

Auditory and spatial regimes of United States colonial rule in Baguio, Philippines

Russell P. Skelchy 

Department of History, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

ABSTRACT

Control over geographic and sonic space was integral to the United States' imperial project in the Philippines. This article explores how the creation of the hill station of Baguio was achieved both spatially and sonically through the work of US urban designers such as Daniel H. Burnham. In the early twentieth century, Burnham's plans for Baguio (and Manila) inspired a model of auditory and spatial planning that colonial administrators hoped to replicate across the archipelago. In this context, I explore how the design and control of Baguio's auditory environment was part of a wider process to transforming the rural military outpost into a comfortable resort city for U.S. expatriates, members of the Filipino elite, and others to escape the noise, heat, disease and insurgency of Manila and the lowland areas. Furthermore, the article explores Baguio as an "auditory contact zone" where sound configured and framed the interactive dimensions of the imperial encounter between Filipinos and US expatriates. As I argue, the reengineering of urban spaces, such as Baguio, under the US colonial administration was integral in establishing sound as a material symbol of imperial power.

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"Silent are the trails of the Benguet Hills ...
Even when the wind stirs the ferns and the bamboo brakes sing
Their echoed murmurs and the laden Benguet women pass
Beating their *pakkongs* in cadenced monotones."¹
–Marcelo de Gracia Concepcion, *Silent Trails* (1931)²

From its conception as a United States military hill station, the city of Baguio was intended to be a respite from the noise, oppressive heat and disease of the capital city Manila and the lowlands. Located around 150 miles north of Manila in the Benguet mountains, Baguio, by the 1920s, had become what the Filipino novelist Carlos Bulosan (1973, 66) describes as "a small city in the heart of the [Benguet] mountains where the weather is always temperate ... Tall pine trees cover the mountains and at night one can hear the leaves singing in the slight wind." A visitor in the 1930s describes Baguio as a place where "the gardens sing and shout" as birds flutter.³ Still others have described its natural environment poetically, sometimes using aural references such as the wind rustling, the "talking" or "whispering" of trees, and the "soundless" experience of quiet walks through pine forests (Subido 2009, 28–30). Hearing the vibrant natural sounds, in this context, sensorially complemented feeling the refreshing chill of the mountain air.

CONTACT Russell P. Skelchy  Russell.Skelchy1@nottingham.ac.uk

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Although the auditory environment and landscape of Baguio today are quite different, and significantly less quiet, the city continues to proudly promote itself as the “City of Pines” in the Philippines.⁴

The origins of the contemporary Philippine nation-state are linked historically to the empires of Spain (1565–1898), the United States (1898–1946) and Japan (1942–1945), making it, as Vicente Rafael (2018, 1) aptly observes, “a kind of imperial artifact.” The name “Philippines” itself derives from the Spanish “*las islas Filipinas*” named by Spanish explorers in 1565 to honour Felipe II, the heir apparent to the Hapsburg throne. Although the idea of instituting a summer capital at Baguio is often credited to the U.S. administration, it was first proposed by the Spanish (Morley 2018, 87). Under U.S. rule, officials modelled Baguio after Simla, the renowned British Himalayan hill station known as the “summer capital of India.”⁵ Colonial hill stations in Asia were a unique entity, neither a traditional Asian city nor a colonial/postcolonial metropolis (Kennedy 1996, 3). A preoccupation with health and climate drove the founding of various hill stations across Asia and Africa, and most were designed to enable colonials to supervise their subjects from isolated and commanding heights (Kennedy 1996; Crossette 1998). Hill stations were spaces of recreation and play, physically removed from contested lowland areas. In Simla, British officials enjoyed the climate and “quiet remoteness” that enabled them to enjoy familiar outdoor activities such as riding, trekking and fishing (Owen 2004, 66). The sensory impact of India, according to Dane Kennedy (1996, 39), “would have been difficult if not impossible [for colonials] to process without a shared aesthetic standard against which these unfamiliar landscapes could be measured and through which they could be given meaning.” The familiarising of landscapes (and soundscapes) defined not only how colonials sensorially experienced being abroad but also how they reengineered occupied space.

In Baguio, the U.S. constructed its own highland sanctuary in Southeast Asia. Nestled in the Cordillera mountains of Luzon island at nearly five thousand feet above sea level, Baguio was an ideal location due to its weather (considered enervating for white bodies), scenic mountain vistas, and the opportunity for adventure. As Grace Subido (2009, xiv) observes, the U.S. colonial narrative of Baguio as “a romantic, exotic space and site for recreation and rejuvenation echoes in the contemporary narrative of the city as a tourist destination.” Baguio symbolised an urban, spatial, and sonic order that the U.S. colonial administration sought to replicate elsewhere in the Philippines. However, the Cordillera mountains also represented a type of auditory wildness that required attention. Certain sounds that resonated nightly from surrounding native Igorot villages, such as loud chanting and the buzzing of bamboo musical instruments, were considered “strange” and frightening for some U.S. Americans.⁶ From a sensory standpoint, controlling Baguio’s auditory environment paralleled the wider colonial project of controlling geographical space.

This article examines how the early colonisation of Baguio was achieved sonically and spatially through the construction of its urban infrastructure in the early twentieth century. Focusing on the designs of U.S. architect Daniel Burnham and his 1905 *Plan of Baguio*, I argue that U.S. colonial reconfiguration of Baguio’s auditory environment was foundational to how the highland military outpost would be transformed into a comfortable resort city. Specifically, I focus on the sonic design of Baguio’s urban core and its central meadow, which later became Burnham Park. My objective here is not to counter the ocularcentrism of others who have written on colonialism by over-representing the significance of sound.

Instead, the article explores how sound was engineered and experienced through a wider sensory world shaped by U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. Furthermore, this article contributes to a body of literature on Philippine colonialism that has been largely ocular and textual-centric. Although canonical historiographical works on colonialism in the Philippines have examined an array of topics, including language, racial hierarchy, hygiene and health and so on, many have not adequately addressed the sensory features of the colonial experience.⁷ Some recent studies in sound and music, however, have begun to shift the discourse on Philippine colonialism towards listening practices, sensorial experience and musical performance.⁸

In this context, I am interested in how the Baguio's urban spaces represented *auditory contact zones* where subjects were constituted in and by their relations to each other through specific types of auditory encounters in a colonial context. Inspired by Lucy Burns' (2013, 16) conception of performing stages as "contact zones," or complex terrains of interaction among U.S. patrons and Filipino performers, I explore how sound in early Baguio configured and framed the interactive dimensions of imperial encounter. The semantic shift from terms such as "colonial frontier" to "contact zones," as Mary Louise Pratt (2008, 8) has suggested, extends readings of imperial encounters to emphasise how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other. Contact zones, according to Pratt, represent "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 2008, 8). In such settings, contact zones shift our focus away from expansionist expressions of the colonial frontier and diffusionist practices of domination and conquest. Auditory contact zones represent an analytic for better understanding how the colonial encounter was mediated by sound and the senses. In this context, the control of auditory environments in Baguio and elsewhere in the Philippines was integral not only to creating familiarised spaces but also in establishing sound as a material symbol of U.S. imperial power.

Colonialism and the territorialisation of sound

In a 2019 issue of *Sound Studies*, Leonardo Cardoso poses the question: "How does the modern state hear?"⁹ Besides framing the journal issue, such a question, mostly absent from sound studies literature in the English-speaking world, forays into a wider relationship between sound, imperialism and Western modernity. As Veit Erlmann (2004, 4–5) writes, to assert the idea of Western modernity as essentially a visual age resting on technologies of surveillance, observation and seeing, no longer holds much heuristic value. Although ideas about the "colonial gaze" have inspired a questioning of Western monopolies of knowledge and representation, they have mostly resulted in more images and texts (Erlmann 2004, 405). While it makes little sense to map an alternative economy of the senses around a "countermonopoly of the ear," understanding arguments about the hierarchy of the senses suggest how such arguments inevitably involve cultural and political agendas.

Sensory historians have argued that all human relationships, including imperial relationships, are shaped through the five senses (Rotter 2019; Smith 2007). Projects of imperialism are not effected by sight alone but instead require the wider human sensorium to make,

accommodate and resist empire (Smith 2007, 18). Andrew Rotter (2019, 2–3) argues that empire was an embodied experience where people living in imperial spaces formed impressions and feelings about each other through the senses. Certain relationships, in this formulation, were as much determined by coloniser and colonised meeting face to face, hand to hand, and body to body as they were by thinking about each other. As David Howes (2005, 4) observes, the senses are not merely another field of study but instead “the media through which we experience and make sense of [fields such as] gender, colonialism and material culture.” Intersensoriality, defined as the “multidirectional interaction of the senses or sensory ideologies considered in relation to a society, individual or a work, suggests ways to consider how sensations weave together in sequence and may be conveyed through sensory shifts (Howes 2005, 9). Howes describes how in Western cultures, the dominant group, whether conceptualised by race, class or gender, has been associated with the so-called “higher senses” of sight and hearing. Conversely, subaltern groups, including non-Westerners, women, and workers, have been linked to the “lower senses” of touch, taste and smell. Akin to sight, hearing has had strong associations with intellect in Western cultures – due to the importance of speech as a means of communication (Howes and Classen 2013, 2–4). For many centuries in Western law and society, the ability to hear and speak represented a prime indicator of an ability to reason, which is one reason why the deaf were considered mentally incompetent.

The hierarchy of senses, as constituted culturally through the relationship between the colonial and modern, was also expressed through the differentiation between the oral/aural bodily knowledge of the subaltern opposed to the ocularcentrism of the elite (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 14–17). The creation of the field of orality inspired theory and methodology for lettered elites to generate the idea of alterity as constitutive of the modern. In the audiovisual complex of modernity, sound appears as the interior, immersive and affective other of vision’s exteriorisation, privileging ocularcentric histories over orality and acousticity (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 14; Sterne 2011). The consolidation of modernity, in this respect, elicits not only an erasure of colonial history and the possibility for decolonial thought, it can also be read spatially through the “silent ruins” of a landscape marked by the remnants of colonial architecture (Trouillot 1995). Marked by the sonic territories and terrains of empire, such remnants have been formulated through circuits of technology and sound that have undermined the neat boundaries of imperial geography (Bronfman 2014, 37; Douglas 2004). The ontological making of sonic space is implicated in the political agency of sound, defined according to sound’s potential and capacity to be implicated in formal and informal cultural politics (Revill 2016, 240–241; Häkli and Kallio 2014). Sound is not merely an object but instead a set of processes and properties operating in and through materials as the agent creating space.

From the sixteenth century onward, colonialism has produced an extensive and widely experienced rearrangement of physical space and people. The project of territorialising sound therefore must be contextualised within a wider transformation of space that gave effect to colonial claims on territory and the dispossession of Indigenous land. As Banivanua Mar and Edmonds (2010, 2) write, “In geopolitical terms, the impact of colonialism on the land is starkly visible in the landscapes it produces: symmetrically surveyed divisions of land, fences, roads, power lines, dams, mines, expansive and gridded cities, and socially coded areas of human habitation and trespass that are bordered, policed and defended.” Land and the organised spaces on it echo the stories of colonisation and Indigenous dispossession and resonate the ideological tools, language, policies

and social infrastructure of colonialism. Projects of occupation and imperialism, in this context, have focused on controlling space over people (Hawkins 2012, 48).

This idea is no different for U.S. occupation and control of land in Asia and the Pacific. As Vernadette Gonzalez (2013, 9) observes, occupied land in the form of colonial outposts and military bases along with the resources and markets of the Asia-Pacific region provide the stakes of past and continued U.S. interest in the area. Forays into “extracontinental empire” have defined sites of U.S. occupation, such as the Philippines and Hawai’i, as “feminized tropics” subject to masculinised modes of security (Gonzalez 2013, 9). Although not unique to the U.S., the mutual deployment of tourism and militarism has enabled the U.S. to successfully navigate the complex global/local dialectics of mass tourism and exoticism projected onto the Pacific next to military occupation and interstate partnerships (Wilson 2000, xi; Gonzalez 2013, 16–18). In general, U.S. imperial objectives in the Asia/Pacific region were no less territorial than previous colonial empires. Although the U.S. did not seek domination through colonial possessions per se, its ambitions were achieved using interconnected means through the domination of the global economy, fostered through capitalism as the basis for an integrated “free world,” and militarisation, which included short occupations, the maintenance of bases and the stationing of “military advisory groups” (Man 2018, 6).

The Philippines under U.S. rule was the site of “a protracted social experiment” in using police as an instrument of state power (McCoy 2009, 16). The creation of a new internal security apparatus in the archipelago featuring the enhanced clandestine capabilities of the military police produced “a virtual blueprint for the perfection of [U.S.] state power” (McCoy 2009, 16). The occupation of the Philippines provided a favourable environment for the cultivation of covert techniques, institutional networks and systematic surveillance that were previously antithetical to U.S. political institutions (McCoy 2009, 18–19, 38). Empire created a crucible for introducing new security procedures into Philippine and later U.S. society. One such measure involved communication technology. For instance, in three years, the U.S. Army laid over ten thousand miles of telegraph lines across the Philippine archipelago which expedited communication between its stations (May 1980, xv–xvii). Advancements in information technology, including the telephone and telegraph, also created an integrated information-based police panopticon that placed thousands of households and individuals under continuous surveillance (McCoy 2009, 34–35).

The organisation of an occupied space, however, cannot simply be understood as the preserve of the colonial power alone but rather one diffused among a multiplicity of actors planning and implementing “a structured chaos” (Weizman 2007, 5). In the Philippines such actors included urban planners such as Daniel Burnham, the renowned U.S. architect who, beginning in the late 1800s, designed distinctly modern urban spaces and auditory environments in the U.S. and fashioned templates for colonial policy in the Philippines. In the following sections, I examine how Burnham’s philosophy of urban design, following the City Beautiful movement, guided the refiguring of colonial space and auditory environments in Baguio. Furthermore, I explore Baguio as an “auditory contact zone” that constituted how Indigenous subjectivities were constituted sonically in relation (and response) to environments created by the U.S. colonial administration. Before addressing these topics, I turn my attention to Baguio as a symbolic space of U.S. colonial authority.

The colonial project of Baguio

In the early twentieth century, Baguio became emblematic of “new empire” acquisitions, by definition a colonial enclave limited in its territory, it represented a process of transforming of the pastoral from an aesthetic form into a colonial reality (McKenna 2017, 7, 154). What began as a U.S. colonial “reservation” of around five square miles in 1905 eventually grew to cover twenty-one square miles by 1907. Baguio was one of thirty-nine “civil reservations” claimed by the colonial government from which the United States sought to exercise local authority while projecting a wider sphere of influence in Asia. The U.S. colonisation of the Philippines, according to Sarita Echavez See (2017, 51), plays a significant role in providing a historical and paradigmatic example of the interconnectedness between settler and military colonialisms at the turn of the twentieth century. As See suggests, the Philippines represents a “pivotally ambiguous formation” that positioned the Filipino as proximate in time and space to Native Americans due the ways that genocidal wars of conquest across the U.S. required the idea of the primitive for its legitimacy. Moreover, the conquest of the Philippines marked the transition between settler colonialism in United States and a transoceanic imperialism that “deployed the genocidal logic of the Indian Wars even if in the end it substituted military occupation for settlement” (See 2017, 51).

Baguio stood representative of a space where acts of dispossession that underwrote its creation as a colonial capital would apply elsewhere. This was exemplified through U.S. dispossession of Philippine Indigenous sovereignty and its enclosure of a political future (McKenna 2017, 7). Conversely, Baguio stood distinct from much of the Philippine archipelago in its geographical and climatic features. Located in the mountainous present-day province of Benguet, Baguio’s topography, along with the region’s large native population, suggests that U.S. officials chose an upland retreat quite different from its lowland bases. An early report by the Philippine Commission, a group of five men appointed executive and legislative powers in the colony, describes the local Benguet native population (likely Nabaloi) as an “awfully quiet” and “harmless tribe” that was “favorably disposed toward Americans.”¹⁰ Such words likely would not have been used to describe the Filipino revolutionaries of the lowlands.

It was in this context that Daniel Burnham journeyed to the Philippines in 1904, not long after the U.S. had acquired the archipelago from Spain. Burnham arrived with impressive credentials as an architect, city planner and businessman, having already received numerous awards for his White City designs¹¹ at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and work in U.S. cities (McKenna 2017; Morley 2019; Hines 1972). Despite only being in the Philippines for a few weeks, Burnham’s impact was significant and remains so until today. Describing his role in reconfiguring Philippine urban spaces, Burnham wrote,

“No sooner had the United States come into possession of the Philippines than the War Department set about adapting the city of Manila to the changed conditions brought about by the influx of Americans, who are used to better conditions of living than had prevailed in those islands” (Burnham and Bennett 1909, 29).

Burnham secured the commission to re-plan the Philippines through a series of social and personal circumstances that involved his growing reputation as an architect and his long friendship with W. Cameron Forbes, a wealthy banker who served as Commissioner (1904–1908) and Governor-General (1909–1913) of the Philippines. Burnham and Forbes shared

similar pro-imperialist worldviews based on an ambivalence towards how U.S. territories were acquired. Although both men agreed on the idea of eventual Filipino self-rule, they believed that Filipinos needed a period of tutelage in which U.S. colonials could effect a “progressive civilization” (Hines 1972, 40; Burns 2013).

Burnham focused on two projects in the Philippines: improvements to the Manila capital and the plan for Baguio. Although the projects were distinct, his approach underscored the philosophical and aesthetic interconnections between them. Burnham did not explicitly discuss auditory aspects in his reports to U.S. officials, yet his awareness of the relationship between sound and urban design was apparent. Burnham also was deeply inspired by design practices of the *École de Beaux Arts* in Paris which placed immense value on the creation of monumental, orderly public spaces and civic districts. As some writers have noted, *Beaux Arts* design did not function within a grid of any historical style but instead represented a way of thinking about form, and in this way, was open and “liberal” (Van Zanten 2011, 26). *Beaux Arts* design, for instance, emphasised, the idea that one should be able to sense the outside when inside of a building (Van Zanten 2011, 25). Likewise, *Beaux Arts* philosophy promoted the idea that cities represented spaces of moral, intellectual and governmental progress (Morley 2019, 49). The importation and propagation of the *Beaux Arts*-inspired *City Beautiful* planning in the Philippines, as Ian Morley (2018) suggests, stimulated advancements germane to the U.S. regime’s efforts to “uplift” and “civilize” the local population. More importantly, city planning was integral to revealing a new political and cultural era while distinguishing the U.S. regime from the previous Spanish era.

The coupling of citizenship and urban design meant that urban planning represented the apogee of rational cultural development. The *City Beautiful* movement inspired the notion that planning was not only a tool to configure urban environments, but also an instrument to enhance the social and cultural conditions of the nation-state. Planners sought to resolve social and environmental flaws, such as poor housing and overcrowding, apparent within urban communities while highlighting flaws with urban government (Morley 2019, 49–51). Burnham believed that urban design would lead to more effective city planning while promoting economy, efficiency and good citizenship.¹² Aesthetically, *City Beautiful* borrowed generously from the *Beaux Arts*, privileging a neoclassical style “signalled by the clustering of civic buildings, provision for open spaces around them, and the axial design of city streets (McKenna 2017, 76). The aesthetic represented a reverence for public life and the aspiration that public spaces become an antidote to the noisy clamour of ethnic and class conflict. The U.S. administration also trained Filipinos, such as Arcadio Arellano, a pioneer in Philippine architecture, in the aesthetics and values of *City Beautiful* planning, which were later utilised to promote ideas of social progress and national identity (Morley 2018, 434–435).

Urbanism, noise and the auditory

Sensorial aesthetics were embedded in the praxis of design in Burnham’s plans. This was evident, for instance, in his incorporation of the European archetype of erecting water fountains in large parks. For instance, Burnham explains the value of having flowing water in parks as a source of refreshment to urban dwellers while using the city of Rome as a model. As Burnham writes, “Wherever one goes in Rome, the gentle spray of water is

ready to refresh the eye and the ear.”¹³ The refreshment of ear and eye, on one hand, suggests how Burnham emphasised visual and aural aesthetics working in tandem with nature. On the other, his assumptions about what constituted sensorial “refreshment” or who exactly it refreshed also revealed elements of the modernist civilisational ideology driving *City Beautiful*. In Burnham’s assessment, refreshment in the Philippine context involved the installation of “playing fountains” that would “help mitigate the trying effects of a tropical climate.”¹⁴ Implied in the statement above is an understanding that the transformation of Baguio into a modern city would entail adverse side effects. In other words, Burnham considered the aesthetic value of public parks, water and open spaces in urban environments because large-scale development, as he experienced it in an early twentieth century U.S. context, had eradicated such sensorial experiences from the lives of residents of large cities. Considering the types of sounds, smells and sights associated with green spaces, swimming pools, running tracks and other outdoor facilities and venues for public entertainment (which included live musical concerts) was integral for healthy urban living, or as Burnham called it, “breathing spaces for the people.”¹⁵

Burnham’s resentment towards “unpleasant sights and sounds” (as an issue of health and economy) was articulated in further detail in the 1909 *Plan for Chicago*. Pushing for the abolishment of excess noise of street and elevated railcars, Burnham argued that such noise deeply impacted residents and ultimately would have adverse effects on the local economy.¹⁶ Burnham’s comments suggest how the experience of urban noise and the senses interweaved with wider issues of capitalist economic and social production, corporeal health and state citizenship. As Burnham writes,

“[T]he noises of surface and elevated road cars [are] often excruciating ... These conditions cause misery to a large majority of people who are subjected to constant strain ... and undoubtedly cause a heavy loss of money to the business community. For the sake of the state, the citizen should be at his best and it is the business of the state to maintain conditions conducive to his bodily welfare. Noises, ugly sights, ill smells ... tend to lower average efficiency ... Moreover, citizens have pride in and loyalty to a city that is quiet, clean and generally beautiful.”¹⁷

Having designed public spaces for large U.S. cities, Burnham understood that the economic benefits of modernising would come with the unpleasantness of sound, smell and sight. Such concerns anticipated and paralleled other discussions about the effects of new technologies and noise on public health and urban acoustic settings beginning in the late nineteenth century (Bijsterveld 2008).

At this point, it is worth briefly explicating the differences between perceptions of sound and noise. The word “sound” describes vibration that is perceived and becomes known through its materiality, often infused with diverse meanings and interpretations that reside in metaphor (Novak and Sakakeeny 2015, 1–2). The physical form of sound is the movement of particles of air that are the basis for hearing, listening and feeling that enable communication and social development. Sound represents the tangible basis for music, speech and spatial orientation – playing a significant role in determining how we locate ourselves in spaces through reverberation (Novak and Sakakeeny 2015, 1–2). Noise, has widely been defined according to a subject-oriented framework that defines it as unwanted, undesirable, bad and unpleasant, anti-social or physiologically damaging, or just excessively loud (Thompson 2020, 4; Novak 2015, 125; Voegelin 2013, 43). Noise often

is juxtaposed with romanticised notions of “natural silence,” some of which have taken on moralistic tones reiterating the binarial position that noise is bad while silence is good. Noise often is positioned as a material aspect of sound or a type of sound, constituted by particular sonic attributes (Thompson 2020, 4). Although difficult to define, noise is always “coloured, filtered, limited, and changed by contexts of production and reception (Novak 2015, 126). Moreover, noise has the “imperial ability to distract and colonise ... hearing” (Voegelin 2013, 44). In U.S., British and other colonial contexts, colonial agents used noise to further their own modernising imperatives while simultaneously confronting and substituting the noise of the colony for a more “civilized sound” (Rotter 2019, 147).

In nineteenth century Britain and Europe, as James Mansell (2017, 1) writes, “Noise was not just representative of the modern, it *was* modernity manifested in audible form.” The so-called “age of noise” equated Western modernity with the clash and clatter of urban and industrial life. This was representative of changing times where noise was thought to be “clamorous, all-enveloping and unpredictable” in industrialised cities due to the introduction of technologies such as motor vehicles, airplanes, typewriters, gramophone loudspeakers, factories, telephones and so on.¹⁸ Discussions of noise constituted a conscious engagement with the politics of modernity in which the modern was not solely a set of ideas, institutions and practices but rather “a sensed experience of an unnerving atmosphere” (Mansell 2017, 1–2, 11). The rise of industrial capitalism and increasingly dense concentrations of people in cities and towns meant that auditory respite was difficult to find. Vibrations of noisy urban life in the industrialised West resonated in a way where many people living in Western cities became accustomed to hearing such sounds. In the United States, the war on noise had important precedents in anti-noise activism throughout the 1900s and 1910s and later in New York City’s Noise Abatement Commission (NAC), which from 1929 to 1932 undertook landmark studies of urban noise based on the premise that urban technological progress itself was the cause of the noise problem (Radovac 2011; Bijsterveld 2008; Thompson 2002; Smilor 1978). Other Depression-era anti-noise campaigns in New York City framed noise as not merely a behavioural or technological problem but as a symptom of urban disorder, requiring that noise be conceived as a spatial problem necessitating a different set of strategies to control (Radovac 2011, 736). Ultimately, such strategies involved increased policing and surveillance and the reconfiguration of urban space as city officials and urban planners sought to protect the stability of the city’s suddenly volatile social relations.

For colonial administrators across the world, one of the requirements for effective governance was the quieting of noise. Noise was culturally and racially defined so that it was not white colonisers who created noise but rather their subjects. As Andrew Rotter (2019, 135) observes in imperial India, “Indians made noise, not sound, and Britons regarded it as something between a nuisance and a threat.” As the British empire expanded across the globe, they removed noisy people in places such as Canada and New Zealand with “more sonically dutiful white settlers” (Rotter 2019, 132). As noise abatement campaigns were undertaken across U.S. and European cities in the late nineteenth century, changes in the dynamics of urban soundscapes “transferred readily and deliberately to the sites of empire ... where sonic environments were more noise than sound” (Rotter 2019, 134). As Rotter writes, “In their presumed resemblance to Native Americans, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities and the lower classes at home, Indians and Filipinos presided over undisciplined natural soundscapes abetted by their own

primitive noise. Britons and Americans would try to impose their own auditory regimes ... If they could not get silence, they would at least demand quiet" (Rotter 2019, 134). Imperial control of noise defined public space, and, in some cases, even restricted certain noises as a matter of public safety. British colonial officials, for instance, created a series of Noise Ordinances that determined when and where Hindu musical processions could move in the British Empire (Sykes 2015, 384).

In the Philippines, noise was ominous and annoying to some U.S. expatriates but did not prevent them from listening and trying to understand it. U.S. governors took tours of the islands not merely as an exercise in reading the landscape but also to listen to acoustic environments and the people (Rotter 2019, 140–142). Although noise abatement was less of a concern, issues of noise were inherent to urban planning. In Burnham's Baguio Plan, the construction of buildings, roads and open spaces fused with its natural surroundings, and subsequently, the city acquired a reputation for being "a place of park-like splendor" (Morley 2019, 91). Such spaces also promoted the acclimatisation of U.S. colonials, many of whom considered the tropical climate unsuitable for long-term and widespread settlement, due to the perception that tropical climates caused the deterioration of physical and mental health among white people.¹⁹ As a full-functioning city constructed out of the Philippine wilderness, Baguio's climate and beauty reminded both colonisers and the colonised that life under U.S. rule was being transformed. In this sense, Baguio was conceived not as a place that would dominate the natural landscape but instead embrace it (Morley 2019, 17).

Burnham's purposeful insistence on promoting beauty and functionality centred on the idea that the Baguio meadow would be the geographical centre (or central axis) of the city. The Baguio plan intended for its natural environment to be more than just a backdrop for the city. Its rationale of blending urban and natural reinforced the character of U.S. governance and its alleged benevolence by creating Baguio as a tool for the colonial regime to obtain influence and control over terrain previously belonging to the indigenous Igorot people (Morley 2019, 92). As described earlier, such ideas extended settler colonial practices of the U.S. metropole to the Philippines. Prior to the arrival of U.S. settlers, the grassland meadow, known as Kafagway to the local Igorot people, was mainly used to graze cows, carabao and horses and bore the distinct soundmark of a horn that would be sounded at certain hours to summon livestock to feed.²⁰ The desertion of Kafagway by the Ibaloi, as one U.S. expatriate noted, symbolised "a silent protest against outside interference," and it was not unusual to hear Igorots state that if U.S. colonialists were to leave "we would quickly return to the happy life enjoyed by our ancestors."²¹ As Olivia Habana (2001, 10) observes, U.S. colonials who laid claim to Baguio conveniently overlooked the fact that its streams, pastures and mines were already inhabited and owned by Igorots.

According to the Baguio Plan, the central meadow offered the largest area of level land and the most practical area for development, a site where "all the more important activities, including business, municipal and government functions" would be located. This would leave the outlying areas on the surrounding hills to be as a space for "residence property" and "detached institutions of public and semi-public nature." Schools, universities, churches, hospitals, asylums and sanitariums were strategically placed on higher ground because, as Burnham explains, such institutions demanded "a quiet location conveniently accessible to the city."²² The distinction of higher ground as quiet and tranquil was indicative of how urban space was aurally differentiated according to the function of certain institutions.

Burnham's cultivation of separate auditory spheres along the gridded lines of noise and quiet also was reflected in the creation of street systems that laid down geometrical schemes that adapted to the contours of the Baguio valley.²³ Different from the earlier Spanish colonials, the U.S. administration considered road construction in the Philippines as key to economic development and nation-building, emphasising specifically how roads productively linked regions, people and resources (McKenna 2017, 52–53). Besides providing ample sunlight, ventilation and strategic sight lines to government buildings, the street system concentrates traffic flow and the sounds of horse carts, carriages, motor vehicles and pedestrians to the far northwest quadrant of the valley, where businesses and government offices were located. Quiet spaces were preserved for schools, colleges and hospitals in outlying areas to the east and south, a significant distance from the municipal centre and its main roads. In this context, the hills surrounding the Baguio valley supplied visual grandeur and a physical sonic enclosure that would resonate colonial auditory power through the sounds emanating from of the city's municipal centre.

As Blesser and Salter (2009, 4) observe, listening to a real environment, such as an urban street, concert hall or a dense jungle is a sonically complex endeavour. This is due to the composite of numerous objects, surfaces and geometries in a complicated environment that creates an aural architecture. Sounds from multiple sources interact with various spatial elements that may displace familiar sounds to unfamiliar environments. Without delving too deeply into issues of aural architecture, it is worth emphasising here the ways that visual and aural meanings often align and reinforce each other (Blesser and Salter 2009, 3). Hearing, and its active component, listening, enable us to aurally visualise spatial geometry and propagate cultural symbols through aural architecture. In this sense, we may imagine that Burnham's aural visualisation of Baguio's natural geometry followed a wider philosophy of embracing nature and more specifically, the sounds of nature. By differentiating spaces of noise and quiet, as I discuss in the following section, Burnham cultivated aural/spatial distinctions that both preserved and drastically reengineered the auditory environment of the Baguio valley. The cultivation of separate auditory spheres would figure more prominently into Burnham's plans for Manila and Chicago, especially in the grouping of government buildings, courthouses, parks and green spaces versus areas of business and commerce (McKenna 2017, 104). From an ideological (and aural) standpoint, Burnham knowingly restricted what he called the "clatter of commerce" from spaces that he considered "majestic, venerable and sacred."²⁴ The distinction between aural spaces would inform how and why park space would be central to Baguio's overall design.

Green spaces and urban aurality

The idea of preserving Baguio's natural environment, to a degree, was reflected in how it was originally idealised in its pastoral form. As I described earlier, building the hill station was not only about escaping the heat, overwork, and exhaustion of the lowlands, which were arguably the realities of U.S. occupation. Baguio also represented a retreat into nature, or more accurately a reengineered "imperial pastoral."²⁵ Furthermore, the idea of a "pastoral capitalism" was exemplified in the efforts of U.S. corporations in the mid-twentieth century to refigure their suburban campuses to resemble a pastoral setting. Such efforts reflected a distaste for the sensorial realities of industrial production, namely the noise and congestion of dense urban cores (Mozingo 2011). As McKenna (2017, 14) aptly notes, the idea of the

suburb as pastoral was not far off from how colonial administrators' imagined Baguio. Like other "progressive" imperialists of the time, Burnham had mixed feelings about the effects of the U.S. invasion in the Philippines. For instance, he warned about the overdevelopment of its green spaces and protecting forests from exploitation by "energetic lumbermen."²⁶

The open space Burnham sought to preserve was the Baguio meadow, which bisected the valley to become a central *tapis vert* or "greensward," a grassy mall between clusters of government buildings.²⁷ Setting Baguio's colonial offices amid grass and trees created a pastoral middle-ground landscape that associated the imposing structures and institutions of colonial power with the virtues of nature itself (McKenna 2017, 78). The preservation of green spaces was central to Burnham's plan and as such, were intended to be aurally and visually appealing to U.S. settlers. Burnham's 1909 *Plan of Chicago* more clearly articulated the ideal of parks as "quiet stretches of green" that would "enhance its attractiveness" and "develop its natural beauties."²⁸ In Baguio, green spaces formed a continuous parkway meant for recreation, public events and performances in open-air theatres. Although such areas were created as "quiet spaces," certain types of sound familiar to U.S. colonials would become a dominant feature of the meadow and its surroundings. For instance, Western musical concerts, public speeches and sporting events featured sonic expression in the meadow that otherwise would be incommensurate with the soundscape of the Cordillera mountains.

The *Plan for Baguio*, to an extent, became a blueprint for engineering urban space in the Philippines. It was not, however, conceived as an immutable model. After Burnham left the Philippines, he chose William E. Parsons, a fellow architect inspired by the French Beaux Arts, to implement the designs. Parsons altered the initial plan by establishing Burnham Park on the meadow, a redesign that included tree-lined open areas, walkways, and a man-made lake for boating, all neatly arranged in a grand symmetrical layout. As Morley (2019, 100) observes, the creation of Burnham Park exploited urban space to aid the normalisation of Filipinos living in what U.S. expatriates considered "culturally unacceptable ways" and represented the colonial imperative of drawing local people into the fold of modern U.S. culture. Besides spatially fortifying the central axis of colonial administrative buildings and green spaces, Burnham Park symbolised a sonic order for which types of sounds would be deemed acceptable in a modern park, for instance light conversation, boating, Western music, sports activities and recreation. In other words, Burnham Park sonically represented how green spaces in the Philippines should sound.

As Henri Lefebvre (1996) suggests, legitimised and authorised presence in a city centre structures membership in the urban public by determining who has ownership of a city and can represent it. Sounding the city in a present-day context, as Marina Peterson (2010, 18–19) observes, involves making urban space "neutral" through projects such as concert programming and urban renewal which "cleans" public areas, such as corporate downtown plazas, by turning them into civic spaces. The idea of cleansing here assumes the wider ideological role of social reform wrapped in urban rationality: clean spaces create clean people, both in body and morals (Peterson 2010, 20). The function of sound in the cleansing of a colonised space reiterates an argument made by Michel de Certeau (1984, 94) that urban environments, in their design, can be employed for "social betterment" when a rational organisation of the environment takes place – a process that includes the production of new spaces to "subjugate pollutants."

Race was a significant factor in the process, and the site of deep struggle in Philippine-U.S. colonial history. As Paul Kramer notes (2006, 4–5), the result of such struggle was "a novel

racial formation” whose contours and texture emerged from a convergence of transnational forces implicating participants of the United States, the Philippines and Europe and its colonial outposts. The encounter between U.S. and Filipino forces in the Philippine-American War structured U.S. racial ideas about Filipinos as tribally fragmented (therefore unfit for self-government) yet racially united in support of guerilla warfare (Kramer 2006, 5). At the war’s conclusion, the Philippine Commission and collaborating Filipino elites constructed a new racial state organised around the capacity of colonial power to shape “a progressive, future-oriented Filipino” under the tutelage and indefinite control of the U.S. (Kramer 2006, 5). Given that the binary of whites and non-whites in the U.S. did not exist in the Philippines, the racial landscape that existed in North America could not be transplanted to the colony without being altered (Molnar 2017, 5). U.S. concepts of race were adapted to a Filipino racial hierarchy creating a “hybridized concept of race” that did not previously exist in that context. The new racial formation also reiterated a bifurcation of the population into Christian and non-Christian people, a binary categorisation with deep roots in earlier Spanish colonialism. As Hispanized Filipino elites allied with U.S. colonial rulers, both groups reinforced the widening gap between the “civilised Christians” and “non-Christians,” especially those of Moro (Muslim) background on the southern islands of Mindanao, Palawan and the Sulu archipelago and the animist highlanders of Luzon island such as the Igorots.

In the context of colonial Baguio, the transformation of a rural mountain area inhabited by a significant native Igorot population into a summer resort town represented a form of class and racial segregation. The reengineering of the Baguio valley created a distinctly colonised space to be used and enjoyed by colonials and members of the Filipino elite, a group that the U.S. administration believed would eventually govern the Philippine state under U.S. tutelage. Reengineering Baguio, in this respect, was not only about constructing modern concrete public edifices, such as city halls and government buildings, tree-lined boulevards and expansive green spaces. With the addition of colonial architecture came the simultaneous cleansing and erasure of acoustic characteristics previously distinctive to the Baguio valley and native communities. The colonial formula of adding and subtracting was symbolised by the creating and destroying of sensory worlds in Baguio. Furthermore, the engineering of a “civilised” Baguio urban core addressed some of the unease felt by early U.S. settlers who described “strange” and “frightening” sounds emanating from the surrounding forests and Igorot villages.

The role of colonial administrators and planners was to conceive and construct stable, isolatable and interconnected properties and organise the city’s operations to eliminate identified pollutants. U.S. officials such as E.J. Halsema, the Baguio mayor from 1920 to 1937, were best known for such a role. As a local newspaper of the period opined, “A man forgets the burdens of democracy to quietly enjoy an atmosphere of cleanliness, of orderliness, and paradisiacal tranquility [in Baguio] ... the roads are always kept in good order [and] no deafening noises are heard.”²⁹ The cleansing (or neutralisation) of auditory space in colonial Baguio had different implications. For Burnham’s protégé William Parsons, the establishment of Burnham Park in the city centre kept with the original intention of the urban park as a cleansing space of sensorial refreshment. The park, however, also marked a space of white colonial domination that, to an extent, cleansed Baguio of the sounds that frightened and caused unease among some U.S. expatriates, especially in terms of the sounds emanating from the nearby Igorot villages and forests.

Conclusion

If the project of Western imperialism is to be understood widely as a complex phenomenon implicating multiple purposes of cultural and religious power, militarism, capitalism, tourism and other imperatives of progress, it is also about how Westerners have tried to control parts of the world with which they were (and are) largely unfamiliar. Unfamiliarity, as Uday Singh Mehta (1999) writes in *Liberalism and Empire*, is not merely ignorance but rather quite the opposite. As Mehta observes, many British liberal thinkers of the 1800s met fastidious standards of knowledge about the parts of the British empire they wrote about. What Mehta (1999, 2) means by “unfamiliarity” is the idea that Western colonisers did not share the “various ways of being and feeling” that shape experience and give meaning to the communities and the individuals that constitute them, or in other words, not being familiar with what was experientially familiar to others in the empire. Unfamiliarity fuelled a liberal preoccupation with empire as a legitimate form of political and commercial governance. As was the case with many liberal and progressive thinkers of the time, what was understood as knowledge about colonised people easily became justification for empire, especially as liberal European thought and Eurocentrism gained confidence in its universality and cosmopolitanism (Mehta 1999, 9; Quijano 2008, 197). Unfamiliarity, in this context, also inspires the desire to familiarise. This feature of Western colonial projects was evident from its earliest days and is ongoing – for instance, in the desire to make familiar spaces of U.S. military outposts across the world as symbols of power and consumer consumption (Gillem 2007). Colonial contexts of intense contact, as Anna Maria Ochoa Gautier (2014, 34–35) observes, mobilise an “acoustic regime of truths” where certain modes of perception, description and inscription of sound are considered more valid than others in the context of unequal power relations. Acoustic knowledge is formed at the nexus of what we can make sense of and what we cannot yet still affects us.

In the colonial Philippines, liberal thinking planners such as Daniel Burnham designed modern urban spaces that would aurally and visually appeal to the increasing population of U.S. expatriates. Such ideas ostensibly differentiated “benevolent” U.S. rule from the previous period of Spanish rule. Urban spaces like Baguio were constructed as material symbols of imperial power, and Burnham’s designs transformed the secluded military outpost into a bustling highland summer retreat and tourist destination in the early twentieth century. This process included the introduction of new communication technologies and the construction of urban infrastructure (roads, railway), green spaces and other facilities (eg. amphitheatre, country club, golf course) that would dramatically transform Baguio’s natural landscape and auditory environment. Burnham’s plans for Baguio were implemented and replicated across the Philippines by William E. Parsons and Filipino planners such as Juan Arellano and Antonio Toledo from 1905 to 1914. In addition to the Manila capital, cities such as Cebu, Zamboanga and provincial capitals including Tarlac, San Fernando, Lucena City, Legazpi City and others were redesigned to fit U.S. standards (Morley 2018, 252). Features of the redesigns included the classically built concrete edifices, such as city halls and capital buildings, wide boulevards lined with trees, and the creation of spacious parks and green spaces. Baguio’s auditory contact zones were sonic spaces of interaction where disparate cultures met under the asymmetrical power relations of colonialism. Such complex and rugged terrains framed the interactive dimensions of the imperial encounter sensorially. The “smoothing out” of Baguio’s rough and rocky terrain, in this respect, involved complex layers of re-engineering of sonic and spatial

architecture that prefigured a wider infrastructural strategy that would replicate across the Philippine archipelago under U.S. colonial rule.

Notes

1. *Pakkong* (or *pakang*) is a bamboo instrument used by Indigenous women of Benguet as they work in fields (Manuel 1978, 28).
2. *Philippine Magazine*, September 1931, 173.
3. Cranston 1937, 300.
4. For instance, see “Top 19 Tourist Sites in Baguio, Philippines: The City of Pines” <https://guide.tothephilippines.ph/articles/things-to-do/baguio-city-tourist-spots> (accessed 15 May 2020) and Reed 1976.
5. Woolley, M. 1913. “Baguio, Simla of the Philippines.” *Overland Monthly*, 292–293.
6. Mock, C. B. 1981. “Childhood, Love and War in Manila: A Memoir.” *Bulletin of the American Historical Collection* 30 (1): 7–30.
7. For instance, see Rafael 1993, Rafael 2000, Ileto 1998, 2017, Anderson 2006.
8. See Rotter 2019, Tan 2018, Balance 2016, Buenconsejo 2017, Castro 2011, Irving 2010.
9. Cardoso 2019
10. Philippine Commission and William H. Taft, *Reports of the Taft Philippine Commission* (1901), 66. Donaldson-Sim, F.H. Interview by the Philippine Commission, 26 July 1899, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the U.S. Commission to the Philippine Islands, 1898–1909. NARA RG 59, Entry 1027, 250: 48/28/01-02, Box 2.
11. White City’s neoclassical buildings evoked the architecture of imperial Rome or Athens. Burnham’s design demonstrated that he was well-acquainted with European precedents (McKenna 2017, 76).
12. Morley 2019, 50.
13. Moore 1921, 183.
14. Moore 1921, 184.
15. Moore 1921, 182.
16. Burnham and Bennett 1909, 74.
17. Burnham and Bennett 1909, 74–76.
18. Mansell 2017, 1–4.
19. Anderson 1997.
20. Tapang, B. P. 1982. “Innovation and Economic Change: A Case History of the Ibaloy Cattle Enterprise in Benguet.” Master’s Thesis, Centre for Research and Communication, Manila. Pp. 82–83.
21. Pérez, A. 1904. *Relaciones Agustinianas de Las Razas del Norte de Luzon*. Department of the Interior, Ethnological Survey Publications, vol. 3. Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 198.
22. Burnham, D. H. and E. H. Bennett. 1905. *Plan of Manila*.
23. Moore 1921, 198.
24. McKenna 2017, 104.
25. William J. 1899. “The Philippine Tangle,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, 1 March; McKenna 2017, 11–12.
26. Moore 1921, 202.
27. The word “greensward” gained popular currency in Olmstead and Vaux’s 1858 winning scheme for the design of Central Park in New York City. These park designers and their clients believed that spatial practices, such as promenading, riding and boating, engendered a sense of “communicativeness” and “commonplace civilization” that fostered a “democratic community” through the enactment of everyday recreational spatial practices (Meyer 2007, 61).
28. Burnham, *Plan of Chicago*, 50.
29. Halsema 1991, 205–206.

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Notes on contributor

Russell P. Skelchy is the ERC Research Fellow leading the "Sounds of Occupation" stream of the Cultures of Occupation in Twentieth Century Asia (COTCA) Project at the University of Nottingham. His research interests include sound studies, imperialism, decolonization, multiracial identity, popular music subcultures, and music of South East Asia. His publications have appeared in *Ethnomusicology*, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, *South East Asia Research*, and *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education*.

ORCID

Russell P. Skelchy  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7157-949X>

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