close to your interviewee.
- If online, make sure your interviewee speaks directly into the recording device. If they have a microphone that attaches to clothing make sure it is attached so there are no interfering sounds.
- No shuffling papers, fidgeting or walking while interviewing (unless you are in a very quiet place!).
- If there is a loud background noise at any point during your interview, ask your interviewee to repeat what they were saying.
- Choose a quiet place to do your interviews. If this is not possible, consider whether it would be helpful to incorporate an explainer into your episode. For example, “X’s job is in a busy place and they work long hours. I therefore went to meet them at their workplace during a break. The noise you hear in the background is the sound of...”.
- Record a bit of additional ambient sound where you record your interviews (circa. 2 minutes at the end of each recording). This is helpful if interview excerpts need to be sound edited.
- **Something to consider...** do you want your interviews to have a more conversational feel, including reaction sounds (e.g., noises of agreement, interjections, etc.) or a more formal feel? This is an aesthetic choice. It may depend on who you’re interviewing or how you want your episode to feel. You might choose to go for a mix, with some interviews more conversational and some more formal.

- For formal interviews:
 - If you're on zoom make sure to turn off your own audio. Then the recording will only pick up the audio of your interviewee.
 - If you're in person try your hardest to minimise reaction sounds while your interviewee is speaking.

2.2 Recording your own additional sounds

- Try to avoid interference with the sound you're recording. For example, if you're recording the sound of a train, make sure nothing is interfering with your recording device. If you can listen back while making your recording, you can check you're capturing the sound you want.

2.3 Collecting additional sounds

- For additional sounds, including archival, news, and pop culture clips, you can find a lot of material on YouTube.
- This free archive of sounds is also useful www.freesound.org.

3. How to share your files

Please input information about your audio files into this database

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Uc4jtxhP8WWuecArhjFKLXvNgM8L2pZkcRK4qVZliCk/edit#gid=0>

The spreadsheet is shared in view-only mode so you can't edit it. Please make a copy and rename it "Sound Clips - [YOUR NAME]". You can then fill it in and return it to us, and we'll add it to our drive.

3.1 File ID

- Please give each clip an ID in the format MC_[Number]. These numerical IDs should be attached in ascending order, corresponding to where in your episode files are positioned, starting with the first clip 01 (e.g., MC_01, MC_02, and so on).
- You might use the different parts of the same longer clip in your episode. If so, the numerical ID in this spreadsheet should correspond to the first time your file is used in the episode. See section 4 below for how to indicate clips in your script.

3.2 Location

- Where the files are located on the internet, you can just put a link into the category "location". For audio files that you have collected such as interviews, send these via WeTransfer to this email and write "WeTransferred" for location. If you ensure that the

"file name" corresponds to the name(s) of the files you share with us via WeTransfer, it should be pretty easy for us (especially George/Adders, our amazing sound editor) to navigate this database and the corresponding audio files.

4. Script

The script is the fleshed out version of your treatment. It needs to include **all** the details of your episode because i) we will use it to review the arc of your episode and its sound with you; ii) our sound editor will work from this to edit your episode together; and iii) you will use the script to record your narration.

The script should translate into approximately 30-40 minutes of audio. There is no exact measure for this, as you will all have different styles - some of you will have more narration, some will speak faster than others, some will have more interview and other sound clips.

Word count can therefore only offer a very rough guide. Past episodes where all the interviews were transcribed were approx. 5000 - 7000 words.

4.1 Writing accessibly

When writing the script, be as accessible and direct as you can. This means:

- Avoiding technical terms, academic jargon or theoretical concepts.
- Keeping sentences short.
- Staying away from academic 'shorthands' and conjunctive phrases. Things like 'indeed', 'therefore', 'nevertheless', 'thus', 'in addition to', 'in so doing', etc.
- Trying to make it feel conversational, like you're talking to someone and you're on the trail of your infrastructural crime together.

4.2 Other things to consider

- How listeners of your episode will follow along. For example, people can't easily flick back and forth as they might while reading, so if you are revisiting an idea (particularly a complex one), it's helpful to go over some of the more complex details again.
- You need to introduce and possibly re-introduce your interviewees. Something like: "I talked to Laleh Khalili, who is an expert on shipping infrastructure in the Middle East. She was really helpful in explaining.....". And then later - "here's Laleh again talking about..."
- Sometimes written sentences do not work when read aloud. It can be helpful to record and listen back to your script before finalising to ensure it works when spoken.

4.3 Directions for your narration

- Try to include mood and/or stage directions. For example:

'this section should feel puzzling therefore read quizzically/curiously'

OR

'this section should feel high octane therefore read fast and with intensity'

OR

'this section should feel powerful and moving therefore read slowly with emotion and conviction'

This might feel silly but it will help you bring your script to life when you read it and help you make sure your narrative is sufficiently varied and therefore compelling!

4.4 Directions for our sound editor

- Where you want a sound inserted, include a line break, followed by the file ID (see Section 3 above) and timestamp for each clip (e.g., '05.03 - 06.21'). If the whole clip is to be used, please write 'whole clip'. For example:

...different actions that do the work of rupture and international solidarity, in material and symbolic terms.

> **Insert MC_24, 01.27 - 02.49**

- Differentiate your narration from your clips by putting your clips in bold and/or using a different font (see example above).
- If you are using multiple sections from one longer audio file, such as an interview, list the audio file ID from your database of sounds, with the timestamps for the clip you want to feature. So long as you include the timestamps, it does not matter if this interrupts your file ID system.
- If several voices feature throughout your episode, it might be helpful to include an additional colour code to show who is who. If you do this, please include a legend at the beginning of your script.

- If you want to edit sections out of an interview clip, you will need to transcribe that section, placing sections you want edited out in parentheses []. Please also highlight for ease and clarity. For example:

> **Insert interview clip: MC_13, 09.15-11.11** '...which are now creating second class citizens directly legally through the nationalities law inside the borders of forty-eight... [And then a whole lot of ambiguous other situations that are applied to other liminal populations that are somewhere on the borderlands or somewhere within these, within these communities that, for example, in Golan, or, for example, in East Jerusalem]... so you have all of these different regimes of racial control.'

- Indicate where there will be a section break and how this will be communicated (e.g., silence, a sound clip, music etc.). For example:

...different political subjects.

> **Insert section break: music 30 secs. Narration resumes and overlaid after 15 secs.**

To make this a bit more concrete, let's get back on the train....

- If you want a sound to underlie a part of your narration, write 'underlying sound: Clip_ID' followed by the timestamp *before* the narration you want it to underlie. For example,

...This paved the way for the US to establish a military base on Guantanamo Bay, or GITMO as it was referred to by the US administration.

> **Insert underlying sound (cuban music): MC_14, 00.00 - 00.58. Narration overlays music from 00.20.**

Guantanamo's peculiar political geography was an advantage to the US...

- If you want the clip to play at full volume before the sound is lowered and your narration comes in or resumes, give the timestamp for when you want narration to resume. For example:

...different actions that do the work of rupture and international solidarity, in material and symbolic terms.

> Insert underlying sound (protest sounds): MC_24, 01.27 - 02.49. Narration resumes at 01.56.

During the Unity Intifada - we saw some genuine examples of this.

- Indicate where you will need to overlay a translation or audio description/paraphrasing or voice distortion added. For example:

> Insert interview clip: MC_07, 03.08 - 04.15. Translation MC_08 starts at MC_07, 03.15.

OR

> Insert interview clip: MC_07, 03.08 - 04.15. Voice distortion needed.

If this is an anonymising measure, we advise discussing this with us and our sound editor before deciding on an approach.

4.5 Additional fidgety things

- No acronyms unless they are well established and/or can easily be read aloud (e.g., IMF - international monetary fund; or COIN - counterinsurgency) and even then the full name must be introduced first.
- When using currencies that people may not be familiar with or when talking about a historical monetary value, include a conversion to current GBP.
- Try not to include too many longer quotes from texts to be read aloud (to avoid an academic vibe). If you do include some, consider if you want them to be read by others for variation.

5. Recording your episode

The more detailed your directions to yourself in your narration, and the more you practise before going into the studio to record, the easier and better this part will be.

5.1 Preparing for recording narration

- Do read-throughs to get to grips with any bits that are fiddly to read and practise your cadence, tone, pacing, and enunciation.
- Make a recording at home and listen back to it. This will also help with cadence and tone, in line with your “stage directions”, as well as pacing and enunciation.
 - Ideally you would share a section of this with us so we can give you our thoughts, especially if you have any anxieties about it.

5.2 In the studio

- When it comes to recording your narration in the studio, **speak slowly and enunciate clearly**, even to the point where it may feel a little bit unnatural. We cannot stress this enough! It makes episodes so much easier to listen to. If you want one section to sound faster than others, go for it, but make sure it is not too fast and ensure that your other sections remain slow!
- It does not matter if you make mistakes, you can always redo sections while you are in the studio.
- If you need to turn a page or scroll on a device while recording your narration, stop speaking, turn the page or scroll, and then resume. These pauses can be edited out easily, but background noise is much harder to edit out.

*If you record at Surviving Society’s studio in Somerset House, our sound editor will be with you while you record to deal with any technical issues and help you avoid falling into any of these traps.

**If you can’t come in to record in London, we will pay for you to record in a professional studio closer to home. Again, there will be a sound engineer to help with these issues, and we will be available over zoom/phone, if remote support is needed.

6. Post-production

The more detailed your instructions to our sound editor in the script, the easier it will be for him to edit the episode together in the way that you envisioned. However, we know not everything will be perfect and that some things may not work.

You will therefore have a chance to review a draft of the episode for edits before it is finalised. But, as sound-editing is time-consuming, **you will only be able to go over the draft once in full**.

It is therefore really important that you are very thorough at this point, detailing all your requested edits fully with appropriate timestamps. Once your requested edits have been made you will have a chance to sign off on them, but you will not be able to make additional edits to your episode.

Bearing in mind how laborious this work can be, please also show our sound editor some consideration in the edits you request. If an edit is quite small, ask yourself if it is really

necessary. As many of us have perfectionist tendencies, we know this can be hard, but Adders will really appreciate it.