Hearing Trouble: Sound Art in Post-Conflict Cities
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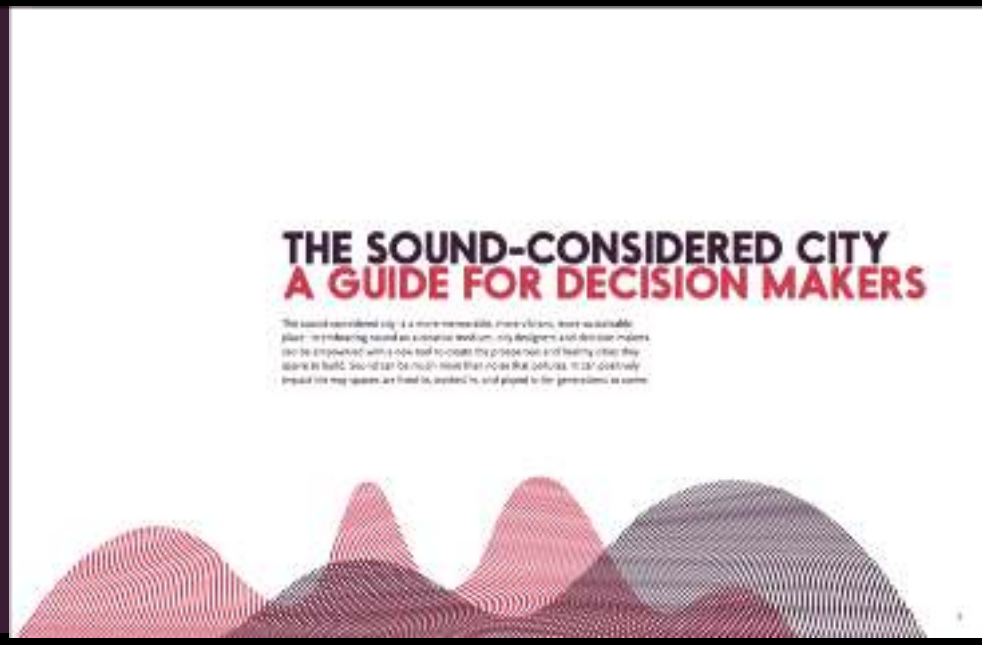
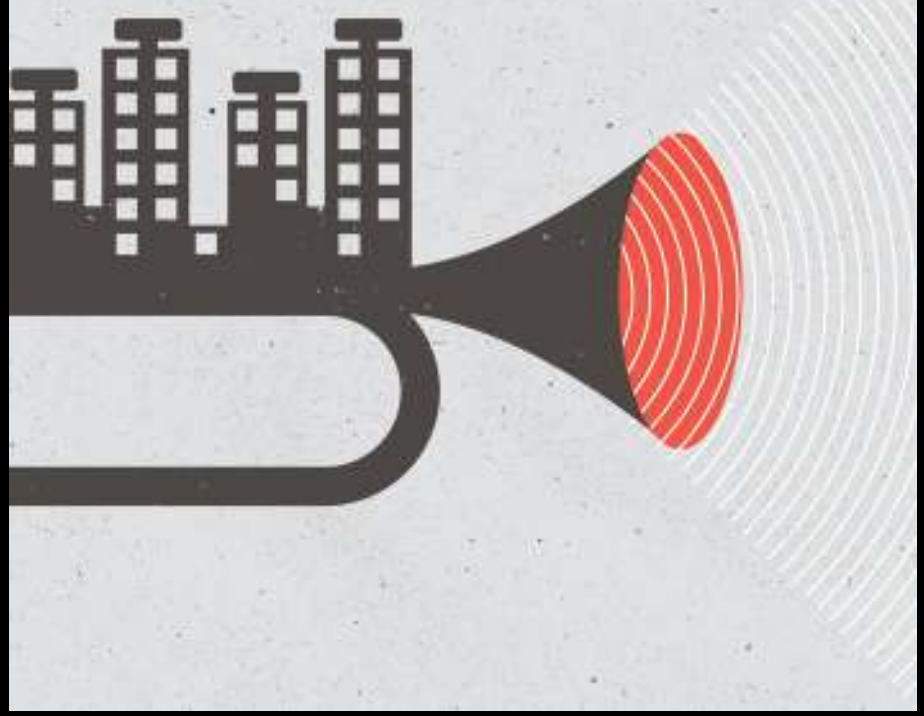
THE SOUND-CONSIDERED CITY
A GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKERS

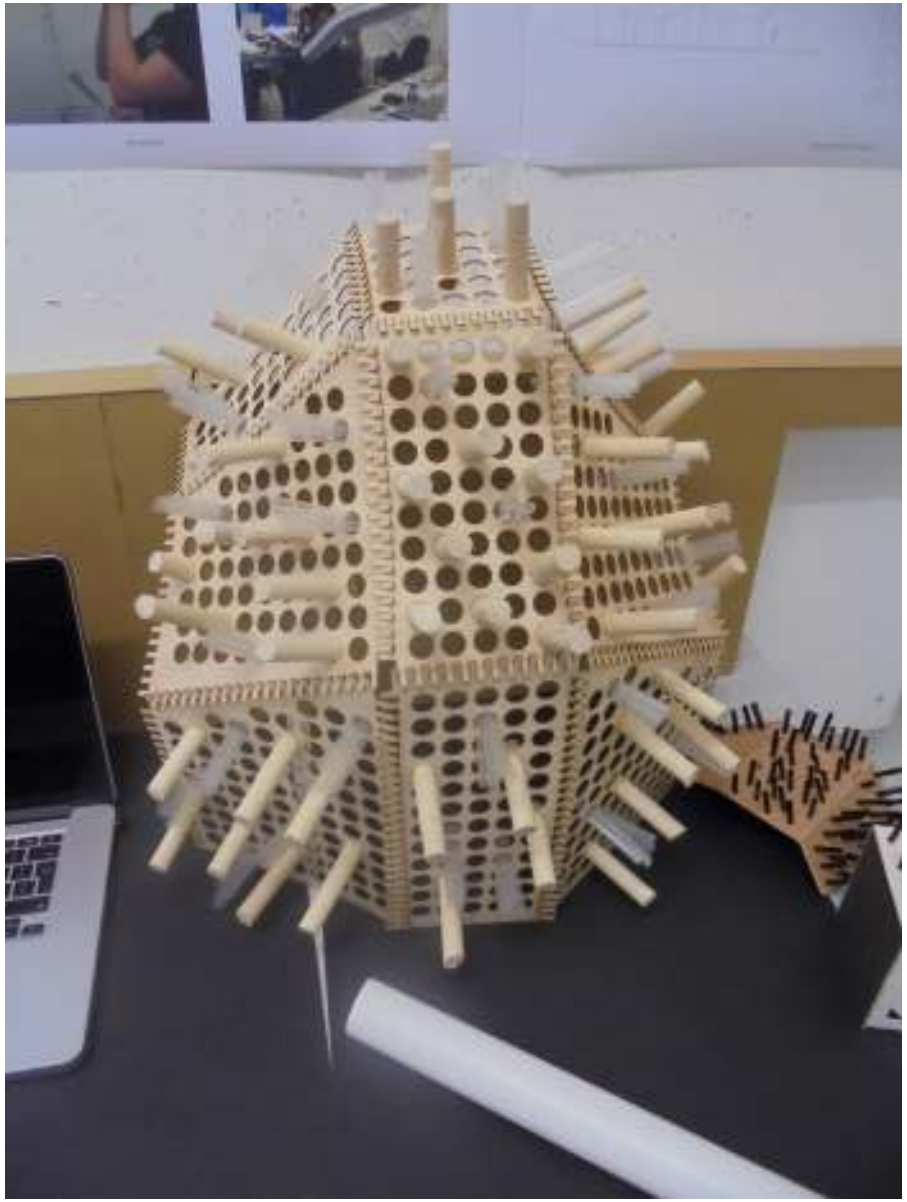


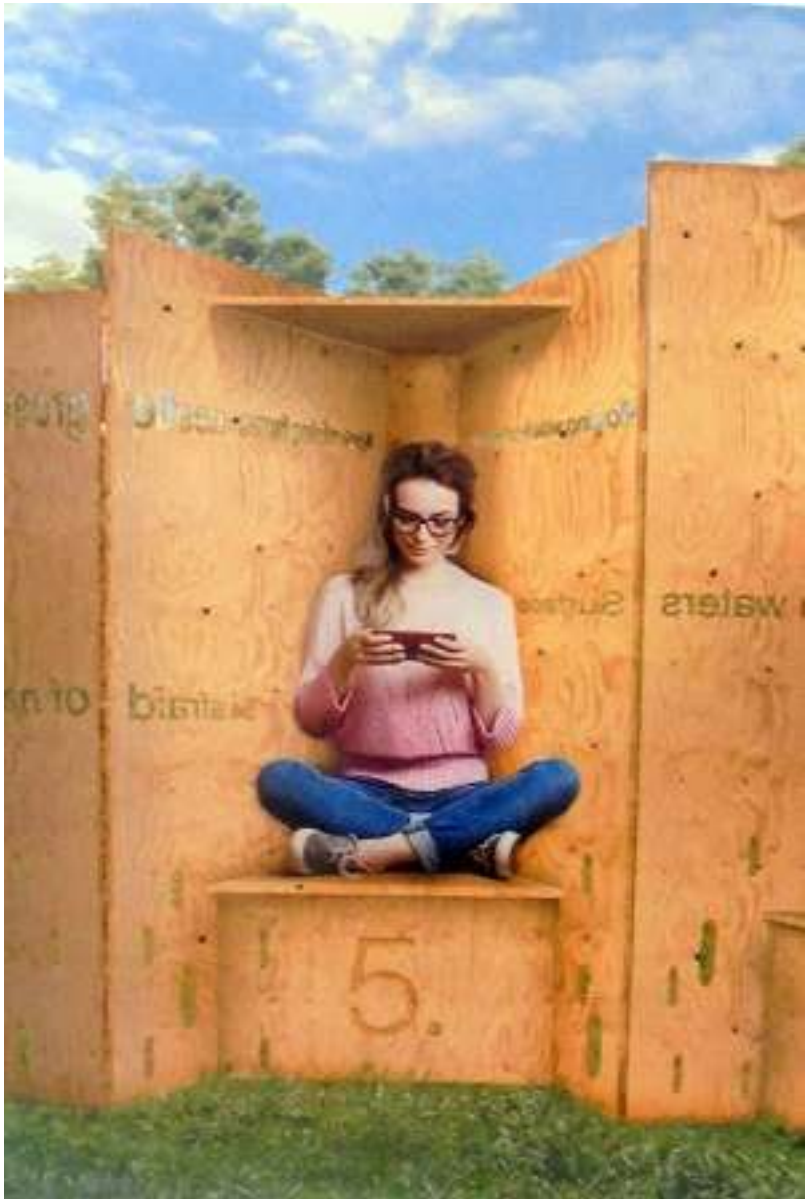
SOUNDSPACE

A MANIFESTO

8. THINK OF ALL THE SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE A SYMPHONY






5.

SOUND ANALYSIS EXAMPLE

Why is it important to consider sound? Several areas of the city are underused partly because of their poor acoustic quality. Here we show how a simple sound analysis can be carried out with the aim of better understanding an area and environment.

ALBERTBRIDGE ROAD

The level of background noise on Albertbridge Road in Belfast is extremely high. Traffic noise masks pleasant sounds such as people chatting or birds singing. However, there are still many pleasant sounds even beneath the cacophony of vehicles – who may not have a memorable view you can't be heard? The acoustic environment of the Albertbridge Road is caught in a vicious cycle. It will not be more pleasant unless people overlook an more pleasant sounds, but as long as it is an unpleasant place, in which to spend time, no one cares or will be bothered. Reducing traffic noise would quieten this space, but it would not necessarily make it more pleasant. What it really lacks is the acoustic vibrancy of human activity. Urban designers could resolve this through creating acoustically protected places along the road in which people enjoy spending time.

Predominant Sounds
Traffic noise

Background Sounds
Busy engines, constant traffic noise, sounds drifting over, passing car or traffic light

1 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

For many cities, improving the health and well-being of citizens is a key consideration in future plans. In particular, many city planners want to promote physical activity through the careful design of streets, parks, residential areas, and workspaces. Simply put, the more active people are, the better their physical and mental health.

Sound can have an enormous impact on whether or not people feel at ease being out and about in their cities. Streets and spaces which sound pleasant can promote physical activity and interaction with neighbours – both important measures for mental and physical health.

BELFAST EXAMPLE
NEWTOWNARDS ROAD

Belfast's busy Newtownards Road is a well-used arterial route into the city. However, it struggles to maintain its role as a local high street due to a history of deprivation and political tensions. Belfast City Council has invested millions of pounds on environmental improvements since its Renewing the Routes scheme (2004-2010). Although this particular scheme was successful and well-received by local residents and businesses, substantial regeneration of the corridor has

While traffic noise masks calming pleasant sounds such as people chatting or birds singing, the variety of sources surrounding the din of traffic is also very limited. There are few places along the pavement where people can move away from the road edge because it is so narrow, making this a particularly unpleasant pedestrian route. With residents as well as a reasonable distance from such high levels of noise, both elderly and very young people could be discouraged from walking along Newtownards Road and will drive into the city instead. The sound environment and the walkability of a city are tightly interwoven: points of acoustic respite or amenity, located along the road could encourage people to walk into the town centre along the Newtownards Road.

Predominant Sounds
High Level traffic passing, chatter

Background Sounds
Passing bus, footsteps

Belfast

Preferred Options Paper
Public Consultation Report
July 2017

Local Development Plan
2020-2035

Belfast City Council

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP

Belfast

Your future city
The Belfast Agenda

A draft for consultation

Nine core planning principles:

1 Health and Well-being
2 Connectivity
3 Safety
4 Vibrancy
5 Tourism
6 Sustainable Economic Growth
7 Shared Space
8 Biodiversity
9 Placemaking

Health and Well-being

Sing City, 2010
Annah M Kassen

fluttery +
squeaky
toy.
BlackBird
mild spring evenings
just after rain
singing males
on an exposed
perch.
-BBC

to remain relatively accurate and seasonal. The more people vote for a particular spot, the higher its rating, the more likely the service will be to direct people towards it. In public locations, hot spots will be labelled by the 'hot spots rock' further explained in that section.

Both members and non-members can plan circular or destination walks as feature of the iPhone application by entering their location and the amount of time they have available, next to the map. The map then links the most popular hotspots in that area to plan a route corresponding to the given amount of time.

iv. an eat out page

This is the section devoted to discovery and learning. Within it are games, quizzes, tutorials, information, photos, info and audio files to help users learn their local birdsongs. There is also an open source component where users can help one another by answering peer questions and contributing to discussions. It is extremely fun and has been very fairly deep in terms of how much birdsong a person can learn if they so choose.

When a member plays a game or completes a quiz, results are updated in the 'hot spot' section of their profile page. This allows them to see their progress as they move through different levels.

v. DIY (Do It Yourself)

If users get frustrated by always having to walk by someone else's garden to hear a bird, this is the page to help them. Whether they have access to a bathroom window or concrete bit, this page is full of information that can turn any outdoor space into a bird magnet. Projects run from being very quick and easy, such as putting up a bird feeder, to quite complex, such as digging a proper pond. They can also be chosen according to what bird a user wants to attract. To assist in this decision, certain species with declining numbers, like sparrows and starlings in winter for example, will be featured with easy tips on how to help them survive the cold.

iii smart phone app

To the user, the app is primarily a vehicle for taking a breather within their day.

As mentioned, when a new member joins the online community, the app can be downloaded for free. It is then automatically synchronised with that particular user's profile page. Relevant changes made on the profile are automatically updated to the app, and vice versa, to avoid a dispersing of information. It facilitates the process of finding somewhere peaceful, in any given neighbourhood, within a predetermined amount of time.

If they choose to, users can set the birdsong alarm call as a reminder. When they respond to the alarm, the are automatically directed to the "plan a walk" page. From here, all they have to do is enter exactly how much time they have available, and the app, using GPS locating, plans a route within this given window.

Like with the live map, walks are planned by recognising the most popular 'hot spots' in an area that other users have tagged. There are default hot spots throughout London for areas with low activity. Depending on the season or how often new hot spots are discovered, it is possible that a 20 minute route from one location could vary from one day to the next.

Once given a route, all the user has to do is follow it. If they choose to, they can tag other hot spots along the way, or even vote for the ones they like by doing the same thing. Again, the GPS does all the work and again, the information is instantly updated to the website.

By zooming in to their location on the map, they can view a list of the birds one can expect to hear in that location, the most common appearing first. Like with the hot spots, default lists would be provided in the beginning, in the hope that increased user activity would allow access to real time data updating.

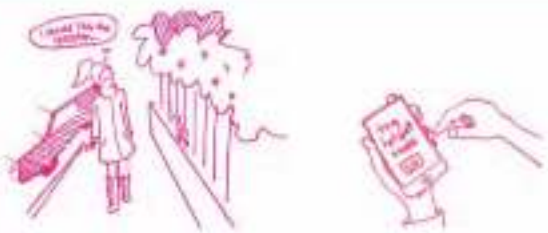
Selecting the image beside the name reveals the silent, and provides a brief description of the bird and its song. There is a large photo, and a few easy tracks to play. Users can use the tracks for reference or to play out loud, prompting birds to call back.

Sim Majkut | 11 years

In-house designer for a kid's television company in central London. Recently opened a SingCity Profile page online. Has just eaten her lunch while working in front of the computer again, but today has programmed her phone to remind her to take a break, get some oxygen and focus on something different.

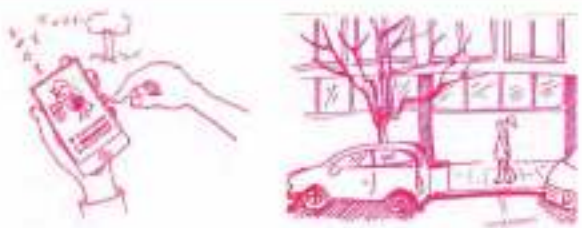
Nearing bedtime, she picks up her iPhone and enters that she has 15 minutes to spare.

The app generates a 16 minute walk for her by finding several "hot spots" in the area.

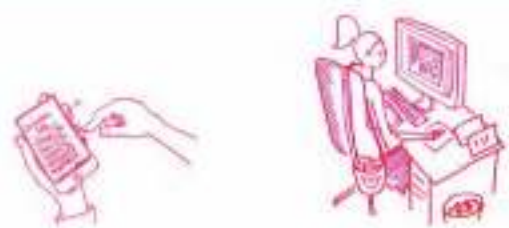


The tags someone's garden as a green spot and the coordinates are uploaded to a live map.

In a park, she zooms in on the map and sees what birds are commonly heard there.



Selecting one of them, she plays the song and a blackbird calls back. She selects "heard it."



Back at the office, she logs her walk and sees the 'rundown' newly added to her profile.

WREN

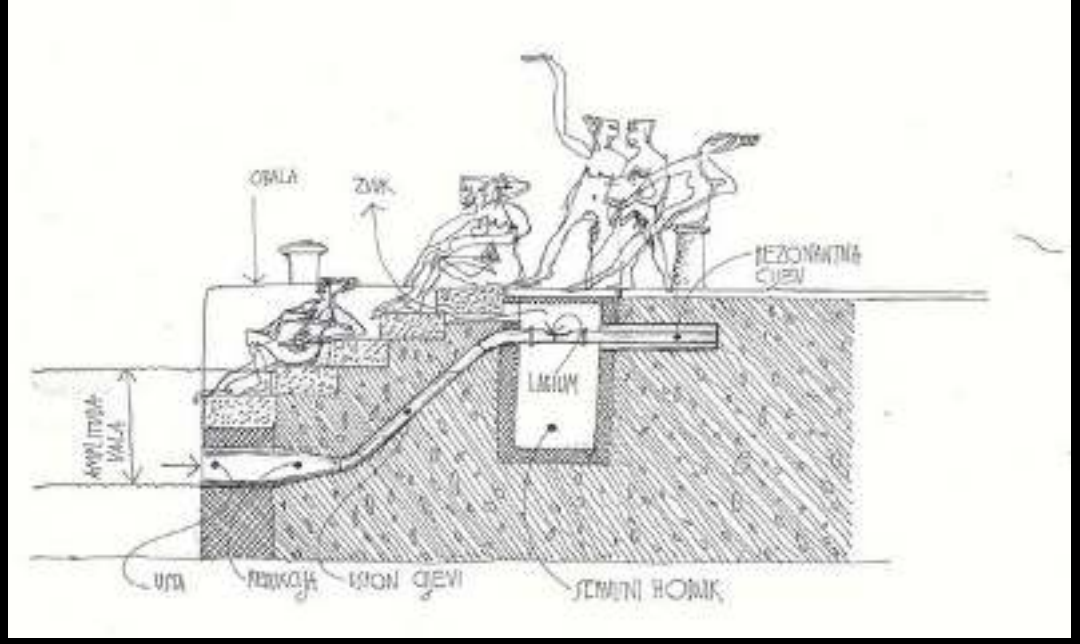
Blue Tit
late winter to early summer
tsee tsee tsee-hu hu-hu-hu
Blue!
high-pitched tremolo ending
-guardian
prrrr hihihi

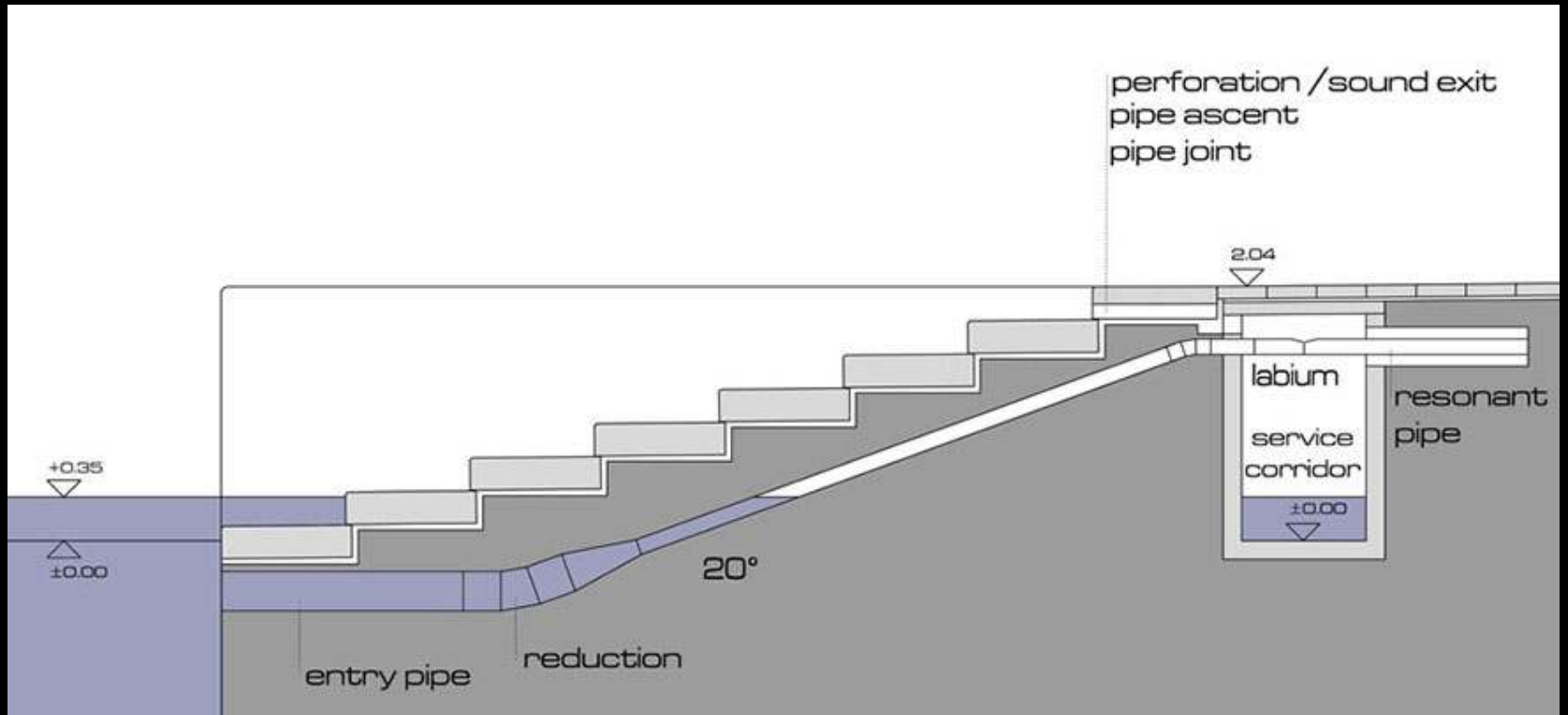
break time!
singCity
linking
hot spots...

17 min GO
rundown

Tourism

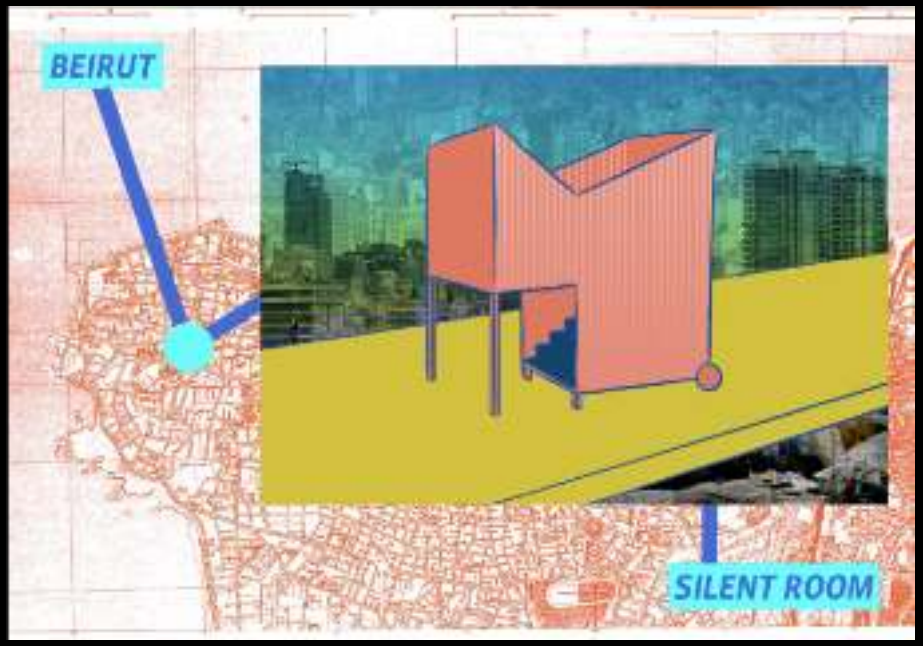
Zadar Sea Organ, 2005
Nikola Bašić, architect
Vladimir Andročec , sea hydraulics consultant
Goran Ježina, pipe maker


OBALA
ZVIK
LABIUM


perforation / sound exit
pipe ascent
pipe joint
2.04
labium
service
corridor
±0.00
resonant
pipe
+0.35
±0.00
20°
entry pipe
reduction

WREN

UQÀM


BEIRUT
SILENT ROOM

BEST MUSICAL
Disney

M12

Smartness? between
discourse and practice

The application process

go to training sessions

length of time

balance of skills across team

work plan

impact not secondary (part of team skills)

The application process: the response

defend, don’t change

hard to predict the timing – clear the decks

get advice

Managing the process

weekly meetings, especially with any PDRAs

keep a record of all activities for Research Fish

keep careful track of the funding – need to spend

be flexible for unexpected opportunities

ACOUSTIC CITIES STUDY DAY

March 6, 2018

Many thanks to everybody who joined us for the Acoustic Cities Study Day held at the University of Oxford on March 2nd.

Photo Credit: Gerard Gormley

This event was co-sponsored by Recomposing the City, Theatrum Mundi, and TORCH Centre for the Humanities at Oxford.

RTC PRESENT RESEARCH AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT

March 6, 2018

RTC's Dr Sarah Leppin and Dr Rachel O'Grady were delighted to present their latest research at the Northern Ireland Assembly's Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS).

The Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) jointly delivers KESS with the Queen's University of Belfast (QUB – co-founder 2011), Ulster University (Ulster – 2012) and The Open University (OU – 2015). It is the first of its kind in the United Kingdom, formally partnering a legislative arm of government – the Assembly – with academia. Aiming to promote evidence-led policy and law-making, KESS provides a forum in which academics present their research findings in a straightforward format, on issues that are relevant to governance in Northern Ireland. It seeks to bring these findings to the attention of key participants and decision-makers, including MLAs, the wider public sector and others, in a "safe space" that encourages discussion, fosters improved understanding and seeks to enable opportunities for more in-depth engagement in future. (Source: niassembly.gov.uk)

Sarah and Rachel presented at the session alongside Prof. Keith Attenborough of the Open University who delivered a fascinating presentation: *Acoustics for STEM and STEAM.*

For more information click here.

Benefits

HUGE – worth all the effort for career

much better chance of being successful in early career

translate into the next grants

opens publication doors

really helps invigorate teaching

RECOMPOSING THE CITY