

Sonic (and Other) Environments as the Mirror of Society (and as the Challenge for Artistic Testimony)

Original Study

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Abstract: The main topics of the paper are the (non)ecological dimensions of sonic and other environments in contemporary world reflecting the “suchness” and quality of certain cultures and society of global transcapitalism in its late phase of digitalisation, and devastation as well. Various social discursive and nondiscursive practices of this civilization influence very deeply our ways of living in many important dimensions—spiritual, moral, ecological, economic, political, and way of communication among others, which is mirrored in different sonic (and other) environments we are situated.

The author refers to the special works of arts, kind of new musical discourses appropriating field recordings of unique environments, sonic sculptures, or intermedia installations in social-critical contexts as the testimonies of such artists as Bob Ostertag (USA), Peter Machajdík, Jonáš Gruska (both SK), among others.

Keywords: sonic environment, sonic ecology, digital transformations, musical discourse

INTRODUCTION

Resonance is everywhere and everything resonates. Even at the beginning of everything, as they say in the Bible, the sound of the word resonated so much that it caused the existence of our infinite universe and its constant expansion. In his masterpiece *Civilization Phase III* (1992/1993), Frank Zappa claims that everything is vibration and resonance of the various waves. We resonate all the time—with the universe, with the Earth (by the way, 70 % of the Earth is water, and 65 % of our body is water, too). We resonate with the air, with the flow of the wind, the ground, the trees, and the inner energy of fire. We do resonate with each other or do not—in positive or negative vibrations...

This paper is focused primarily on the resonance of sonic environments surrounding us, and how they reflect our cultural habits, behavior, and social, and environmental, relations to the world. Thus, trans-/interdisciplinary collaboration in the scientific research of sonic ecology is the basic prerequisite to achieving relevant results. We see a big potential for interdisciplinary relations among different sciences—cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, aesthetics, acoustics, etc.—on the level of contemporary existential semiotics to investigate this field of the sonic (and other) environments surrounding us everywhere we are.

The existentially semantic dimension of sounds plays a crucial role in our lives anywhere and anytime we happen to be. No wonder the philosophy of the ecological

approach to our acoustic semiosphere is highly needed, especially in our world with various devastations of our natural and urban environments. To be clear, the environmental consciousness of the policymakers is superficial and hypocritical; COVID-19 crisis in the first half of the 2020s, amplified and accumulated all crises we have experienced in recent decades (ecological, moral, economic, cultural, social, etc.), showed a total misunderstanding of the sources of the current ecological disaster. The change of this highly critical situation is directly conditioned on ending mutated global digitalized hyper-capitalism, which is based on the supremacy of marketing for unscrupulous financial profit.¹

Environmental consciousness and policies in our society must eliminate these harmful influences as possible—it must be not campaign-like superficial, not extreme as well unprofessional (with which we are confronted so often in the meantime). They should consider seriously all local givens and specifics, protect them as our cultural heritage, and respect and cultivate our environment anywhere we are on the Earth as the only time-space that allows us to survive.

The ecological effort to save and to rehumanize the spaces we live in—sonic ones included—can be considered as one of the most important issues today, more than ever before. There is also a real need to develop a special, creative sensitivity and new ways of perceiving sonic elements, their meanings, and their remarkable significance in our daily being. If we are more sensitive and open to accepting and understanding the (sometimes implicit, sometimes radical) otherness of sonic “suchness” then we can be able to accept the otherness as such. The realistic and real ecological environmental policy (if it is not connected with the madness of s. c. Green Deal) is very necessary today at any level and in different areas of our social life and culture. Unfortunately, the agenda of acoustic, and sonic ecologies is in the shadow of other issues, but it is changing slowly. For example, in the awareness of how important is not to generate acoustic smog in homes, schools, parks, and certain work environments, at least.

But there is not only audible noise and dangerous acoustic smog. There is also the hidden one, mostly badly digitalized sounds of acoustic smog, which is almost inaudible—it is emitted by digital electronic devices, smartphones, computers, Wi-Fi routers, a stand-by regime of TV, radio, etc.—that surround us almost everywhere and irritate us constantly. We are often not aware of it, but it can slowly damage our health. We know how

tired and dry our eyes are after staring at digital screens all day, so how tired our ears and mind must be exposed to digital noise all the time?

There is also another level the non-ecological dimension of digitally streamed sounds. Kyle Devine in his book *Decomposed: The Political Ecology of Music* (2019) claims that there is no such thing as a nonmaterial way of listening to music: “The so-called cloud is a definitely material and mainly hardwired network of fiber-optic cables, servers, routers, and the like.” (Devine; Ross 2020, 2) and as Alex Ross, review of this work pointed out: “This concealment of industrial reality, behind a phantasmagoria of virtuality, is a sleight of hand typical of Big Tech, with its genius for persuading consumers never to wonder how transactions have become so shimmeringly effortless.” (Ross 2020, 3) The streamed music is even more non-ecological, and expensive than ever before (even in the time of digital CD media).²

SONIC (AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL) MIRRORS AS CULTURAL METAPHOR

If we can be denotative, there are real sound mirrors in the world, e.g. such as the acoustic one near Kilnsea Grange, East Yorkshire, or Denge sound mirrors located in Romney Marsh in Kent. These mirrors are passive devices that collect and amplify sound waves. They were often designed in a parabolic-shape made of sound hard materials, which allows them to reflect and focus incident sound signals. Before the invention of the radar system, this kind of acoustic mirror was used to detect incoming aircraft. In recent times, they have been used often in aero-acoustic wind tunnels (for noise measurement). There are also parabolic acoustic mirrors, “whisper dishes” in various observatories, or ones with small portable parabolic microphones to record e.g. birds, or to stream some football, or ice-hockey players during the games.

But let us deal with the different meanings of sonic mirrors as a cultural metaphor, with the problematics of how acoustic environments speak about the quality and “suchness” of concrete cultural, social spaces & time. Various social discursive and nondiscursive practices of our civilization influence very deeply our ways of living in many important dimensions—spiritual, moral, ecological, economic, political, and way of communication among others, which is mirrored in different sonic environments (pleasant or unpleasant, or even destructive) we are situated willingly or (mostly) involuntarily.

One of the authors and artists who deal with problems of contemporary civilization (not only) in the indicated

1 It is necessary to raise public awareness of the fact, who is the main polluter and destroyer of our environment in global measure. It is fine when we separate the waste and buy bio-/eco-products, and so on, but... In the conditions of a very late phase of transcapitalism – which causes far-reaching all-planetary crises (ecological is “only” one of them) and is unable to solve them at all –, it is necessary to stop as soon as the global disaster and unprecedented pollution caused by the richest class of people, the oligarchs and their megacorporation net (acting behind the visible elected political-economic structures) who live at the expense of the “99 %” of population, and flora & fauna, too.

2 Alex Ross continues: “When we listen to music, we may ask ourselves: Under what conditions was a particular recording made? How equitable is the process by which it has reached us? Who is being paid? How are they being treated? And—most pressing—how much music do we really need?” (Ross 2020, 3).



Figure 1. Denge sound mirrors.

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/d8/dd/5b/d8dd5b0938b267255fa94039bb8f032e.jpg>

contexts is Bob Ostertag (1957). American composer, a world-renowned innovator of analogue and digital electronic music, a long-time queer activist (in earlier times, when it was not yet attractive and conjunctural), and at the same time a politically committed person on the left, capable of helping directly to the epicenters of war conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador in the 1980s, or in Serbia after the bombing by NATO troops in the late 1990s. He reflects on social events and their sonic contexts, which he transforms into his intermedia musical compositions or sonic “documentaries”. We can mention the catharsis piece *Sooner or Later* (1991) based on a recording of the cry of a Salvadoran little boy burying his father, partisan, or *Yugoslavia Suite* with two parts *War Games and These Hands* (1999), appropriating the video war games in a simulacrum of CNN TV news, or the sounds and images of clapping red bloody hands of politicians during the Balkan civil war in 1990.³

He also writes remarkably interesting texts and books from his travels and artistic tours. After the publication

Creative Life: Music, Politics, People, and Machines (2009), he published another book set of texts, resp. of essays, entitled *Facebooking the Anthropocene in Raja Ampat. Technics and Civilization in the 21st Century* (2021). He presents here views of the contemporary world, various forms of culture and art in the late stages of fatally failing social (be it neo-capitalist or neo-socialist) systems at a time of their ubiquitous overgrowth with digital technologies, the Internet, and at the same time ongoing threatening ecological, slowly catastrophic devastation. Among other issues, Ostertag writes about how various environments (sonic ones included) around the world can express and mirror the ways of our cultural and social being.

The first part of this publication is a conglomerate of direct testimonies, profound reflections, and insights in the form of an engaging postmodern travelogue, or rather a reportage from Ostertag’s fifteen-month tour at the end of the second decade of the 21st century across various countries of the world. He describes not

³ Description taken from Ostertag’s authorized web site:

“In *War Games*, Ostertag sits on stage with a joystick made for computer games which mimics the joysticks in military aircraft. The performance looks and sounds much like a computer game. The result is an improvised mix of manipulations of image and sound from computer games, US Army and Air Force training videos, actual bombing videos from the cockpits of NATO planes bombing ex-Yugoslavia, and cartoons.

These Hands uses video clips from the Balkan civil wars which were selected because of the prominence of hand gestures projected on a scrim (loading bullets into a gun, firing a bazooka, pointing to a map, bandaging a wound, covering one’s tears). A live performer stands in the dark behind the scrim, with only his hands lit. The disembodied hands are visible both through the scrim and are also captured by a camera and collaged into the video. The performer can thus reach his hands into the hands in the videos and manipulate the image with his gestures.”

See more: <https://bobostertag.com/performance/yugoslavia-suite/>

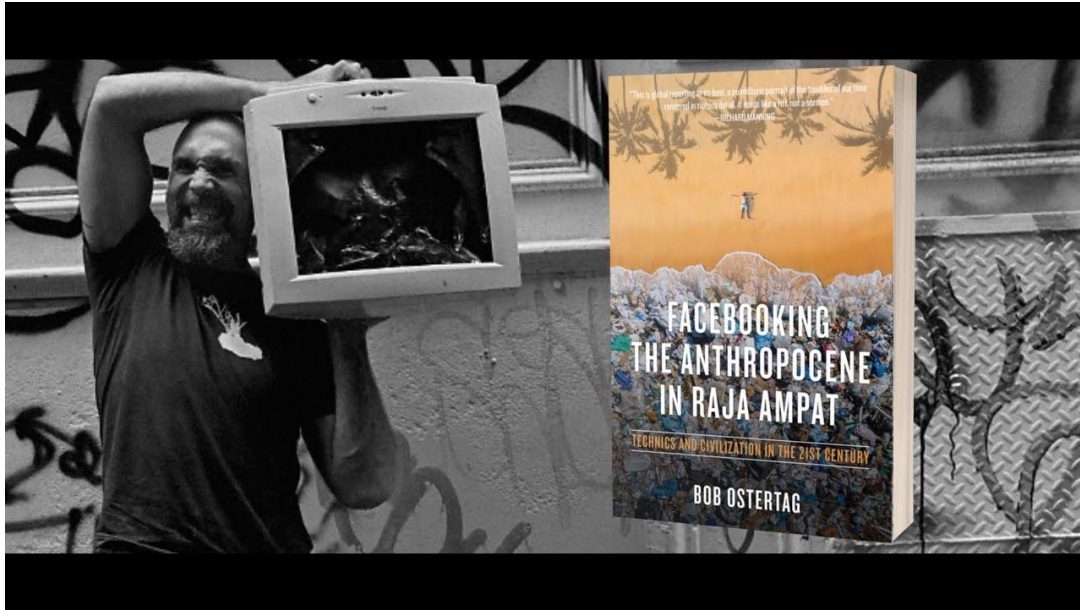


Figure 2. Bob Ostertag and his book *Facebooking the Anthropocene in Raja Ampat*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92HdfblfQhU>

only the unprecedented expansion of the reach of digital technologies to the “most western” corners of the world and their transformative impact on local cultures, but also the tragic impacts of the “plastic age”—e.g. the contamination of urban agglomerations, countryside, nature, beaches, seas and oceans, fauna and flora—and thus ourselves, with (primary) plastics and (secondary) microplastics, and the onset of global, increasingly dystopian, irreversible climate change. The author did not choose the attractive tourist destination of Raja Ampat, an archipelago in the Indonesian province of West Papua with a dreamy diver’s paradise, as a model example by chance. It is a place that is not easily accessible by plane or ferry, it evokes pristine, exotic nature. However, after it became a popular tourist destination, you are already covered ankle-deep in plastic waste on the adjacent beaches... The local culture has disappeared, and people have reoriented themselves to the globally expanding tourism business, communicating with foreigners in English via smartphones, but no longer able to communicate in local dialects, even with the inhabitants of the neighbouring island (!).

On his travels, Ostertag encountered war conflicts, immense poverty, ecological devastation of unimaginable proportions, industrialized agriculture, and waves of huge numbers of refugees. But on the other hand, there is the breathtaking wealth of the “one percent” of the chosen ones and the dominance of the globally implemented internet which has dramatically and explicitly paradigmatically transformed our world. According to him, the world is *de facto* divided into a significant minority of those who “have” and the overwhelming majority “who have almost nothing”. He notices the rapidly developing illiberal capitalism in China, controlled by the local Communist Party, is manifesting itself in the total devastation of air quality and terrible sonic ecological conditions in

some cities, not only in megacities like Beijing, Shanghai, or Wuhan. Ostertag also notes the construction of huge agglomerations with standardized skyscrapers in China, which deprive the socially weaker population of their homes, who survive until the last moment in half-destroyed houses. However, you may not find the skyscrapers built a few years ago there today. They are built from poor-quality “disposable” components, often renovated and in their place, and there are other, new flourishes of postmodern architecture, soaring into the sky, apparently again temporary.

Bob Ostertag has a permanent residence in the Mission district of San Francisco, a former working-class Latin American neighbourhood, now just a short distance from the headquarters of global, digital technology giants such as Facebook and Google in Silicon Valley. According to him, these are young, fabulously “rich, arrogant immigrants”, owners or partners, top managers of these mega-companies, whom no one sees in person, reminiscent of the authorities in Franz Kafka’s novel *The Castle*. Nowadays, when the number of users of these internet corporations can be counted in billions, it is probably unnecessary to talk about the unprecedented global power and influence of these owners of our digital data. Wherever Ostertag went in the world, he saw more and more people, regardless of social status, “glued” to their iPhones, and smartphones, surfing Google preoccupied with posting statuses, videos, and photos on social nets. According to him, San Francisco itself is currently divided into the sphere of this tech-economy and the sphere of the economy of everything else, which is now dependent on the first completely.

According to him, the internet and hand-held, pocket computers fundamentally change the way of communication (sonic one including) in terms of its semantics and significance, its content, or the selection of those with



Figure 3. Peter Machajdík and part of his installation *Waves and Cages* (2012).
Photo: Ivan Majerský

whom we (don't) want to conduct it. They also change how we spend our time, and the understanding of the meaning of time and the quality of its experience. They are changing us right at the basal level of being and at an unexpectedly accelerating level. Moreover, these achievements of modern digital technology often saturate our need for real, realistically absent relationships, "contact with the world", creating the illusion of their presence. Yes, we live in an all-pervading smartphone age, or internet and (micro)plastic—in which, as Ostertag writes about it in one place, even dead coral reefs are replaced by imitations made in a 3-D printer—with all the consequences of its environmental and our internal hyper contamination.

He avoids extreme views of tech-optimism or disillusionment, which allows him to see the fact that even though we are surrounded by various screens and smartphones at every step, the originally desired, productive supplementation of reality does not occur. The creation of a hyperreal version of it, which is moving away from it. There is not even the dreamed expansion and enrichment of our universe with additional parallel virtual worlds, but rather the effect of alienation—alienation from the immediate reality, as well as from ourselves.

The philosopher of postmodern art and conceptual artist Jozef Cseres writes about Ostertag's observations: "Among the problems that Bob Ostertag reflects on in his new book, the most important and acute question is, without a doubt, what humanity is doing to survive global crises in a planetary environment suitable for life. It is obvious that without respectful interaction with nature and without the help of technology, it cannot do it today.

Technology is our new nature, and it doesn't always get along with the original one that was here before us (and hopefully will be after us). (...) But how to combine the biological and cultural dependence on technology, with the destructive consequences it has on nature, is a tricky question of our Anthropocene presence." (Cseres 2021, 3)

EXAMPLES OF THE ARTISTIC TESTIMONIES

The aforementioned phenomena are the challenge to create a kind of artistic testimony in a special multi-meaning statement, which can combine, and mutate in the dialogical symbiosis of the world of sounds with selected semantic references and new experimental music. Music today is related to sounds of various environments, we live in an era when any sonic sources of the semiosphere can be related to musical meanings, thus we can talk not only about musical work of art in a traditional way but also (to replace/update it) about musical discourse, as Polish semiotician Maciej Jabłonski suggested. According to Edvin Prévost "no sound is innocent" because every sound is pregnant by meaning. Ludwig Wittgenstein said that music as such is a very tricky phenomenon, a tricky language game *sui generis*—no wonder, the music generated from the sounds is tricky even more maybe. There are many artists focused to re-/cross-/contextualizing some field recordings of sonic environments in contemporary music and intermedia projects—if we consider the large universe of audio arts as music.⁴ I can mention at least some interesting projects from the Slovakian scene, of the composers Peter Machajdík and Jonáš Gruska.

4 These thoughts resonate with contemporary musical semiotic research in the biosemiotics. As Matthew A. Slayton and Yogi Hale Hendlin claim in their study *The Musical Turn in Biosemiotics (An Expressivist Model of Communication)*: "Paying more attention to soundscapes as cohesive structures also temper mechaphony and other intrusive forms of anthrophony. Semiosonic research gives us deeper insights into harmonious and disharmonious sounds and noises, which can provide heuristics for ecosystem and organism health." (Slayton, Hendlin 2023, 232).

Július Fujak

Peter Machajdík (1961) is a polystyle composer, the author of very interesting works of radio art, or electroacoustic, and acousmatic compositions, among which we can mention at least the experimental ones *The Healing Heating* (2005) or *Slyší e mě obře? no?* (Do you ear me ell? es? , 2013), created on behalf of the R(a)dio(custica) project of the Czech Radio Vltava, *The Marathon* (2007) for the Festival of Electronic Music in Osaka, Japan, *Tolleranza* (2016), among many others. There are also remarkable sound installations such as *Hannahver* (2003), *Belianka* (2015), or live musical performances as an unconventional guitar accompanying the contemporary dance of Petra Fornayová. It should be noted that in addition to his artistic work, Machajdík is also engaged in organizational activities: for a long time at the international festival *Genius Loci* in Levoča, in the concert cycle *Music at Fulla Gallery* in Ružomberok, and first of all since 2011 he has been the curator of the International biennial of sound art *Sound City Days*, and the curator of the festival *Soundart vs. Nu Dance*.

One of his important, socio-environmental installations is *Waters and Cages* (2012) in the Gallery of Bratislava City, kind of homage à John Cage created in the year of his 100th anniversary of birth. It was also twenty years since Cage visited Bratislava, Machajdík's birthplace. The installation in the exhibition room involves the visual and auditory components, four cages were

filled with water from the most polluted rivers of the world, including the Yangtze, Mekong, Salween, Ganges, Indus, Danube, La Plata, Rio Grande, and the Nile. "It is not easy to get water from the Amazon or the Nile, as some countries do not agree to export it. For example, an acquaintance smuggled me some water from the Yangtze River. Other acquaintances from India brought me water from the Ganges. I then mixed the water from several dirty rivers," (Machajdík, Opoldusová, 2012, 2) said the artist. In the installation, it was possible to hear the tones C – A – G – E from four speakers in each of the four cages, and rhythmic composition arose from the different time durations of each note (as a reference to Cage's legendary composition 4'33"). Two other speakers set up in the room played every four minutes and thirty-three seconds the sounds of various voices and narrations of John Cage. Some of them were electronically adjusted, even played backward: "It could symbolize Cage's return, maybe the return of his ideas and his message back among us," (Machajdík, Opoldusová 2012, 2) Machajdík explained. According to him, these audiovisual objects/cages with polluted water of the polluted rivers symbolize the changes in the organic components of the ecosystem, especially the risks to faunal assemblages, but also the changes in the inorganic components of the environment. They deal with the question of the extinction of animal species, especially birds. They stand as a representation of the diminution



Figure 4. Jonáš Gruska.
Photo: Lucia Kovalová

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not only of bird species, but as well as drawing attention to the suppression of human rights.⁵

Jonáš Gruska (1990), Slovakian unconventional composer, intermedia artist, and musician—or, as he calls himself, a “sound enthusiast and field recorder”—is one of the most interesting figures in contemporary Central European sonic and sound art. The creator of experimental sonic installations, audio-staged events, and intermedia projects in site-specific contexts surprises with the level of invention in almost every one of his works, in a relatively radical grasp of the medium of sound. Musically, he is oriented towards the world of “chaotically” polymetric rhythms, and various non-tempered, unconventional tunings, primarily he works with the psychoacoustic properties, expression, and influence of the very phenomenality of sounds and so-called field sound recordings, which he likes to appropriate in his artistic output. He prefers always a direct live contact with the “tissue” of a particular sound, with its fascinating texture, whether it is generated electronically or recorded in a specific environment:

“I remember a trip on a trolleybus, where I decided to listen to its electromagnetic field. The wailing solo melodies were distinctly interrupted by a harmonic drone. The trolleybus driver was at that moment a sort of performer for me—without his own knowledge he was creating a musical experience for me, conditioned by the traffic around him, the traffic lights, but also by his own decisions.” (Fujak 2021, 79).

As a bricoleur, he developed special devices Elektrosluch (Electrohearing) and Priezor (Visor), kind of an antenna for electromagnetic listening, as well as (micro) Ears, sensitive omnidirectional microphones that capture microsounds.

Among his sophisticated sound-intermedia installations, let us mention, the series *Site Specific Resonances I–V* (2012–2016), for ventilation systems in a psychiatric ward in Prague or at the Vienna post office, for iron doors in Zlín, etc., *Radiators* (2016, Oblastní galerie Vysociny in Jihlava), *Experiment 0* (2017, for interference frequencies of sheet metal at Meetfactory in Prague). We can mention also his sound field recordings such as *Kvílenia* (Wailings, 2015), *Zvuky Slovaftu* (Sounds of Slovaft, 2015). Gruska is also the author of the remarkable project *Lúky* (Meadows, 2015), realized originally in the large hall of an abandoned sugar factory in Rimavská Sobota as part of the Ruins project with folklore women singers, later also in the center of contemporary culture Nástupište 1–12 (Platfotms 1–12), in Topoľčany, which resulted in the slightly differently conceived album *Spevy* (Singsings, 2017).

The author of this study is also an intermedia musical composer/comproviser (combining pre-composed and

improvised processes) who creates various acousmatic compositions that appropriated the field recordings of unique site-specific time spaces (available e.g. in the latest album *Transparent Sculptures*, 2022/23). To be more personal: we need to focus our attention on *kairos* (the right, opportune moment of our being); the trace of *kairos* hidden in certain, unique special experiences of sonic events. Why? They can project in a certain ecological way the existential essence of our lived moments enacted in the concrete and unrepeatable spatial and temporal context, and they are related to barely verbalized meaning or beauty. One of the author’s transparent sonic sculptures is the acousmatic piece *Nitrian Atlantises* (2013). It is dedicated to very special place and very interesting part of the pre-ancient local history of Nitra—the town that the author live in for almost three decades—as well as to certain semantic parallels of this period manifested in the contemporary life and sonic environments of the city. Why such “an apocalyptic” title *Nitrian Atlantises*? There was an ancient “proto-civilization” that existed in the warm valley of the Nitra River back during the Stone Age some 3,000 years BC. Its traces can be found in southern Slovakia, in the village of Nitriansky Hrádok. Here, at a site known as Zámeček, researchers found the oldest Neolithic sculpture in Slovakia, the so-called seated Venus of Nitra. The archaeologists found there very special, strange, sophisticated pottery, antler tools with beautifully worked kind of Mycenaean (!) ornamentation, as well as all manner of tools, rings, and even several bone ice skates. We still don’t know much about this culture and society, but it has left us with a fortification system, burial mounds, immense bulwarks, the ruins of structures built in rows resembling city streets, and signs of deep moats that formed a network of small islands. This society’s peak came later, at some point during the Bronze Age (from the mid-17th to mid-15th century BC), an area of several dozen kilometres experienced a boom of activities, its inhabitants developed numerous trades, planted various crops, and adopted pagan myths and rituals. Nobody knows what happened to this advanced, admirable society, it disappeared suddenly and mysteriously. It is possible that, following a long period of drought, it “evaporated” along with the life-giving water. Or maybe it was afflicted by a different catastrophe. Nobody knows. The existence of this unknown Nitrian Atlantis fascinated and inspired the author to engage in this acousmatic experiment/acoustic collage (commissioned also by Czech Radio program rAdioCUSTICA), whose first part is called *After...* At the end of that summer, he with his wife travelled to Nitriansky Hrádok, where he made some field recordings of sonic environments at Zámeček near the Nitra River. There was almost nothing except one weathered billboard showing the seated Venus. These recorded samples create the axis for the entire first section of the piece. Later, he recorded an

⁵ See more: <https://kultura.pravda.sk/galeria/clanok/65048-kamarati-pasovali-vodu-zo-spinavych-veltokov/> (Translated from Slovak language by the author.)

audio collage—consisting of the sonic environment of that mysterious place, then he added different sounds of wooden sonic objects, bone ocarina, copy of an anthropomorphic 4500-year-old urn, black volcanic sand from the “real Atlantis” (he brought from the Island of Santorini), small percussions, female voice, my whispering, and bass bagpipes. He did not want to “reconstruct” the sounds and music of this lost culture; He just aimed to find the symbolical form to express the interplay between the past and present as well as the “flashes” of the ancient and mysterious place’s space-time in contextual similarities with contemporary life.

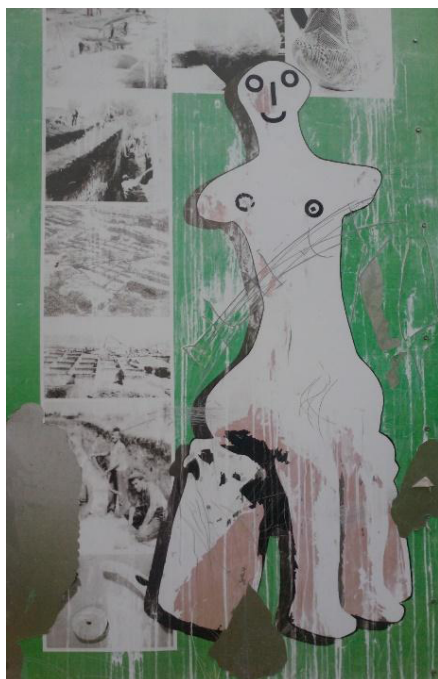


Figure 5. Billboard in Zámeček of prehistoric seated Venus of Nitra, “completed” by a local “artist”.

Foto: Július Fujak

The second part, entitled *Before...*, is about urban postmodern civilization in Nitra in the 21st century. The sonic recordings were made on a tropical summer day in different places and environments. These audio postcards were made in various locations in the town that serve as main promenades between the hot noontime and early evening; in the big shopping center, at the main intersection in front of the Tesco hypermarket, on the road to the hospital (where you can hear women talking in the maternity and gynaecology ward), from the evening pub behind an indoor swimming pool, and by the kind of commentary onto unique recorded situations of this one day in the life of another potential Nitrian “Atlantis”...

CONCLUSION

Once upon a time, the indigenous people of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa were in shock and sadness when they discovered that writer, philosopher, and farmer Laurens van der Post, who visited them, couldn't

hear the stars at all. For these bushmen, the inability to hear and listen to nature was a sign of profound disconnection from the world around us. Even in ancient Greece, Pythagoras recognized the relation between the harmony of spheres (environment of the universe) and the music created by man according to the Mystic Tetractys, which can harmonize our soul—he named this connection *mimesis*.

Are we connected with nature and the environments we create? Or do we create only the labyrinth of creek simulacra mirrors, the sonic noise ones including? And can we apply the understanding of Tetractys and *mimesis* (in the range from Pythagoras to Aristotle) in some analogies to contemporary musical discourse extended to various sonic environments in the context of sonic ecologies, which can harmonize our souls? Especially, if we know that everything, including us, was made from the stars? So, we can question ourselves today—can we listen to stars and sonic environments around us, and how does it resonate with the character of the society we live in? What everything does it mirror? Each of us can answer these questions right now and here, in concrete real situations, by him-/herself.

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