Listening to the Place of Cyprus:
The everyday acoustic experience in an intercultural island

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Abstract
Over the past few years, terms which were initially explored in Acoustic Communication, such as 'soundscape' or 'acoustic community' have been integrated into other socially oriented scientific fields. Through such integrations, regulated circumstances are encouraged, which lead to hybrid approaches, also oriented towards the sonic experience.
In the contemporary Cyprus era, the paper traces the connection developed by various communities on the island between themselves and their place through sound. To the ears of the divided country's residents, the everyday sounds appear to have a greater significance than other, political or religious ones. Memories, activities and politics connected to sound in Cyprus are being explored and questioned, forming likewise anacoustemological approach which acknowledges the property of sound to cross borders. Thus, a formation of a large conceptualized acoustic community is encouraged.

Keywords: sound place community borders

1. Acoustic Communication and beyond
Sound is a medium, can carry a message, can be regarded as energy or wave, and it is approached as such by the relevant scientific fields, which open up the ground for generating theory or practicing research. Acoustic communication has been an interdisciplinary field, considering sound as an equal part of a standard triptych: 'sound - listener - environment'. Everyday listeners are exposed to sound information, and perform both the role of the producer and the receiver. Concisely, the involved parameters have been subject of study, regarding their functions between the aforementioned three basic concepts. The further involvement of social sciences in sound studies has paved the way for multiple and different perspectives. From the 70s, the founders of acoustic communication theory suggested a way of careful listening to the environment: musical and environmental epistemology was used to trigger this new way of research. With the -absolutely justified- fear of the industrial sound dominance and power and the forthcoming destruction of the natural sound environment, a new eco-centred way of interaction with the environment in acoustic terms was proposed. The field of Acoustic Ecology was coined and developed by Murray Schafer(1977), opening the

ground for experimentation and research in this exact field. Barry Truax had (1984) worked on the concept of acoustic communication and established the theory which could later on be applied by the sound studies researcher in everyday life. In parallel, Hildegard Westerkamp (1988) used soundwalking as a practice of attending and re-understanding our everyday soundscape. This tool appears to be a useful way of approaching the soundscape of a place, as its subjectivity creates dynamics of various qualities in research. The contribution of theories and tools as mentioned above, has led to the birth of new sound-related discourses, placing the listener and the experience in the epicentre of the studies and attributing other features to the environment - regardless of whether they relate to its acoustic properties or its socio-cultural significations. The way one perceives sound information related to the nature of such properties may vary from one listener to another. In parallel, the sound variety itself, to which we are exposed daily, is proven to be much more complicated, considering that we carefully listen to our sonic environment. A second reading on this interaction opens the way we study and understand environmental (both rural and urban) sound, and the properties of the place, through it. People around a harbour where the horns of the ships are audible, people attending the same radio programme or even visitors of a sound art exhibition form an acoustic community. The sound marks can be these same sounds they are exposed to. What is even more significant in the research of such cases is the way the boundaries of any such community are in fact defined by the members themselves, by their own sounds. According to a relatively recent reconceptualized approach, an acoustic community is '*a group of people which connects and is defined by its sounds*' (Truax, 2001: 66).

Regarding the potential evolution of this field, the term 'acoustemology' can be successfully used, as it describes sonic sensibilities: It relates to the way place is constructed by sound sensations, experiences and memories: '*an exploration of sonic sensibilities, specifically of ways in which sound is central to making sense, to knowing, to experiential truth*' (Feld, 1996, p. 97). It was also only recently supported that '*where the model of acoustic communication includes the communal and personal relationships to soundscape, Feld recently added another layer, and stressed that experience and memories are related to sounds and places*' (Kytö, Remy, & Uimonen, 2012, p. 30).

2. The Sonic Experience in Place

The term 'soundscape' - that was also described as any '*sound environment, either in the natural world or in any recorded medium*' (Cox & Warner, 2009, p. 415)- has been an evolving term, challenging the emergence of the sonic experience over the past few decades. Its intellectual character that traverses the field of acoustic communication focuses on the interaction itself between human and the sonic environment, while living the sonic experience. The relatively new concept of the 'sonic effects', as suggested in Augoyard and Torgue's study (2005) confirms the complexity of such relations and considers the effect sound and space properties acquire in the way we listen to our environment. In this context, the way human interacts with and attaches to place creates the space for both research and experimentation. How could one study the sonic experience in a specific place in depth though?

To give an answer to this question, the concept of place needs to be demarcated. Apart from being a space which is geographically defined, several complex meanings are also distinguished – as it has been noted, '*…place is space to which meaning has been ascribed*' (Carter, Donald, & Squires, 1993, p. xii). Cresswell noted that '*most places are more often the product of everyday practice. Places are never finished but produced through the reiteration of practices - the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis*' (2004, p. 82). In a similar spirit, Rodman had stated that '*places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions*' (1992, p. 641).Considering that everyday social activity is able to reveal the properties of place, then an appropriate method to approach the sonic experience in place would focus on studying the everyday soundscape: the

result of such activities. A way of doing so would include experiential embedment in the sonic daily routine of the area; for example, soundwalking is part of one's sonic experience. The subjectivity and the action of walking through various spaces with different acoustic properties are characteristics of a typical soundwalk, and these automatically enhance the attention on the experience itself in a particular place. Besides, as it is known, space can be studied through sound: '…*sound studies and auditory knowledge contribute greatly to understandings of the 'geographic' and the modern legacy of spatial production…*' (LaBelle, 2010, p. xxi). Rodaway explored sound as sense combined in a similar context too, emphasising on geography and insisting on the sense of place (Rodaway, 1994).

Part of the whole sonic experience is the relation which delves into the connections of the sense of hearing and the more intellectual procedure of listening on behalf of the members of the acoustic community. The importance of the sonic experience is empowered at an individual level, but also at community levels, as the listener creates, by soundwalking or just listening, the soundtrack of him/herself. Also, the time an individual spends in a geographically defined area, and the way s/he connects with it, but also with the rest of the inhabitants, are elements which form and influence the properties of place. The sense of place is what offers to human a habitude with the specific part of the environment as well as familiarity with the sound. It would be then worth investigating the nature of the bonds between the listener and the place regarding sound.

3. The (Sonic) Place of Cyprus

The main theoretical discourses which were just explored, have attempted to approach the way sonic experience in place is constituted. Another question is hence generated: how can concepts such as place, memory and borders be explored in what we call 'Cypriot context', or more correctly the 'Place of Cyprus?' Cyprus is a Mediterranean island with a rich history and culture; numerically, 9520 sq. km of land host 0.8 million people (Solly, 2012): Political and cultural varieties coexist in an area of a long-existing conflict, creating various dynamics among the people. Its population consists of Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and other minorities of various ethnic communities living across the island. These include migrants and tourists or people doing business at the place. Humans, along with animals and the natural landscape of Cyprus resonate across the island and shape the basis for the acoustic experience of the residents. The country has been divided since 1974, and as Bose notes, there is '*an almost impenetrable frontier between the Turkish Cypriot northern third of the country and the Greek Cypriot south*' (Bose, 2007, p. 56). Respectively, it is understood that Turkish and Turkish Cypriot is spoken in the Northern part, while Greek and Greek Cypriot is mostly spoken in the south. A blend of cultures and communities resonates across the island though; a passer may hear other languages resonating within the various Cyprus soundscapes. This being used as the starting point, the paper is interested in investigating the inhabitants' everyday acoustic experience in an island with a rich intercultural character and a strong ethnohistorical background.

The research question is then formed likewise: Which are the elements that form the sonic place of Cyprus, and how are they regarded by the various communities of the island? Deriving from acoustic communication as explored in the beginning, there are various methods to study the sonic environment of an area. Such methods should be more open and act cooperatively when a place is more conceptually approached, rather than geographically. The elements of the sonic place are audible, but to be outlined, they need to be heard and described - such actions can be implemented by the researcher. In a next level, however, both the way inhabitants regard the sounds of their area as well as their listening procedures are aspects that requirea deeper understanding – firstly by the members of the communities themselves.

Before advancing with the analysis of the sonic place of divided Cyprus, the methodology which was used to explore the research question is presented, and is organized in two ways, as it was carried out:

soundwalking and in-depth interviewing. The sonic place of Cyprus includes complex sonic elements which are traced using a combination of listening through soundwalking in Nicosia, the divided capital of the island, and the method of open-ended interviews with members of various communities living across Cyprus. Besides, it was recently stated by Iscenthat '…*diverse approaches to the soundwalk, sound diary and soundscape composition can be integrated into ethnographic research*' (2014, p. 134).This is why a series of soundwalks was implemented in the divided city centre of Nicosia, capital of the island before the interviews. To be more precise:

Ten soundwalks of the same route were implemented/carried out in the area during July 2013. The data has been written down and logged, and the sounds which stood out were noted. Interviews were implemented with participants from Nicosia, but also from other regions of Cyprus, with members of various ethnic communities. Questions regarding their sonic environment – including data collected through the soundwalks, and the relation to place were asked to 50 participants. As Cyprus was regarded as one place of various dynamics, inhabitants were approached as members of various communities, with the purposive method. The analysis of their discourse would be qualitative and, for this reason, participants were contacted in order to offer the maximum possible variety in terms of ethnicity, but also variety of responses towards their sonic environment. The significance of the definition of the place itself - as Cyprus demonstrates such irregularities - allows us to acquire a more conceptual attitude towards the sound of the place; besides, it is the inhabitants – listeners who are part of it.

An emerging issue from the data has been whether discreet sound details or heavy loud sounds, when characterizing a geographical area, can form part of the place of divided Cyprus. Regarding the research question, it has been deemed necessary to indicate whether an inhabitant could point out a certain bond with the sound s/he was commenting on. In the place of Cyprus, the integration of sound and the type of application of its characteristics on the place itself happens in several levels.

The experiential part reveals elements which outline the soundscape of the centre of Nicosia, but also many other areas in Cyprus. The sea, other natural sounds and the machines – cars and motorcycles resonate in various areas and compose a part of the soundscape. In fact, considering its main characteristics, some useful sound information can be extracted, which can be confirmed by the soundwalking and studied deeper through interviewing. As Cyprus is a Mediterranean place, the climate is usually good, there is often sun and the temperatures are high. This means that air conditioning is used a lot, while tourists and their sounds – including the variety of the languages - are a common phenomenon. The fact that it is an island makes the sound of the sea characteristic, adding to the variety of languages, dialects and idioms spoken. Such facts were confirmed during the interviews across Cyprus. Nonetheless, it is the importance people give to sounds which is subject to variables worthy of discussion: In order to explore the way members of the communities regard them, but also organize the data acquired from soundwalking, a categorization has been made. This categorisation has allowed to place data, whether retrieved from a native Cypriot, from a migrant, or from the soundwalker myself, to a proper place referring directly to the communal resonances.

3.1 Spatial attributes

In a spatial level, reflection of sound in various interfaces acquires specific properties. The dome in temples-both churches and mosques - reverberates any sonic element taking place in there. Sellers' voices in closed markets also compose a distinct soundscape, while human sounds in a tourist area reveal the reputation of the place. Kids playing in open squares are common in Nicosia, while their voices reach far in the neighbourhood. Each of these spaces is characterized by unique details, which give a particular acoustic meaning to the place. For instance, reverberation, as defined in sonic effects varies and identifies each area differently.

3.2 Time indicators

In a time level, specific sounds during the 24h day intensify actions of everyday life - the place's everyday life. For instance, the rooster who wakes everyone up in the morning, the newspaper seller who sells his stuff in the streets all around the city, the hodja's call to prayer which is heard five times per day around the mosques, or the bell of the churches, which show activity especially on Sundays. Sound here works as a regulator of everyday life in terms of time. These characteristics do refer, in various ways, to the theory of sonic effects and raise more questions regarding the way they are perceived.

3.3 Memory

People connect to their place through their common sonic experiences, as they recall sentiments and events by them. The human-centred approach of acoustic communication involves the individual in a complex system of information exchange so the way sentiments and memories connect with acoustic elements of the environment is easily justified.

In divided Cyprus, by listening to hodja's call to prayer in the old city of Nicosia,a Greek Cypriot woman remembers her trip to Morocco, while an Egyptian inhabitant of the area declares that he enjoys being there and listening to the prayer. A Turkish Cypriot woman recalls herself as a kid, sneaking into the building of the mosque, trying to imitate the hodja's voice when he was not looking, and singing with all her strength from that height of the minaret. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots remember stories and recall memories from their past when commenting on certain sounds. The intense cultural and religious sonic elements, like the church bell or the hodja's call to prayer trigger memories connected to other places rather than connected to religion itself.

Impressively, also other sounds appear to be of a great importance, sounds which would not be that meaningful to a visitor. Animal sounds seem to be able to travel inhabitants to the past, where a more virgin landscape and soundscape used to be their environment, as now the urban sprawling of the buildings has changed the circumstances. The sea sound which is characteristic at the perimeter of the island also enhances the memories of the inhabitants of their past, as they grew at that area. A resident of Kormakitis' village in the north of Cyprus remembers the old times when the number of tourists coming to the area was great, while another fellow villager remembers herself being scared of the sound of the wild sea when she was young. Regarding migrants, they also appear to 'carry' their personal sound from their home country. A girl from Nepal remembers the gong next to her former place whenever she hears the church bell in Limassol. A Syrian remembers with detest the sounds of the bomb and the helicopter, as he had survived three wars. Particularly regarding the migrants, the sound of the common language they speak among other members of their community appears to enforce memories of the place they live, but also memories of the place they used to live. Specific songs that they sing among the members of their community, or the sounds of animals do appear to remind them of their country.

3.4 Politics

People do listen in the same way, regardless of the ethnic community they belong to – this was found out by the discussions implemented with the participants. Regarding the way people think about their soundscape, it was proven to be deeply related to political issues: What has triggered the interest of the research has been the common reference to such issues when not only politically oriented sound, but also everyday sound, or the way different languages are heard in space. Either belonging to one of the two major ethnic communities of the island or belonging to ethnic minorities, it has been common that sound initiated discussions over politics: in the first case regarding the Cyprus conflict and possible solutions to it and in the second case mostly regarding migration issues. As for the religious sounds, it is understood from the

interviews that only from a certain point of view, the hodja's sound and the sound of the bell are characterized by a 'sacred nature', which would unite the two 'opposed' religions rather than divide them. Precisely, for the sound of the bell, a Christian priest interviewee revealed a deep devotion while showing mutual respect for the hodja's song simultaneously – the hodja respectively demonstrated admiration for both sounds, with reference to the sacred. Regarding other sounds, a participant remembered the sound of the stones being thrown in his shop and recalls Cyprus conflict-related issues. An 'other' sound, though, is not always the sound of the other community (the two main communities living on the island) but may also imply others, smaller ones. Indeed, discussing the soundscape of the area, cases which recalled situations regarding migrants appeared: some also expressed their negative attitude towards small 'foreign' groups which live in the area. A critique to the social construction enhancing the national identity might be initiated from the discussion around sound and its politics - particularly when the case concerns the sounds of the languages and the religious and cultural sounds resonating all over the island. Necessity for the tourism being enhanced was also mentioned by the participants: the responsibility of the actions of the State were claimed. The sound of the tourists proved to symbolically claim the government's strategies on growing the financial capital on the island or not.

3.5 Everyday

The sonic tapestry of the island is rich in variety and plurality. From the analysis of the data acquired from the in-depth interviews, one can figure that members of the various communities are found to be attentive and connected to everyday sound; they do, in fact appreciate the special characteristics which were traced during the soundwalks. The sounds of Cyprus in various places demonstrate common elements between them, and this is encouraging for considering the island as one intercultural place. Whether these concern the place or the degree of the intercultural element dominating the space, acoustic communication offers the ground for justifying the acoustic experience. It also appears that this dimension is applied to all the communities living on the island. Sellers advertising their staff appear to be a common sound to the inhabitants, while the religious sounds are regarded as regulators of everyday life: a Greek Cypriot woman knows that she will have to collect the children from school when the hodja's call to prayer resonates in the evening, while a group of Roma kids close to Paphos declare that the last school bell is their favourite sound.

4. Communal Resonances - Discussion

Cyprus is a divided island which consists of many resonant communities. However, the analysis has indicated that there are related sound qualities and soundmarks across the island, and commonly listened by all. This fact would allow us to abandon the classification of the inhabitants in different communities and integrate them into one and only acoustic community, regardless of their ethnicity. More importantly, we are allowed to consider the structure of the borders within the island: A piece of land in the middle of the Mediterranean with the sea as natural water borders, has in a second level, a land-shaped border which cuts the island across. Inhabitants can cross from one side to another only from specific crossing points. What has been proven though, is that sound is not deteriorated by such territorial borders in two levels: in an actual level it travels through the air, but also in a more conceptualized one, it is regarded similarly by the inhabitants of the 'double-bordered' island. We are then legitimized to concern the people living in Cyprus as members of a large acoustic community, since similar sounds are resonant all over it. It has been shown that sound surpasses borders, whether enhanced by memorial, political or everyday life related meaning. In all cases, sounds which are heard on a daily basis, whether these are political, cultural or of minor significance, are able to cross over human-made walls in open air. Specifically, religious sounds are proven

to characterize an area, without necessarily being perceived in the way Religion would likethem to be perceived.

The research has revealed an acoustic community spread all over the island, the structure of which is dynamic and flowing; its sound constantly challenges discussions around the Cyprus Problem or migration issues, embedding political opinions, everyday activity and triggering various memories to the members of the communities. The fact that everyday situations were recalled and discussed over heavy ethnic-oriented comments proves the transgressive property of sound, regardless of geographical borders and the existence of a conceptualised dynamic acoustic community around it, which potentially questions the way ethnic communities are defined.

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