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Soundscapes of Mostar: Space and Art Beyond the Divided City

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ABSTRACT

The ‘spatial turn’ in peace research has primarily highlighted the visibility of the spaces in which peace takes place. In this article, however, we argue that ‘sound’ can challenge rigid visual markers, which are particularly prominent in divided cities. Drawing on a sound story from a larger archive, we investigate how a sound artist re-imagines the divided city of Mostar by mobilizing a set of sonic memories. Our sonic reading of the Partisan’s Cemetery traces the spatial transformation of the city, which disrupts visual representations of space as divided and presents alternative spatial imaginations.

KEYWORDS

Sound; space; peace; memory; Mostar; divided city

Introduction

The discipline of International Relations has increasingly paid attention to the spatial dynamics of peace and conflict (cf. Björkdahl and Kappler 2017; Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2022). In this, cities divided by post-conflict lines of segregation (‘divided cities’) have enjoyed particular attention as a way of capturing the spatial restrictions that urban residents face in their everyday lives, and how they aim to overcome them (cf. Kaldor and Sassen 2020). Both the physical infrastructure of spaces, and the ways that they are imagined and remembered in relation to a violent past, shape how post-conflict social orders are reproduced spatially. Based on the understanding that memories shape identities, which are in turn articulated spatially (Drozdowski, De Nardi, and Waterton 2016, 447), spatial approaches to the divided city can help us understand first, how space embodies expressions of post-conflict identities and, second, how (artistic) interventions into such spaces engage in the redefinition of such post-conflict identities. Peace can therefore be seen as emerging from transformed spatial memories and identities.

Existing approaches dealing with the spatiality of memory of post-conflict contexts have largely been shaped by a focus on ‘visuality’, centring on urban infrastructures (cf. Büscher 2016; Gusic 2022), architecture (cf. Brand 2009; Badescu 2022), walls and bridges (cf. Björkdahl 2013). Far less attention has been paid to the role of sound in shaping the spaces of global and local politics. With the notable exception of Guillaume

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and Grayson's (2021) study of sonic formations, this has largely been restricted to music (Franklin 2005) or conceived as a mere supplement to the visual. For example, Malmvig (2020) investigates the interplay between 'the visual and the auditory in war music videos' (650), demonstrating how its affective elements supplement experiences of the visual. Instead, focusing on sound as a memory-making practice, this article will argue that, rather than being congruent with the visual properties of space, and particularly divided cities, a focus on the sonic properties of space allows for a different kind of politics to emerge. If the memory of particular spaces changes, so do the identities emerging from such spaces. This argument responds to and is situated within a wider context of artistic and cultural re-imagining of spatiality and division in Mostar (Barišić, Murtić, and Burzić 2017; Oručević 2010). Sound art is one way of challenging the assumed rigidity of divided urban space and offers a way of aesthetically developing a different kind of city. We therefore ask: how can remembrance through sound, rather than through the visual markers of division, impact conflict transformation in divided urban spaces? Contributing conceptually to spatial approaches to peace (cf. Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016; Björkdahl and Kappler 2017), we argue that space can be reframed, re-membered, and thus, transformed through artistic agency, specifically through the production of sound art.

To that end, we investigate a specific sound art intervention – which centres on the space of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery – in the divided city of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), notorious for its strict two-part division since the Bosnian–Herzegovinian war in the 1990s. We first reflect on the value that a focus on 'soundscapes' as a mnemonic device adds to the dominant visual approaches in the discipline of IR, before discussing art interventions as a way of shaping public space. We then go on to discuss a piece of sound art that intervenes in the alleged rigidity of divided urban space and invites the listener to engage with memories that transcend the popular image of Mostar as a divided city.

On this basis we will show how sound art is able to experiment with different temporalities and develop mnemonically-inspired utopias ('sonic fiction'). In our example, it is remembering Mostar as a city shaped by complex ruptures and reconnections and the nostalgia for an era before binary urban division. Such emerging sonic 're-memories' transcend the possibilities offered by tangible (visible) heritage and urban infrastructure and allow for a reinterpretation of the divided city as one based on shared ideas, labour and (broken) nostalgias. Peace is therefore the product of sonic spatial memories that deviate from the dominant icon of the divided city. Instead, we understand peace as a product of sound-based memories which aim to reconnect the past with the present in ways which support grassroots peace imaginations.

Methodology: Attuning to Mostar's sound (stories)

The term sound attunes us to voice, silence, and tone in performance, as well as to the rhythms of performance and everyday life in the urban environment. Sounds are produced within a particular soundscape, a term 'anchored in a form of listening that became possible only through the development of technological forms of mediation' (Samuels et al. 2010, 331). Sonic interventions are understood as curated works of art which draw together the range of sounds found, heard, and/or performed within a space. Listening to sonic interventions as an alternative dimension to that of visual

space-making enables us to engage with alternative ideas and practices of spatial politics.

The archive that we explore in this article is part of a wider research project entitled ‘The Art of Peace’, of which we are part. Hosted by the OKC Abrašević and designed by sound artist Ronald Panza, the sound archive consists of a set of audio installations which tell stories of the city. These sound stories each centre on a space and/or (architectural) object which evoke aspects of everyday life in Mostar. Sites include the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, OKC Abrašević, the Neretva River, and the Old Bridge. The stories centre on topics including environment, forgotten/neglected spaces, the experiences of those living with disability, and prominent local stories (such as the Old Bridge divers). Panza characterizes the stories as ‘radio documentary’, positioning himself as a sonic storyteller of the city’s (hi-)story: ‘I feel the city speaking through me, I still feel it, remember it and bring it into the stories of the new city’ (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020). Through sonic intervention, Panza aims to tell a story which produces ‘cracks in the [listener’s] experience of reality’. As such, the sound archive demands ‘careful listening’ to the spatiality of the city and a process of re-understanding (Samuels et al. 2010). Methodologically, we develop a spatial reading of the Mostar Sound Archive which attends to its material, social, and affective production. We focus on the curated soundscape of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery as a site with layers of cohesion and division alike. A memorial complex erected during the socialist period to commemorate Mostarian partisans killed during the Second World War, the site evokes, for some, memories of Mostar’s multi-ethnic past. Yet, in contemporary Mostar, the Partisan Memorial Cemetery is a contested space (Forde 2018, 200). This article proposes an assemblage methodology to examine Mostar’s contemporary landscape. We draw connections between affect, materiality, and the social collective through listening to the Mostar Sound Archive, allowing us to account for the ‘shifting, processual, historical, and [...] contingent’ relationship between sound and space (Järviluoma and Vikman 2013, 645). This relationship arguably contradicts that of the dominant visual of division. We follow two sonic guides – those who use sound or sonic words to produce the space – who facilitate our practice of listening. The first is Bogdan Bogdanović, the site’s architect and the author of the essay *Grad mojih prijatelja* (The City of My Friends), the text that the sound story of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery is based. We read Mackic’s (2015) translation of the text. The second is the artist of the sound story, Ronald Panza, who performs Bogdanović’s original essay at Partisan’s Cemetery in contemporary Mostar. The text is read as it is written, using voice, tone, silence, and other sonic effects to reinterpret Bogdanović’s original text. We draw on several methods which enable us to navigate the space of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery: a site visit in February 2020 where one author was given a guided tour by the artist, a subsequent desk-based practice of listening to the sound story, and a personal communication with the artist about the archive, soundscape, and site. Though we were unable to physically undertake the sonic walk in Mostar due to the coronavirus pandemic, our familiarity with the site enabled us to engage in an imagined sound walk which responded to Panza’s soundscape. This process echoes the way that the Mostar Sound Archive will primarily be experienced, planned for exhibition in OKC Abrašević and in the UK as part of the Art of Peace project.¹

Soundscape as a spatial approach to understanding peace

Responding to conceptualisations of space which have rendered it a fixed and passive entity, Massey (2005) proposes a reorientation toward the relationality of the spatial. In the context of peace and conflict, scholars have sought to demonstrate how the production of space is fundamentally tied to ‘the structure and function of peace’ (Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016, 3; Björkdahl and Kappler 2017; Brigg, George, and Higgins 2022; Bell and Wise 2022). As Gusic (2019, 48) contends, peace and conflict are social relations that have spatial consequences, with ‘space inseparable from what happens and exists in it’. Space is therefore understood as emplaced social relations (Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016, 4); a sphere of everyday negotiations through which identity and subjectivity are ‘continually moulded’ (Massey 2005, 306). Adopting this notion of relational spatiality, we contend that the production of space is continuous, ‘heterogenous and ever becoming’ (Gusic 2019, 48). We join others in challenging the solidity and fixity of Mostar’s spatial division (Carabelli, Djurasovic, and Summa 2019; Forde 2018), reflecting on the soundscape as a spatial approach to peace that enables forms of spatial transformation (Forde 2018).

The soundscape, according to Schafer (1993, 14), describes ‘any acoustic field of study’ including but is not limited to musical composition, natural and urban acoustic environments, and recorded sound art. As an ‘auditory or aural landscape’ which denotes both ‘a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment’ (Thompson quoted in Sterne 2013, 182), the concept of ‘soundscape’ implies a spatial dimension which is both ‘expansive and contained’ (Sterne 2013, 182). In this article, we use the concept of the soundscape to draw together ‘the contradictory forces of the natural and the cultural, the fortuitous and the composed, the improvised and the deliberately produced’ (Samuels et al. 2010, 330). In particular, the soundscape under focus produces a sense of space through weaving together environmental sounds with a performance in space. The soundscape functions as a form of imaginative emplacement which produces its makers, audiences, and worldviews (cf. Smith 1994, 232), across a series of temporalities.

Spaces are made in multiple ways and using multiple senses. As the literature on the intersection between aesthetics and space-making suggests by pointing to the multiple senses through which spaces are made and experienced (cf. Hawkins and Straughan 2015), they have visual, sonic and olfactory dimensions. These multiple dimensions interplay in various ways, not necessarily in congruent and balanced ways, and produce complex spatial experiences, which can be shaped and curated. In this article, we are particularly interested in the manner in which the curated soundscape of the sound archive disrupts space as it is produced by dominant and existing visual-material markers, reflecting on the implications for peace-making in Mostar as a relational spatial practice. Aesthetics, Dikeç (2015) argues in his reflections of the relationship between spatial politics and aesthetics, ‘is linked to politics as a form of perceiving the world and a mode of relating to it’, pointing to the relationality expressed in sensory expressions of politics (35). The sonic dimension of space, we argue, offers possibility of transgressing the seemingly fixated visual landscape of division. To be clear, sound, like the visual-material, functions as a social phenomenon which is both embedded within and productive of power relations (cf. Guillaume and Grayson 2021). Our reading of sound thus speaks to

Samuels et al. (2010), who argue that sound structure should be understood in relation to social structure. Blurring binaries such as nature/culture or musical/acoustic analysis (336), soundscapes are fundamentally enmeshed within social systems and wider social relations (cf. Chandola 2012, 56). In this article, we focus on the multiple meanings produced by soundscapes as they purport to peace. In this vein, we show that in a case like Mostar, where the visual and sonic practices of space-making diverge, a focus on soundscapes can point to a spatial dimension that challenges rigid ethnic and infrastructural divisions. In the absence of visible changes in a conflict landscape, peace interventions are thus taking place sonically.

The soundscape is also intrinsically linked to memory. Writing of the relationship between space, place, and memory, cultural geographers highlight that space often becomes a vehicle for the exploration of memory narratives (Bakshi 2012, 480). Memories of war and conflict, particularly, tend to embed themselves in the ‘materiality [...] of the built environment’ impacting both individual and collective identity narratives (480). While Bakshi (2012, 81) connects this primarily to ‘images of place’, others have pointed to the way traces of war emerge through a range of sensorial registers including ‘smell, taste, [...] touch’ (Parashar 2013, 619), and most significantly for this article, sound (Hast 2018; Malmvig 2020). Working with the soundscape, we are able to engage with the materiality of the city to explore memory and its relation to peace. It is therefore useful to elaborate the ways that we approach the soundscape to examine the space of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery.

Thinking spatially, scholars have reflected on the soundscape through exploratory practices of walking. In this literature, the soundscape functions as a kind of sonic map through which spaces can be traversed and ‘decoded’ (Chandola 2012, 59). Guiding movement by ‘drawing the listeners attention to unusual [and more everyday] sounds and ambiances’ (Schafer 1993, 224), this explicitly links the soundscape to space-making. Practices of guided walking have also been examined in contexts of intervention. Bliesemann de Guevara (2016) examines politicians’ field visits as a series of carefully composed performances which largely tend toward ‘security-related affects’ (Bliesemann de Guevara 2016, 57), with walking engaged ‘as a performative practice shaped by the political geography of the state’ (Mason 2021, 2). Yet, walking can be a disruptive practice.² Indeed, as Saunders and Moles (2015) reflect, while audio walks gesture toward a ‘route and a story’, they are not ‘rigid’ (100). As sonic representations of ‘histories and stories of and about place, [...] they are replete with’ spatial possibility (101). The curated soundscape of focus in this article engages in an exploratory practice of connecting Mostar’s past and present, maintaining a sensorial openness in its evocation of space and movement. As we will show below, the listener of the soundscape of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery is guided through space, but ‘does not know where the experiment of surrendering will lead’ (Järviluoma and Vikman 2013, 655). This allows for a connected experience between the sound artist, who functions as sonic tour guide, and an audience who is metaphorically exposed to the tour guide. It is in this communicative relationship that transformative re-membling happens, whereby sound art challenges deeply engraved memories of divisions, with a repertoire less limited to the physical urban infrastructure than visual interventions in the city.

This links to an important, but often neglected element of the soundscape: its spatio-temporal elements (Samuels et al. 2010, 338). Though variable with regard to time and

space (Raimbault and Dubois 2005, 340), the act of recording and curating the soundscape prompts the dislocation of sound from its time and place. This act of dislocation is significant because it generates the possibility of layering multiple narratives, histories, and temporalities in space (McMillan 2019, 113), whilst at the time allowing for a creative discrepancy between material and sonically represented space. Thus, the listener is able to be guided through space through the act of listening, engaging layers of experience and the imagination. To the extent that the memorial complex is imbued in the spatial divisions of Mostar, its exploration through sound provides opportunities for listening and experiencing a space in ways that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. This is particularly acute where those hearing or listening view the space as ‘disruptive’, even ‘harmful’ (Waite, Ryan, and Farbotko 2014, 287). The Partisan Memorial Cemetery is a case in point. Though the site bears markers of its multi-ethnic past, this is not a past which is easily reconcilable with the present to the extent that it has become imbued with ‘material and immaterial’ traces of war and violence (Drozdowski, De Nardi, and Waterton 2016, 449). This includes memories and markers of its destruction during the war, which find echoes within the monument’s continued vandalism and defacement, including a recent act of vandalism in June 2022 in which 700 engraved stones commemorating anti-fascist fighters who were killed in the Second World War were smashed (Kurtic 2022). Even as the ‘city is rebuilt’, such traces intersect with memories in ways that may make it difficult, even painful to engage with particular spaces. As such, sound has the ability to ‘cohere subjectivities, space and a sense of ‘togetherness’, but also act to ‘provoke a sense of alienation’ with regard to space (McMillan 2019, 287). Against this background, we investigate the extent to which a sonic intervention into an infrastructure of division is able to rebrand the memory of the divided city into a more complex set of memories, thus challenging the binary narrative of the city as either united or divided.

(Sound)art: An aesthetic intervention into space

As any spatial configuration, soundscapes are subject to constant transformation through multiple forms of intervention. Some art projects, whether individually or collectively designed, offer radical practice, critique and politicization, without necessarily being subversive (Pinder 2008, 733). As Pinder notes, ‘[c]ritical urban interventions and spatial practices are based on the refusal to accept current conditions as inevitable and natural’ (734). In that sense, while art’s moment of intervention can be one of social destabilization (cf. Bharucha 2007, 399), Kondo (2018) reminds us of the productive power of ‘worldmaking’ that artwork can evoke. Focusing on the performative, she raises the salient questions: ‘Who is allowed to exist in the public sphere? Whose stories are represented [...]?’ (14). Art can act as the basis of the reconfiguration of social forces and memories, as represented and inscribed in space. The spatial reconfigurations imagined in artwork may, but do not necessarily have to, imply a subversion of the system as a whole, while still offering an important critique (Mouffe 2007). They may be primarily symbolic, but can lead to material consequences, reparations and transformations in the long run (cf. Kondo 2018).

This speaks to the ability of art to ‘provoke’. The provocation can emerge through direct expressions of resistance, as Saher and Cetin (2016) outline in their article on

music as expression of political resistance. Yet, provocative interventions through sound art can also take place in more intricate ways. According to Malmvig (2020), sound, whether staged or not, can act as an audial frame through which spaces can be experienced and distorted (655). Sound is able to guide listeners' experiences and mobilize communities of people. This aspect is addressed in the context of social movements, where collective rhythms and choreographies have been outlined through sound-based bodily movements (Waitt, Ryan, and Farbotko 2014; Chandola 2012, 68; Amin 2008, 9). Thus, sound produces connections between individual and collective rhythms as well as memories. The soundscapes emerging from such movements include affective and sensorial dimensions (Järviluoma and Vikman 2013, 646). They can experiment with layers of composition which demonstrate the complexity of space.

As such, sound art intervenes in the materiality of the place to which the sound relates and the memories and utopias it is confronted with in the staging of sound art. The latter represents an intervention into 'relationships between sound, space, technology, expression, and culture' (Samuels et al. 2010, 334), inextricably linking human activity to place. Sound art negotiates 'the boundaries between nature and culture' (Revill 2000, 599), as well as between the materiality of place and the symbolism of utopias that surround it. This staging echoes what Ikoniadou (2017) has termed 'sonic fiction', a speculative method which occupies a space 'between theory and fiction' (252). For Ikoniadou, sonic fiction breaks down binaries between fiction and non-fiction, expressing 'the memory of an un-lived reality, arriving entire and intact, yet never before experienced' (Ikoniadou 2017, 257). In this sense, it operates similarly to 'counterfactual – and counterfactual – thinking' (258). Based on Ikoniadou's notion of sonic fiction in terms of its speculative potential, we argue below that the sound stories in the Mostar Sound Archive offer a fragmentary narrative which creates openings for multiple interpretations. The layering of urban memory, we will show, is a blending of urban heritage and memory – at the intersection of fiction and history. A sonic intervention represents a new layer of memory into the urban palimpsest.

Acknowledging that (sound) art allows for the development of different imaginations, we note that these are informed by memories and transversal temporalities. This opens up the possibility for sound art to evoke nostalgia through evoking the soundscape of the past and through selective memorialization. In post-Yugoslav space, this has often been expressed through Yugonostalgia, 'broadly defined as nostalgia for the fantasies associated with a [lost] country' (Lindstrom 2005, 228). This 'relationship [...] between the temporally and spatially fragmented memories of a Yugoslav past and the present' is non-linear (228). As such, sound can be said to flow, not only spatially (Chandola 2012, 67), but also temporally, in that it sonically evokes a differently remembered past in the context of the present.

Yet, sound art is not merely a conciliatory tool between past, present and future, nor are sound interventions free from exclusions, sensory othering (cf. Chandola 2012, 57) or sonic prejudices (58). While art can create mnemonically-inspired utopias with new protagonists and events, it may also produce new configurations that are potentially exclusionary. Yet, art cannot be considered as synonymous with elite-level politics either. Through its potential to allow for reflexive practice (see Samuels et al. 2010, 330), art can make exclusions visible or audible, and may be subject to critique by other forms of intervention into (sound)space. It can experiment with ideas and alternative visions

of social justice. Artworks' speculative potential becomes a powerful tool though its ability to signal presence and absence in landscapes (cf. McMillan 2019, 81), to devise visions of the future inspired by (perhaps romanticized) fragments of the past, and its multi-sensory, affective appeal to an audience's emotion make it a powerful tool of intervention into the transformation of public spaces.

Mostar and the sound archive

Mostar is a small city in the Herzegovinian part of BiH and was one of the main icons of destruction during the war in the 1990s. Its famous bridge, overlooking the river Neretva, was bombed in 1993 and reconstructed (with World Bank funds) in 2004. Meanwhile, to the outside world, the bridge has become a symbol of reconciliation, despite its somewhat ambivalent role in the city (cf. Björkdahl and Kappler 2017, 26). This has not prevented scholarly attention toward Mostar's framing as a 'divided city', or what Carabelli, Djurasovic, and Summa (2019) have called 'the seem[ing]ly-permanent division of the city' (117). They claim that '[t]hese narratives powerfully shaped and normalized the representation of Mostar as a place of ethnic hatred, corruption, permanent political impasse, and failure' (Carabelli, Djurasovic, and Summa 2019, 118). It is notable that research on Mostar has often focused on the visibility and materiality of cultural heritage and urban infrastructures (cf. Laketa 2019; Bogojević, Puzić, and Žuljević 2019). The latter has become particularly important in cementing the material division of the city between Croats on the one hand, and Bosniaks or Bosnian Muslims on the other. The fact that the former frontline of the war is still full of visual reminders of the war (bullet holes and destroyed buildings) contributes to the impression of spatial permanence with respect to ongoing divisions in the city. These processes have been channelled into political divisions with respect to the city administration, and have resonance with Mostar's external representation. In this context, there is a growing tourism industry that focuses on Mostar's dark history, evoking old and new juxtapositions. Such dark tourism is necessarily chained to the bittersweet taste of war and the destruction of the iconic bridge and, at least implicitly, references the war and division as its basis for income generation (Forde 2016, 477).

Given the strong material presence of conflict heritage, a change in urban representation is difficult to achieve. At the same time, those divisions and their representations have been the subject of artistic interventions in an attempt to either use them creatively, or to rebrand the city as a place that transcends an exclusively conflictive identity. In this context, local, national and international artists – primarily engaged by the youth centre OKC Abrašević – have been crucial in re-engaging the city through public art interventions (cf. Carabelli 2018). This is also the context in which the sound archive, one aspect of which we discuss in this article, is located. As a collection of sound stories produced by the artist Ronald Panza, the sound archive aims to reframe Mostar in a way that transgresses the notion of dividedness by playing with sonic fictions inspired by the past, present, and future. The archive recomposes sound as a way of changing the memories of the city as a divided space. Sound enables us to uncover different layers of space, which are temporally ruptured. The sonic space that the archive produces are partially congruent with, but diverge from the visibility of urban memories. Since sound art is indirectly tied to the materiality of the site, the sound artist has the freedom to (re)interpret the

site and its spatial properties through layering and (re)arranging sounds. This corresponds to what Massey (2005) terms ‘a constellation of trajectories’ (297), which shape the relationship between nature and culture, and between the visual and the sonic. These effects are enabled through the selective entangling of memories with the materiality of the present within the archive. The archive’s attempt to rebrand the city is a result of its non-linear temporal arrangements, which draw on intersecting, and sometimes, competing temporalities that exist in the city of Mostar (cf. Summa 2019).

The sound story of the partisan monument

In this article, we zoom in on the sound story that intervenes in the site of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. The site was designed by Bogdan Bogdanović, an acclaimed architect who created many monuments across Yugoslavia. Construction work began in 1960, with the complex officially opened on 25 September 1965 by Josip Broz Tito on the 20th anniversary of Mostar’s liberation from fascism (CPNM 2006). Situated in the west of Mostar, the site was badly shelled and damaged during the war in the 1990s. More recent attempts toward restoration ‘have repeatedly fallen victim to vandalism’ (Dougherty 2019, 256), and as such, ordinary Mostarians do not often visit. This had led some to argue that the Partisan Memorial Cemetery has been abandoned and forgotten (Dougherty 2019). According to Bogdanović 1997, the monument was intended as ‘a miniature Mostar’ (Mackic 2015), the design mirroring elements in the city. The running water in the fountain evoked the Neretva river; the stone mirrored ‘Herzegovina’s necropolises, the roof cladding of Mostar’s houses’ and its cobbled paths; and the curated vegetation reflected the plant life of the region (CPNM 2006). The interplay between the site’s natural and built elements produced an ‘imaginary vision of the necropolis as a place for the living’ (CPNM 2006) where visitors could look over the city.

Layers of meaning

The sonic intervention into space curated in this sound story is double-layered, consisting of an essay – Bogdanović’s 1997 text, *Grad mojih prijatelja* – and its sonic performance by Panza in the form of a reading, blended with background sounds. As we will show, the original text and its sonic performance merge and deviate in ways that allow for the stretching of representational space. This blending reflects the relationship between the two artists, which (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020) describes in terms of love for the city of Mostar: ‘Bogdanović taught me how to read and love the city [...]. We easily recognized each other [...] because Bogdanović was like my older professors who [...] believed in this city’.

Attending to damage to the Partisan Memorial during the 1990s war, the sound story performs *Grad mojih prijatelja*, a text written as a lament for the destruction of the site and the city of Mostar alike. In the text, Bogdanović engages in memorialization, evoking a form of nostalgia which is ‘directed toward the past’ (Palmberger 2008, 367). This nostalgia is sonically evoked in the performance and narratively described in the text. Bogdanović generates sonic effect through use of metaphor. For example, he references the site as a ‘place that reveals the voices of the night – crickets, whistling night birds, the distant sound of the Neretva’. During the section where he talks about the site’s construction, he writes:

Every stone sounded like a musical instrument. I knew, predictably, that different kinds of stone would resonate differently – the softer the stone, the deeper the tone. It is paradoxical [...] that the most solid granite whispers; that marble sings a mezzo-soprano; and chalk, the most musical stone, sings a beautiful, velvet-soft alto. (Mackic 2015)

Bogdanović explains that the monument was dedicated to the ‘naive self-sacrifice’ of ‘Mostarian antifascist fighters’, an aspect represented through the ‘stone allegory of two cities’. The design – intended to give ‘joy to [his] ‘new friends’, whose names – Muslim, Serbian, Croatian names – lined up on the terraces of the necropolis’ – alludes to a harmonious and multi-ethnic past. Through a nostalgic and sometimes fantastical recounting of the ‘laboriously and carefully’ constructed monument, Bogdanović conjures a sense of his connection to the city. Reflecting on the war damage, Bogdanović continues that the ‘real old Mostar has disappeared’. Shifting ambiguously between the ‘two cities’, Bogdanović expresses sorrow at the way that ‘the gravestones have cold-bloodedly and sadistically been taken away’, lamenting that ‘[a]ll that is left of my original promise is that the former city of the dead and the former city of the living still look at each other, only now with empty, black and burned eyes’. Nostalgia in Bogdanović’s text highlights the physical, material, and embodied destruction of the monument and the city. It takes on a complex temporality, with the nostalgia for a lost past projected into an imagined future where the divided city of Mostar is, once again, inspired by the memories of a less divisive past.

The art intervention by Panza plays with this sentiment. Created in 2020, it intervenes in a different temporal context. Over the years, damage to the monument has been compounded by vandalism, graffiti, the overgrowth of plants, and deterioration (CPNM 2006). There have been a series of grassroots and official attempts at repair and reconstruction. With substantial official reconstruction works carried out in 2005, the site was declared a national monument in 2006 (CPNM 2006). Activists have also engaged at the site. The Youth Council of Mostar carried out a series of cleaning actions, while the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and SABNOR-BiH held an event in 2013 to draw attention to the site’s disrepair (Dougherty 2019, 256). Subsequently, there have been artistic interventions at or inspired by the site, including performance, installations, and a mural featured as part of the street arts festival (Barišić, Murtić, and Burzić 2017, 46–49).

The sound story intervenes in this longer trajectory of activism and artistic intervention. In the contemporary context, the space maintains a reputation as abandoned, ‘dangerous, undesirable, [and] transgressive’ (Dougherty 2019, 260), rendering it largely inaccessible to visitors. Grassroots interventions seek to reclaim and spatially reimagine the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. Approaching Bogdanović’s text, the sound story seeks to ‘encounter [...] the materiality of the past’ (Nassar 2020, 514). Evoking a sense of space, place, and movement, it critically guides the listener through the performance. Situated in a more future-oriented nostalgia than Bogdanović’s original text, we address a series of ways that the sound story provides an opening for imagining the Partisan Cemetery beyond narratives of spatial division.

Sonic walking as space-making

In the sound story, the narrator acts as a sonic guide of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. As Panza explains, in relation to where he moves himself whilst recording the story, ‘[t]he

sound follows the ascent of the monument’ echoing Bogdanović’s ‘symbolic journey’ through space (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020). Movement around the site is indicated by the sound of footsteps which intersperse the reading of the text. This effect is heightened by pauses between stanzas and the layering of ambient sounds. For example, a prolonged period of ambient sound is notable at 16:30 in the sound story, lasting for over three minutes. Prior to the pause, Panza performs the line:

I had promised the inhabitants of Mostar to make something that would be unparalleled, [...] but was I even sure that I would succeed and finish everything the way I envisioned it? (Mackic 2015)

The question invites the listener to a space of reflection on the past, present, and future of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, heightened by a pause which is punctuated by bird song, footsteps, and a not-quite-overheard conversation which loudens and quietens as our guide passes by. The movement encouraged by the sound story is unlike the highly choreographed forms of guided tour discussed earlier in the article. Here, movement is implied by sound, but it does not prescribe a definitive path through the monument complex. This implied movement leaves space for the ‘observant’ listener to encounter ‘spaces [...] left neglected’ and to ‘work on the story, the memory’ (Oručević 2010). In other words, it enables space for the imagination through sonic fiction.

The ambient sounds in the sound story are not incidental to the reimagination of space. Adapting Smith’s (1994, 235) contention that music ‘inform[s] geographical interpretations of the cultural landscape’, we suggest that sound acts as a form of emplacement, or space-making. The inclusion of bird calls familiar to Herzegovina – including ‘woodpeckers, [...] blackbirds, swallows, sparrows and [...] nightingales’ (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020), the ebbs and flows of traffic, and the distant sound of the river Neretva, sonically locate the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in the city. Further, the consistent presence of ambient sound in the space serves as a reminder that the place is embedded in the social relations of the city, rather than simply a forgotten or abandoned space set aside from everyday life. Without the sounds that fill the gaps between stanzas, the performance would be akin to a ‘blindman’s bluff without a whisper’ (Oručević 2010).

The sounds used to create the sense of place are imbued with symbolism, resonating with the story and situatedness of the site within Mostar. For example, the sounds of birds characterize the sound of the city, and can be linked to Bogdanović’s likening of the monument to a ‘fort of stone birds’ which symbolically reference peace (CPNM 2006). The distant sound of the river that can be heard in parts of the sound story echoes Bogdanović’s description of the sounds of the site. Traffic noise provides a grounding element to the sound story by drawing attention to the sounds of everyday urban life. In this way, the sound story evokes Bogdanović’s notion of the interconnections between the city of the living and the city of the dead, without indulging in idealized nostalgia; instead a sense of nostalgia which connects to the lived social relations in the city.

Ruptures and reconnections

The sound story plays with the idea of rupture and connection, unfolding spatially and temporally. In Mostar, this particular metaphor tends to be materially interpreted through the iconic bridge, often seen as a metaphor for the destruction of war (when

the bridge was bombed) and reconciliation, symbolized by its reconstruction in 2004. Rather than locating this pivotal point at the bridge, the sound story spatially shifts attention to the cemetery, and temporally to a new configuration between past, present and future. Bogdanović's original text indeed refers to this in the following statement: 'A little feverish and distracted, I repeatedly crossed the bridge of Hajrudin from the one end of the riverbank to the other, over the cliff'. The sound performance picks up on this notion by inserting a long gap in the spoken word performance directly prior to this point to focus on ambient sound. The implicit reference to the bridge allows the artist to aesthetically shift the centre of attention from Mostar's city centre to its outskirts, where the cemetery is located.

This raises the question: what happens when spatial centres are shifted, and spatial memories are challenged through an art intervention? In this case, we see a different kind of space unfolding. Namely one that is not primarily shaped by the memories of the war (the bombing) and the externally directed reconstruction efforts (as was the case with the bridge), and instead towards a spatio-temporal past in which Mostar's social organizations were not organized in binary ways. At the same time, the spatial imaginary created by sound is not limited by a static notion of the past. It instead uses history as spatial starting point from which new trajectories can be imagined, both literally, through the illusion of walking through the space in the recording, and metaphorically, in terms of Mostar's wider direction of travel. This corresponds to an understanding of memory as a 'future present' or 'future past' and the creation of possibilities that emerge through non-linear temporal configurations (Feindt et al. 2014, 29).

Nostalgia for art as labour

Another mnemonic feature that becomes prominent in the text of the original essay is a sense of nostalgia for labour which is entwined with sound and art (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020). Speaking of the physical labour of building the monument, the architect recalls the workers in his essay as follows:

They were modest, polite and friendly, and they did their work religiously, almost liturgically: the resonance of their chorus-like liturgy of the chiseling took, a little interruption included, five years.

[...]

One night I decided to go up, to the building site. From a distance I could hear a song, a harmony of voices, a choir without words. [...] Barba, grey, hair electrified dispersed to the four corners of the world, commits a crime like a magician, as the ghost of the stones. Suddenly, he lifts the hammer and the chisel up in the air, everybody lifts their hammer up in the air; they reverently keep silent, a silence takes hold of the place that reveals the voices of the night – crickets, whistling night birds, the distant sound of the Neretva. One of the masons, apparently appointed for this purpose, once again initiates a melody without words, nasal and mysterious, as in a ritual of stone worshippers. Barba picks up the rhythm with his chisel, hits the block in front of him, and starts to work the stone. (Mackic 2015)

A few points are worth noting here. First, the reference to 'Barba' who, earlier in the text, is described as a paternal ancestor to the citizens of Mostar. Tying in with the earlier account of the strategic use of temporality, this aesthetic account invokes the past as a

source which inspires the building of the present. Second, in this instance, Barba dictates the rhythm of work. He becomes the metronome that inspires the collective building endeavour. This takes on a different inflection in Panza's sound story which emphasizes the phrase 'a harmony of voices, a choir without words' through repetition and overlaying, giving the effect of a chorus of voices. This sonically recalls the Dalmatian stonemasons, who were known for 'constantly singing [...] while working' (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020). Its emphasis in the art intervention is significant since Panza recalls how people from the city visited the site to listen to the sound of 'work' and music. For him, the process of 'communication' between the monument and Bogdanović's text is a mode of reimagining or 're-membering' space and place in the city, reconnecting the stories of the former city with its new formations (Mackic 2015).

We can draw a parallel to Kondo's concept of art as worldmaking, which, she argues, 'is always collaborative' and about making repairs (Kondo 2018, 54). Artistic labour takes on an important function in the building of the social relations of the city. Worldmaking here is city-making. This means that, thirdly, the stonemasons who originally built the monument and are vividly evoked in the reading are the actors giving material presence to a different idea of the city, then and, through the re-enactment of their work, now. In that sense, the labour that goes into the making of the cemetery as much as the labour that goes into the sound story itself are a way of intervening into the existing hegemonic spatial memories of the city and building a new urban mnemonic repertoire based upon the palimpsest of the past and present. Such processes take place as a collaborative effort of the urban builders: architects, stonemasons, artists and ordinary citizens of Mostar. Both Bogdanović's and Panza's interventions stress this aspect.

Layered artwork in the city

We may now ask ourselves how the double-layering of aesthetic interventions helps us understand the kind of city that is produced, both materially and aesthetically through these intertwined interventions. Certainly, Bogdanović's Mostar was different from Panza's. The former was a city immersed in the fight against fascism, having emerged from WWII and re-imagining its position in a Cold War context. The latter is confronted with a city deeply divided between Croats and Muslims, spatially, politically and economically. And yet, both artists find themselves united through the space of the cemetery, which functions as a projection space of their utopias and nostalgias. The space encapsulates different temporalities by its non-linear referencing of past and present, enabling the development of alternative memories which are emplaced within the city of Mostar. The physical space of the city seems violently divided, unyielding, and rigid, with little hope for change. Yet, Panza's sonic intervention demonstrates that, where the material architecture of the city is sticky, a different kind of intervention – here, through sound – can open up space for the rethinking of urban memories and can shift urban centres in space and time by mobilizing memories of a shared past.

Conclusion

This article has explored the production of space beyond the narrative of the divided city in Mostar, suggesting that listening to the sonic dimensions of space enables different

layers of spatial memories to emerge. Throughout, we have noted the potentiality of sonic art as a site from which to interrogate how memories of division challenge the building of peace. Sound art, understood here as the use of voice, silence, and tone in performance, enables its listeners to explore the spatiality of the city through renewed frames of understanding, generating a different set of memories which are less constrained by divided urban infrastructure. It is these renewed spatial frames that the Mostar Sound Archive develops, with each of its sound stories producing new urban configurations.

Sonic fiction is used in the Mostar Sound Archive to re-inhabit spaces of the city. Coded as forgotten, abandoned, and even transgressive, the sound story of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery prompts a more complex and manifold engagement with its spatial dimensions. In particular, the sound story intervenes in the nostalgia of the original text and re-interprets it in the context of the present. As such, the sound story is able to move across layers of spatio-temporal meaning through sonic walking. This provokes a critical re-appraisal of the space and evokes a set of memories that have largely been demobilized in the current inventory of discourses about the 'divided city'.

As we have noted, the literature on urban space in Mostar has often focused on the entrenched rigidity of its spatial divisions which often arise through narratives of the divided city. Working with the disjunctures between physical and sonic space, the sound story de-centres its explorations of rupture and connection in Mostar. Critically engaging with an 'atmosphere of permanent insecurity' which becomes spatially manifest in narratives of division, the archive intervenes to create a 'lasting document' of the city's past, present, and future (Ronald Panza, email to authors, December 8, 2020). This artistic intervention enables listeners to explore the city in light of renewed spatial configurations, re-membering and metaphorically rebuilding the city. As a mode of critical engagement with the city's past, present, and future, we argue that sonic fiction intervenes to re-imagine the city beyond its spatial and material division.

Notes

1. This research has been approved by the SGIA Ethics & Risk Committee at Durham University on 26 November 2018 (reference number not disclosed due to personal details included). This research was conducted in partnership with the OKC Abrašević in Mostar. Research participants were able to review our interview notes and provided informed consent electronically.
2. Practices of walking have been widely discussed with regard to the production of space and environments (Mitchell and Kelly 2011). Situationist and psychogeographical engagements helpfully underline how walking can disrupt or routinize our habitual ways of experiencing urban environments (cf. Pyry 2019) as well as 'change the way we think about ourselves' and our relations with particular environments (Bridger 2013, 295). In this article, however, we focus less on the ways in which audiences experience space and instead concentrate on the ways in which a sonic art project intervenes in, challenges and re-curates a visually divided space.

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Data access statement

Data can be accessed by request to the authors until the sound archive is fully published online.

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