

DOI <https://doi.org/10.2298/MUZ1722089H>  
UDC 78.038.531(497.4)  
78.038.531(497.11)  
78:316.7

# SONIC MEMORY INTERVENTIONS AGAINST POLITICS OF URBAN SILENCING\*

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Received: 15 February 2017

Accepted: 1 June 2017

Original scientific paper

## ABSTRACT

We discuss the political implications of the noise/silence dialectic in order to reflect on the urban and social materialities of sonic memory activism in the post-Yugoslav space. We see the privatization of public space as one of the defining issues of current socio-political tensions and we strive to offer a more nuanced model for thinking about grassroots practices of musicking and listening in the context of resistance and power and control redistribution. Discussing sonic interventions in Ljubljana and Belgrade enables us both to uncover how important global processes are reflected in these local contexts and to locate diversity of present practices of resistance.

**KEYWORDS:** noise and silence (politics of), urban activism, post-Yugoslav space, cultural memory

\* This article was written for the project *City Sonic Ecology — Urban Soundscapes of Bern, Ljubljana and Belgrade*, financed by Swiss National Science Foundation within its SCOPES program (2013–2016). Some of the research for this project was conducted as part of the project of the Institute of Musicology SASA *Serbian Musical Identities Within Local and Global Frameworks: Traditions, Changes, Challenges* (No. 177004), financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

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*You cannot really think about its [the city's] function and aesthetics if you overlook the fact that it is ruled by surveillance cameras, restricted access, trading logic and above-managed cultural, sports and other content (because hierarchical management of the public is not the same as common management). Such an attempt at the rehabilitation of the "urban city" is an exclusionary concept. The street increasingly acts as scene and scenery for the smooth making of profit and less as a living space of expression – freedom of creativity, anger, rage, joy ... – is increasingly a department store and boutique of consumer hedonism (for those who can afford it) and much less a place friendly towards all people and towards unpredictable, spontaneous activities. Such stifling spatial conditions are a symptom of key social tensions (Jelisijević 2015).*

In this article, we discuss the political implications of the noise/silence dialectic in order to reflect on the urban and social materialities of sonic memory activism in post-Yugoslav space. We see the privatization of public space as one of the defining issues of current socio-political tensions and we strive to offer a more nuanced model for thinking about grassroots practices of musicking and listening in the context of resistance and power and control redistribution. We recognize that at a time in which demands for new "everyday" forms of democracy and emancipatory practices, particularly in urban areas, have become part of the common worldwide political struggle, "the local" and "the global" have become increasingly blurred political terms (Massey and Allen 1984). Thus we aim to elucidate potentialities between current political interventions in two post-Yugoslav capitals: Ljubljana and Belgrade. On account of postsocialist transformations and the aggressive introduction of neoliberal capitalism, the privatization of urban public spaces has become omnipresent and it is not surprising that cities have become the most prominent stage of struggle in post-Yugoslav societies. Discussing sonic interventions in Ljubljana and Belgrade enables us both to uncover how important global processes are reflected in these local contexts and to locate diversity in present practices of resistance.

Although Ljubljana and Belgrade did not share the same trajectories in terms of political and economic instability and uncertainty and structural problems after the breakup of Yugoslavia, both cities are currently facing growing urban transformations as a result of public/private restructuring and mass forced migrations because of their important positions on the Balkan route of refugees.<sup>3</sup> During the period of socialism, the state acted as the main vehicle of urban transformation, struggling to display the dominant discourse of "classless society."<sup>4</sup> As the restoration of capitalism (Vesić et

3 The (western) Balkan route refers to a land and sea route used by refugees in the ongoing European refugee crisis (primarily since 2015) to reach Central Europe from the Greek-Turkish border, through Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia, and has mostly been used by refugees from war-affected areas of the Near and Middle East (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.). Cf. Medić 2016.

4 On the issue of class in socialist Yugoslavia, see: Archer, Duda, and Stubbs 2016.

al. 2015)<sup>5</sup> enters into full swing, formerly socially and state-owned spaces are being privatized and city landscapes (and soundscapes) are being transformed by neoliberal urban regimes (Vilenica and kuda.org 2012: 9). This introduces radical changes in the urban environment and the rise of social inequalities, poverty and discrimination, changing the living conditions of the urban population. The process of reshaping the class geography of post-Yugoslav cities can aptly be described through the concept of “informal” or “illegitimate city” (Abramo 2003; Perlman 2004), in which poverty, exclusion and structural violence are embedded in the very structure of the urban and cannot be made distinct from other social practices. The de(con)struction of public spaces resulting in the lack of social spaces (such as parks, children’s playgrounds, various cultural spaces etc.), and the inaccessibility of social institutions and infrastructures, proves that the privatization is a much broader social and cultural phenomenon than a simple shift in the mode of property or, as neoliberal technocrats would have us believe, an apolitical step towards a more meritocratic and efficient production of wealth.

Based on our ethnographic exploration of urban soundscapes in Belgrade and Ljubljana, we argue that it is not only possible but indeed necessary to theorize the political subjectivities mediated through sound beyond the individual/collective dichotomy. Drawing on Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, we understand sound “simultaneously as a force that constitutes the world and a medium for constructing knowledge about it” (Ochoa Gautier 2014: 3). In this article we aim to show how the intensity of sensorial experience in co-creating urban soundscape has fostered socialities which act as active political agents in post-Yugoslav context. We have organized our article in two main sections: in the first we address two cases of disciplining or sanitizing city sounds in particular everyday and political contexts, and in the second we discuss how activist interventions, which draw on collective and individual memory, create ruptures in this policed sonic ecology.

### POLICING AN “IDEAL CITY”

On 1 January 2016, Ljubljana was designated a green capital of Europe under the slogan “Ljubljana – an ideal city.” In their campaign, policymakers emphasized access to fresh water, and a green, beautiful and peaceful landscape as main markers of a high quality of life in a healthy environment and sustainable future for Ljubljana. This particularly concerned the city centre which was presented, in the words of mayor Zoran Janković, “as a big living room and a cultural and social setting, while former brownfield areas have been transformed into numerous parks, green spaces and playgrounds, where citizens relax and socialize” (Janković 2015: 6). The discourse of “sustainable growth” as one of the main concepts in the EU rhetoric of “healthier and liveable urban environments” also includes the acoustic environment factor by controlling “noise pollution.” Although the role of sonic ecology in promoting well-

<sup>5</sup> We follow Vesić et al. (2015) in using the term “restoration of capitalism” in order to refer to what is in official and mainstream Western-liberal discourse known as the “post-socialist transition,” that is, the postsocialist socio-economic transformation which ensued after the end of the Cold War.

being was not one of the priorities of the municipal council of Ljubljana,<sup>6</sup> officials placed emphasis on “natural sounds” of relaxing and healthy urban environment as an aesthetization of the tourist experience of city sounds (Bull and Back 2003: 8). And what can be wrong with such a policy emphasis on “healthy,” “sustainable” and “beautiful” urban ecology?

On 6 June 2016, representatives of the municipality, after a long period of negotiation concerning the revitalization of this area of the city centre, violently destroyed the first and only political squat in Slovenia – the *Rog* Factory (Tovarna *Rog*).<sup>7</sup> They used the police in order to clear a vast location of 7,000 square-meters in Ljubljana city centre and transform it into a hub for contemporary art and creative industries. Although it could be hardly said that there is something wrong with the project of recovering the former industrial site<sup>8</sup> through art and culture and transforming it into a creative space, such “revitalization” implies a radically different approach to the usage of city public space. At a time when all segments of city ecology become a commodity while the concepts of clean and beautiful space are merely a niche for consumerism and profit, autonomous spaces such as the *Rog* factory have great importance for cultural production and politics from below. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, *Rog* shared the same fate as several other factories in the same area, which, unable to be privatized, remained abandoned until 2002, when the Ljubljana municipality bought the entire industrial complex. In 2006, informal groups and individuals decided to take the initiative and squat *Rog*, transforming it into an autonomous cultural and artistic centre unique in this part of Europe, with several prominent figures involved in its activities, such as Antonio Negri.<sup>9</sup> Based on the principles of horizontal (self-)organizational and socially progressive politics, in ten years *Rog* became a place for non-profit activities with hundreds of individuals and organization involved. An attack on such an autonomous space thus can be seen an attack on the cultural, artistic and living practices that attempt to build different social relations, that go beyond the existing capitalist mode of production.

What is even more important, *Rog* has been a main social centre for disadvantaged groups and individuals in Slovenian society, where the voices of migrants, women, non-heterosexual people, precarious artists and cultural workers, and others who are socially excluded or invisible can access various forms of emancipatory activities. Starting with the refugee crisis in 2015, *Rog* represented one of the main help centers for undocumented refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and many others coming through the Balkan route. If we take these circumstances into account, the importance of this space is not connected only to alternative modes

6 See the main strategy in *Ljubljana for You* 2016.

7 The factory was founded in the second half of the 19th century, with the main building for leather production built in 1922. Shortly after WWII it was nationalized and refurbished as a factory for *Rog* bicycles, which operated until 1991.

8 The main factory building (being the first steel and concrete building in Slovenia) has been protected as a cultural heritage site since 1998.

9 For more on this see: <http://tovarna.org/node/113>.

of artistic and cultural production and self-organization, but also to rising voices against the mainstream anti-refugee politics promulgated by the Slovenian government.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the “ideal city” rhetoric promoted through the title of Green Capital of Europe led to a policy of sanitization of the urban landscape and, moreover, implied a set of social and economic relations in which particular aural environments are threatened by this project. Although the city government promoted its policy as a way “to improve the quality of life of each and every citizen” (from the promotional leaflet, 12), a concept of well-being and healthy environment is based on the dangerous exclusion and erosion of certain aspects of the public sphere. As David Novak asserts, “public attention to street noise helped establish new divisions between public and private space, and became a crucial point of dispute for class-biased social reforms” (Novak 2014: 29). Following that, a relaxing and quiet city soundscape is not presented just as a commodified good and the most desirable quality of modern urban space. It becomes a sonic marker of the “First world” acoustic environment and an epitome of the “Fortress of Europe” as a structural condition of silencing. Taking into account the limitation of the mobility of refugees and the silencing of their acoustic practices in daily city life, struggles over *Rog* became an emblem of resistance to restriction and structural violence.

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Early in the morning on 13 November 2016, the city square Slavija in central Belgrade was occupied by machinery aiming to remove the grave monument of Dimitrije Tucović. City officials had been mentioning the removal of the monument as a part of the larger project of renovating this roundabout, but the exact time of the inception of the project had not been pre-announced, possibly due to the fears that several Belgrade leftist groups who voiced their disagreement could have staged a protest. The legacy of Dimitrije Tucović, one of the first Serbian socialist thinkers and politicians, has already disappeared from Serbian society, even before his bust was physically removed from Belgrade’s public space. Importantly, Tucović was one of the rare opponents of the Balkan wars and World War I (even in European context), arguing that the irredentist striving of the Serbian political elite was imperialistic and egoistic in its nature, and his writing from this period could have served as a valuable knowledge-base for current conflict resolution (Tucović 1946; Baković Jadžić 2014). Praised by the Yugoslav political elite in the aftermath of World War II, Tucović was exhumed from the site of the 1914 Battle of Kolubara at which he died and reburied in the Belgrade square which also bore his name until the 1990s. In the last decades, his monument became an important reference for leftist political and activist rallies, which often paid tribute to Tucović.

In the new vision of the city officials for 2017, the place of Tucović’s bust is to be given to a *music fountain*, a novel object in the Belgrade cityscape, designed not only

<sup>10</sup> Most visibly expressed through installing a wire on the Slovenian border, but also other forms of structural racism. On the connection between activities at *Rog* and structural violence towards erased, migrants, refugees, LGBTQI, workers, see: Gržinić 2016.

to cover 32 meters in diameter and to eject water at a height of 16m, but also to play music. This peculiar solution sparked an outpouring of sarcastic remarks on social media aimed at divulging how unnecessary an embellishment this is to a deeply impoverished society. These included the popular fake-news website Njuz.net reporting that the Slavija music fountain will feature as the main performer at the New Year Eve concert at (another) city square, Trg republike (thus referring to another, no less important discussion concerning the Belgrade public soundscape – that is, who should be invited to perform at the open-air New Year celebration and how much money should the city spend on this enterprise; Sokolovic 2016). Responding to various criticisms, chief city manager Goran Vesić stated that “whoever doesn’t like the music fountain doesn’t have to listen to it” (Nikolić 2016). However, the project of erecting a music fountain becomes even more bizarre when one consults the full Slavija reconstruction plans which include the intention of removing all pedestrian crossings and public transport stops within 50 to 100 meters’ distance from the roundabout. The image of the “ideal” city square envisaged for Belgrade in 2017 thus not only presupposes complete ban of negotiation of how the public (sonic) space is to be used and shared – by preventing public protests and denying the possibility of questioning the music played by the city – but it also excludes the *listener*. The “music” which will be produced by the music fountain will be an example of superfluous sound (cf. Mbembe and Nuttall 2004, Luci 2014), sound produced for the abject listener, or in this case the listener distanced by the soundproofed vehicle (as the construction of bicycle routes is also missing from the new project).<sup>11</sup> It will produce *public* without *community* as a new governmental ideal, creating a vision of uninhibited flows of capital and ostensibly effortless human labor.

### SOUNDS (AND SILENCES) OF DISOBEDIENCE

Sonic politics have been strongly involved in the processes of fighting for alternative urban relations based on experimenting with different types of coexistence, solidarity and autonomy. Moreover, they call for the importance of understanding soundscape not as an experience or object but as a process and an action. Struggle against transformation of *Rog* was loud and displayed what the city officials during the campaign for the Green Capital of Europe wanted to mask: city sounds of global migration, economic crises, social stratifications, a high unemployment rate and so on. The case of *Rog* proved the importance of the different soundscape regimes, in which unwanted sounds included “forbidden” languages of illegal migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, sound of tunes and music genres that cannot be heard in the city centre or are considered “sound pollu-

<sup>11</sup> Soundproofing and sound insulation of car cabin is becoming an ever more present issue in private car marketing. The promotion brochure of the most sold vehicle in Serbia in January 2016, Renault Clio, advertises the updated model of this brand as the one which “transforms your travels into sensory experiences” through “an immersive musical experience with the BOSE® Premium sound system”. Cf. Prodaja novih vozila and New Renault CLIO brochure.

tion.” Similarly, the struggle to cleanse the political space from the “forgotten” vestiges of the socialist past and to inundate it with seemingly innocuous sounds of popular music through new technologies of creating monitored soundtracked spaces shows how the official image of Serbia as the “regional leader” in mastering neoliberal capitalism in the Western Balkans is difficult to sustain and demands new, expensive models of everyday interpellation.

#### THE RIGHT TO THE CITY AS COMMUNICATED THROUGH MASS SINGING

Some of the leading voices in resisting the process of the capital-led city’s transformations, degeneration and gentrification were activist, “self-organized” choirs (*samoorganizovani zbori*), Female choir Kombinat (ŽPZ Kombinat) and *Feminist choir Fighters* (Z’borke) that both have a very important place in the re-sounding of Ljubljana’s urban spaces. Both choirs were active in fighting against city policy regarding Rog: Kombinat, which received its name after the Factory Rog (during socialism called *Kombinat Rog*) had an open rehearsal in front of the defenders of the squat, while Z’borke sent an open letter to express disagreement with the restructuring of Rog. Choir members were actively involved in the campaign “Save the Rog factory” (*Ohranimo tovarno Rog*) by performing at the protests or physically protecting the space within Rog. From their foundation (Kombinat was founded in 2008 while Z’borke started singing in 2014 in Ljubljana), both choirs have understood collective singing as a form of political action.<sup>12</sup> Their common goal is to evoke a collective spirit of choral singing, emphasizing its revolutionary, rebellious side and emancipatory potential in order to give voice to previously marginalized individuals, groups, or narratives.<sup>13</sup> “Giving voice” or “sounding” by performing in Ljubljana’s squares, streets and parks is one of the most important political actions of the choirs as an act of occupying the city. Their mass singing aims to reintroduce “hidden”/marginalized city histories (of women, migrants, refugees, etc.) on the city map and reveal “inappropriate” city soundscapes.

These choirs’ interventions transgress the typical notion of “music performance” by exercising sound relocation on the macro and micro levels. On the macro level, they initiate guerrilla performances – open-air concerts in front of established cultural institutions (such as *Španski borci*) or marginalized places or cafes, and at protests, as Majda, a Kombinat choir member, explains: “And in general, flashmobs are our main idea – street, guerrilla.” In this way, the choir members transgress the usual choral performance setting – the stage, understood as reserved for formal events. With their “music actions,” by enabling specific co-creation of sound and space and drawing on the potential of the mass performance, they provide new forms for political participation in the urban setting. Since their performances

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed study of the post-Yugoslav self-organized choral movement see Hofman 2015; 2016, since, due to the limited scope of the article, we avoid the discussion of this particular phenomenon.

<sup>13</sup> For extensive analysis of choir’s membership, internal structure, performances and political engagement see Hofman 2015 and 2016.

include public speeches, shouting and clapping, they make their sonic “intervention” a new kind of auditory participation also through dissolving the line between noise and music. Choral singing, as a form of mass performance, can produce new networks and shape social interaction and intra-action between performers and listeners (Bakhtin 1986), establishing new patterns of political participation. Choir members embody new strategies in spatial dimensions of their performance and willingness to be a part of social experiment. Particularly flashmobs were seen as having more potential to transgress these boundaries: “We particularly like these guerrilla performances, when there is no distance erected by the stage, and it is really a different dynamics. It is a horizontal organization” (Teja, Kombinat).

The sonic aspect of the choirs’ performances appeared to be particularly important: the core of their repertoire consist of partisan, workers’ and revolutionary songs from the Yugoslav antifascist resistance during World War II. Recalling the musical past of WWII along with songs from the Spanish civil war, the French and October Revolutions, songs from the Civil rights movement and the great depression, anti-fascist and resistance songs from around the world, enables “socialist sounds” to be included in the so-called “repertoire of the global left” (see Hofman 2016). In the case of street performances, particularly during protests, choir members claim to exploit the “primary” function of these songs during the National-liberation struggle during WWII (NOB) – to raise morale and contribute to social networking and solidarity. Open-air street performances can also reflect the symbolic referring to naturalistic, open spaces which is seen as inseparable from the NOB (a naturalistic aesthetic of forest as the original partisan guerrilla fight setting). In the case of Kombinat, the natural environment is replaced with an urban setting: The result is an interesting picture of “situating” or “displaying” partisan songs in a modern urban environment which, “instead of camp fires, half-demolished houses and the forest, is occupying palaces of the capital, shopping centers and jumbo posters” (P. B. 2009). In that sense, their performances enabled new mobilizations, appropriations and reinventions, which enable the aural, social and political to be interconnected through the establishing of spatio-temporal sonic collectivities which act as an individual social body (see Hofman 2015; 2016). Choral performance is used in their cases of open political engagement as a kind of public social intervention to express and articulate their rebellion, and to make their voice present in public. The fact that partisan, workers and revolutionary songs, as the leading genre of the socialist music legacy are the main soundtrack of resistance to the urban transformations fostered by neoliberalism proved that they are acquiring new meanings. These songs, which were until 1990s an important part of sound city ecology, were silenced in the public sphere after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, as a legacy of the totalitarian past. In that sense, re-sounding this particular repertoire in the public sphere does not only evoke the common historical soundscape of Yugoslavia’s past and multicultural identity that is seen as a threat to the newly founded national states after the state dissolution. Bringing these songs to the streets, choir members claim to sound marginalized aspects of the official city history (and also marginalized or lost histories), reveal conflicting interpretations of what is unwanted and what is embraced in the city’s sonic heritage. As described by Tanja Petrović, “this choir [Kombinat] often performs in places that were heavily symbolical during socialism and marginalized after it, such as monuments



to heroes of the antifascist struggle; with these performances, they re-actualize them, giving them a meaning different from what they had in the socialist times” (Petrović 2011). Moreover, their actions can be seen as a resistance to the sanitized city soundscape, since evoking sounds of struggle against fascism but also racism and any form of social exclusion and exploitation enables sounding an ethnically diverse city population, migrants, refugees, unemployed workers from former privatized factories. By occupying city spaces with sound, such mass performances actually “re-ideologize” public space at a time when, to quote Marina Gržinić, the political and ideological content is de-ideologized and anaesthetized – the emptying of politics in favor of the anaesthetization of ideology of any politically substantial content (Gržinić 2014: xi).

### THE MNEMONIC SILENCE COMBATING THE NEOLIBERAL DRONE

As the example of music fountain serves to emphasize how public space becomes sanitized through purportedly apolitical soundtracking, it is possible to theorize the role of silence in combating this governmental development and reclaiming the public space for political action. The Belgrade feminist and anti-war group Women in Black (Žene u crnom) are arguably the most prominent activists in Serbia dealing with questions of memory, dichotomies of collective versus individual and the desired versus the undesired. Established as part of an international movement, the group rose to prominence during the early 1990s, uncompromisingly confronting Slobodan Milošević’s regime’s belligerent politics and rampant violent nationalism (cf. Fridman 2011). Their activities after 2000 have been focused on reconciliation processes, asking that Serbian society face its responsibility for the Yugoslav wars. Since the 1990s, Women in Black have carried out silent vigils as their main form of protest, and they regularly engage with performance art as a strategy for gaining greater visibility in the public space. The pillars of their public acts are vigil, silence, body, and the color black. Women in Black insist on the non-representative aspect of their presence: although the medialized picture of the performances is recognized as important by the group, the physical intervention in the public space, the actual participation in the standing vigil, is what holds the group together.<sup>14</sup> Looking at three memorial actions in the period between July 2015 and February 2017, it is possible to locate important aspects of Women in Black’s political aesthetics of public intervention.

I. On 10 July 2015, Women in Black staged a major commemoration in Belgrade’s Trg Republike, dedicated to twenty years of the Srebrenica genocide. They collaborated with an experimental theatre group, Dah teatar, in order to build an elaborate performance symbolizing the massacre of more than 8.000 Bosniaks, mainly men and boys, during the seizure of the city by the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska. The performance occupied a central city square, the urban pedestrian hub of the centre engulfed by cafes and serving as a usual meeting point. This space

14 In this regard, one can note how relatively few of the group’s efforts are aimed at the medialization of their activities, as well as how the pecking order in the group is dependent on actual participation in the vigils.

was transformed by the group through the usage of wide panels with the names of the victims held by the activists, and a large white canvas which was laid down in the square, creating the quasi-stage for the performative act. Because of the ambitious spatial scope of the performance, but even more because of the heavy over-policing of the event by police units equipped for riot control, Women in Black succeeded in silencing the everyday sounds of the commodities and services, creating the sonic space of the vigil, onto which they loop-played “Srebrenički inferno,” a song recorded for the purposes of the Srebrenica genocide commemoration and regularly featured in the annual memorial ceremony in Potočari, where the solo vocal line is given to a feeble child’s voice bereft of vibrato (see Pitić 2017). This sonic loop of the Belgrade commemoration was itself feeble, played on mid-range loudspeakers powered by a portable diesel generator, and was mixed with the ambient noise and the sound of the engine-generator itself.

II. On 18 November 2015, Women in Black commemorated the fall of Vukovar in 1991, the culmination of the 87-day siege of the city in Croatia by the Yugoslav People’s Army and paramilitary forces from Serbia during which the city was almost entirely destroyed and which resulted in exhaustive looting and numerous civilians’ and prisoners’ killings. Again, in the midst of the commercial everyday centre of Belgrade, at the beginning of Kneza Mihaila Street, and accompanied by police, the group staged their performance involving wide panels and writing on pavement using salt. This time the members of the group who coordinated the lining-up of the participants entered into marginal conflict with manager of a nearby sports and fashion store for allegedly disrupting the flow of customers, but also with a street musician—violinist, who presented a polished Piazzolla-based repertoire to passersby and who protested at the disruption of his informal music stage.

III. On 27 February 2017, Women in Black staged a vigil, “We remember the crime in Štrpci,” to commemorate the mass killing of non-Serbian civilians on a train which was travelling between Belgrade and Bar in Montenegro and which took place near the Bosnian village of Štrpce. The commemorative vigil was held outside Belgrade Central train station, which – as the huge promotional panel covering the whole left wing of the building incessantly reminded the activists – is itself scheduled to be abandoned and the grounds surrendered to the current main Belgrade aggrandizing endeavor, “Belgrade Waterfront,” the flagship project of the current government, aiming to transform the state-owned land at Sava riverbank into a private commercial area.

It is only partially true to state that Women in Black engage in memory activism, as they often cannot afford to draw on memories which are present in the collective, but have to build them anew. By intervening in the public space they draw on “abject memories,” memories which should have been present in the public and media space, but which have been stifled, ignored and rebuked. What they choose to do is to construct tangible but transient memorial spaces to specific traumatic events in the duration of their vigils. By default, they occupy a prominently central urban space, quite often a commercial and pedestrian hub rather than a place attached to an administrative or governmental seat of power. As their presence is itself always controversial and perceived as radically different from the official narratives, their interventions

in the urban space allows them effectively to disrupt the commodified noise-drone which characterizes the centre of Belgrade. In a system where omnipresent superfluous sound is seen as a mark of neoliberal triumph in rendering labor cheap and effortless, producing silence in the city centre is not innocuous as it seems. By producing a space of vigil, these interventions offer a rupture in the fabric of the neoliberal sonic phantasmagoria and open the possibility of the political. In other words, by demanding the space for vigil in the centre of the city, Women in Black afford the possibility of retaining a critical distance from the sound which is becoming ever closer. Finally, by insisting not only on non-medialized experience of the vigil, but also on its duration, Women in Black open the window of change in the understanding of urban time. Insisting on the duration of vigils, which usually take an hour, long after the journalists and media reporters, bar a few dogged photographers, have left the stage, the group also rethinks the understanding of time as a commodity – valued, but dispensable.

## CONCLUSION

Spreading neoliberal ideology in reshaping urban spaces in Ljubljana and Belgrade has produced new patterns of domination and exploitation but also provoked more action-oriented city population and self-organized practices which confront the interests of corporate capital. This article addresses sonic interventions in public space as a revitalization of the city soundscapes of marginalized histories, groups and individuals while simultaneously enabling social fabric through evoking communal aspects of public space. Case studies on various cultural and symbolic reconstitution of the city we presented prove the importance of the establishment of alliances that introduce new senses of belonging and solidarity, and new ways of self-empowerment through sound. Such emphasis on sociality is crucial for active engagement and intervention in the urban public sphere. Self-organized groups, including collectives such as Women in Black and the choirs *Kombinat* and *Z'borke*, which are structured through a horizontal architecture of infra-power, as well as emerging heterogeneous alliances which are constituted through public protests and immediate presence in the public space, can offer a vision of a society of co-operation, commonality and solidarity, and might open up a room for new political forms and redistributions of power. The affective potential of participatory sonic events provides an emergent sense of collectivity on a wider scale and makes it possible to constitute new socio-temporal collectivities. These undertakings do not function as merely ideological, discursively medialized events, but as visceral interventions, working with affect on the plane of immanence and its potential to create a collective of bodies affected together and acting together. This gives a new potency to political participation through collective public sonic experience, forging new political inter-relations. In other words, the main potential of the sonic interventions which we describe here is in creating collectivities which are fostered by the sheer intensity of the sonic experience. In this way, an intensive collective experience of joint participation in the sounding, musicking, or even appreciating newly-discovered silence in the public space, engenders a sense of incipient community that is not yet there, but could be, as vehicle for rethinking the aesthetic, cultural and political potential of the audiosocial.

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ЗВУК И СЕЋАЊЕ КАО ИНТЕРВЕНЦИЈА ПРОТИВ ПОЛИТИКА УРБАНОГ  
 УТИШАВАЊА

(РЕЗИМЕ)

У овом чланку расправљамо о политичким импликацијама дијалектике буке и тишине како бисмо се осврнули на урбани и друштвени значај активизма који се темељи на звуку и сећању у пост-југословенском простору. Услед постсоцијалистичких трансформација и агресивног увођења неолибералног капитализма, приватизација урбаних јавних простора постала је свеприсутна, те не изненађује што су градови постали најистакнутији простор борбе у пост-југословенским друштвима. Звучне интервенције у јавном простору разматрамо као ревитализацију маргинализованих историја, група и појединаца, те сећања на друштвене аспекте јавног (заједничког) простора. Студије случаја о културалној и симболичкој реконституцији града које представљамо показују важност успостављања осећања припадности и солидарности и нових начина присвајања моћи кроз звук. Самоорганизоване групе, укључујући колективе као што су Жене у црном и хорове Комбинат и 3'борке, структуриране кроз хоризонталну архитектуру инфра-моћи, као и хетерогени савези који се конституишу кроз јавне протесте, могу понудити визују друштва сарадње, заједништва и солидарности. Главни потенцијал интервенција које овде описујемо је стварање колективитета који је подстакнут интензитетом самог звучног искуства. На тај начин колективно искуство стварања музике или звука, или чак стварања новог, политичког простора тишине у јавном простору, представља основу за изградњу нових врста заједница (и заједништва).

Кључне речи: бука и тишина (њихове политике), урбани активизам, постјугословенски простор, културна меморија