

# GENERIC SOUNDS

## **ON THE TYPICAL, INDISTINCT AND IMPERSONAL IN THE SONIC ARTS, MEDIA AND AUDITORY CULTURE**

Seismograf Peer invites proposals for audio papers and written articles exploring the aesthetic and cultural implications of generic sound in music, sound art, audiovisual media and everyday life. We are interested in experimental scholarship on the sonically indistinct, the unexpressive and the impersonal; on the delights and discontents of sameness, repetition and standardization; on the trivial, the typical and the all too familiar sounds we live by.

The ‘generic’ refers to that which belongs to a large group, the genus, “shared by, including or typical of a whole group of things” (Oxford Dictionary). It is the paradoxical quality of having “no particularly distinctive quality” (Merriam-Webster). Hence, the generic is defined in opposition to anything specific, individual, distinct, characteristic, personal. It is anybody, anything, anywhere, anytime – and therefore nothing in particular. How does that sound? What are the qualities of sounds without qualities? Unspecific, trivial, typical sounds?

Indeed, to distinguish what is specific and what is generic in today’s soundscapes has become a complex issue. Still, however, we spontaneously invest sounds with certain values and affective capacities on the basis of this distinction, which makes it continuously effective and relevant. Generic sound has often been disregarded as a sign of commercialization, standardization and as an enemy of the ‘authentic’ human qualities of individual expression and interpersonal communication. But on the other hand, the generic is widely acknowledged as a ubiquitous and inescapable part of the modern soundscape (Chion 2016). Generic

features such as imitation and variation, standard formats and typical forms of expression, reproduction, circulation and serial distribution are arguably defining factors in shaping how contemporary sonic arts and communication function in a commercialized, mediatized and globalized culture. The sonically specific, personal and distinct is, in a sense, always haunted by the generic – for good or for worse.

While the topic is still seldom addressed directly in sound and music studies, questions related to generic sound has been touched upon in a wide range of topics and fields. As inspiration for potential contributors, and without in any way offering a comprehensive list, this includes topics and fields such as: technologies of sound recording and playback (Kittler 1999); the acoustic-technological design of public spaces (Thompson 2002; Goodman 2010; LaBelle 2010); electronic music, pop music, film music and contemporary sound art installations (Wurtzler 2007; Demers 2010; Schmidt 2023); sound design, sonic branding and commercial sound (Augoyard 2005; Whittington 2007; Taylor 2012; Schulze 2019; James 2019); digital, DAW-based sound production (Frith and Zagorski-Thomas 2012; Goldmann 2015); sonic distribution and infrastructures (Larkin 2013; Kassabian 2013; Devine and Boudreault-Fournier 2021); and the influence of algorithms, synthetic voices and sonic AI on reshaping the current soundscape (Faber 2020; Braguinski 2022).

Areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Trivial sounds, including the sound of routines and habits, boring sounds, repetition, the all-too-familiar
- AI sound, synthetic voices, sound bots, sonic deepfakes
- Sound of generic spaces, including spaces of transport and transit, workspaces, offices, spaces of commerce, shopping spaces, public institutions, spaces of power, etc.
- The impersonal, the typical and the unexpressive as sonic expression
- The influence of DAWs, presets, templates, automation and sequencing on contemporary music, sound art and sound design.
- The relation between site-specificity and generic sound/space in soundscapes, field recordings, environmental music and contemporary sound art installations.
- The influence of digital infrastructures, platformization, algorithmic selection and standard formats on contemporary music, soundscapes and listening practices.

Seismograf Peer invites scholars from various disciplines such as sound studies, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, artistic research and experimental music, musicology, performance studies and art history to reflect upon and investigate, contextualize and historicize generic sound in art, music and auditory life in the format of an audio paper or written research paper. The format of the audio paper offers authors to present their research in sound in a way that gives the thematic of sounds' agency the possibility to be performed and heard, not only described in text. If you have any concerns or questions, feel free to contact one of the special issue editors prior to the submission deadline.

## REFERENCES

- Augoyard, Jean-François, and Henry Torgue, eds. 2005. *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Braguinski, Nikita (2022). *Mathematical Music: From Antiquity to Music AI*. London: Routledge.
- Chion, Michel (2016). *Sound: An Acoulogical Treatise*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Demers, Joanna (2010). *Listening Through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Devine, Kyle and Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier (eds.) (2021). *Audible Infrastructures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Faber, Liz (2020). *The Computer's Voice: From Star Trek To Siri*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Frith, Simon and Simon Zagorski-Thomas (eds.) (2012). *The Art of Record Production*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Goldmann, Stefan (2015). *Presets: Digital Shortcuts to Sound*. London and Berlin: The Tapeworm.
- Goodman, Steve (2010). *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- James, Robin (2019). *The Sonic Episteme: Acoustic Resonance, Neoliberalism, and Biopolitics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kassabian, Anahid (2013). *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. (1999). *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Koolhaas, Rem (1995). "Generic City." In Koolhaas OMA and Mau: *XS, S, M, L, XL*. New York: The Monacelli Press: 1248-1264.
- LaBelle, Brandon (2010). *Acoustic Territories*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Larkin, Brian (2013). "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42: 327–343.
- Laruelle, François (2011). "The Generic as Predicate and Constant: Non-Philosophy and Materialism." In *The Speculative Turn*, eds. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman. Melbourne, Australia: re.Press: 237-260.
- Schmidt, Ulrik (2023). *A Philosophy of Ambient Sound: Materiality, Technology, Art and the Sonic Environment*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Schulze, Holger (2019). *Sound Works: A Cultural Theory of Sound Design*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Taylor, Timothy D. (2012). *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Thompson, Emily (2002). *The Soundscape of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Whittington, William (2007). *Sound Design and Science Fiction*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Wurtzler, Steve J. (2007). *Electric Sounds: Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.

## EDITORS OF SPECIAL ISSUE

### Morten Riis

Composer, sound artist and Teaching Associate Professor, Aarhus University  
[mr@cavi.dk](mailto:mr@cavi.dk)

### Ulrik Schmidt

Associate Professor, Roskilde University  
[ulriksc@ruc.dk](mailto:ulriksc@ruc.dk)

# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR AUDIO PAPERS

## ABSTRACT

### DEADLINE

December 1, 2023

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- Audio abstract, 60-90 sec.
- Written abstract, 150-200 words
- Bibliography
- Biographies for all authors

Please transfer / send audio file (MP3) and the abstract file including bibliography and biography (Word) to [peer@seismograf.org](mailto:peer@seismograf.org)

### EDITORIAL RESPONSE

After editorial review of the received abstracts, a selection of authors will be invited to send in audio papers.

## AUDIO PAPER – FULL SUBMISSION

### DEADLINE

April 1, 2024

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- Audio paper, length 12-15 minutes
- Written abstract, 150-200 words
- Bibliography, Style guide: Harvard Standard
- Biographies for all authors, max. 100 words for each author. Portraits are welcome, but optional (please include photo credit)

### FORMAT OF THE AUDIO PAPER

The audio paper is a 12-15 minute-long audio production presenting a research question or focus. The audio paper combines speech and narratives with “sonic argumentation” which can be composed through sound recordings, sound productions or any other sound practices, voice practices, the audible use of one’s body, everyday tools, gadgets, musical instruments, computer software or all kinds of objects and agents. All audio papers are being peer reviewed by reviewers within the given field. The reviewers are asked to assess after these guidelines: A clear and contextualized research question / focus of exploration; a clear and vivid argumentation and exploration of the research question / focus; meaningful and original use of sound as medium and content to support, present and materialize the argumentation; coherence between dramaturgical composition (tempo, density, narrative structure) and

content; appropriate references in the accompanying text (abstract and bibliography) and/or in the audio production.

Please visit [seismograf.org/fokus/fluid-sounds](https://seismograf.org/fokus/fluid-sounds) for further thoughts on and examples of audio papers.

All submissions will undergo rigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and anonymized refereeing by at least two anonymous referees. Submitted contributions must be original and not have been previously published or submitted elsewhere during the review process.

### **SUBMISSION**

Please transfer / send audio file (MP3) with the abstract file including bibliography and biography (Word) to [peer@seismograf.org](mailto:peer@seismograf.org) no later than April 1, 2024.

## **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPERS**

### **ABSTRACT**

#### **DEADLINE**

December 1, 2023

#### **REQUIRED ELEMENTS**

- Abstract, 150-200 words
- Bibliography
- Biographies for all authors

Please send the abstract including bibliography and biography in a single file (Word) to [peer@seismograf.org](mailto:peer@seismograf.org)

#### **EDITORIAL RESPONSE**

After editorial review of the received abstracts, a selection of authors will be invited to send in full written research papers.

## **RESEARCH PAPER – FULL SUBMISSION**

#### **DEADLINE**

April 1, 2024

## **REQUIRED ELEMENTS**

- Research paper, 6000-8000 words
- Written abstract, 150-200 words
- Bibliography, Style guide: Harvard Standard
- Biographies for all authors, max. 100 words for each author. Portraits are welcome, but optional (please include photo credit)

## **FORMAT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER**

While the audio paper is an experimental format, we are also inviting written research articles of a more performative character. But, as with the audio paper, this does not mean that anything goes. Seismograf is an independent journal concerning aesthetics and art forms within the fields of sound, sound art and contemporary music. The readers of this journal are therefore not academics only, but cover a variety of people – dedicated listeners, artists, critics, curators etc. We are open towards written submissions that stretch the format beyond traditional academic publishing – but that are still being peer reviewed. The review guidelines concern: strength, originality and clarity of the overall argument in the article; originality of and insight into the empirical material; strength and originality in presentation, argumentation and discussion; relevance of the literature references referred to.

All submissions will undergo rigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and anonymized refereeing by at least two anonymous referees. Submitted contributions must be original and not have been previously published or submitted elsewhere during the review process.

## **SUBMISSION**

Please send the research paper with the abstract file including bibliography and biography (Word) to [peer@seismograf.org](mailto:peer@seismograf.org) no later than April 1, 2024.

## ABOUT SEISMOGRAF PEER

Seismograf Peer is a peer-reviewed online platform devoted to practical and theoretical issues in relation to contemporary music and sound art. Seismograf Peer covers a broad range of topics including sonic materialities, modes of listening, philosophy of sound and music, aesthetics, technology and audio visibility as well as performative, curatorial and archival matters related to the sonic arts.

Seismograf Peer encourages a wide spread of methodologies and theoretical discourses, ranging from the more established academic approaches such as sound studies, musicology, cultural studies and performance studies to artistic research, practice-based research, artist writing and media archaeology.

Seismograf Peer is hosted by Seismograf, a Danish magazine with a long and proud tradition of publishing essays, interviews and reviews by music journalists and critics as well as academics and composers, acting as an inspiring and important platform within the field. Seismograf Peer is a natural development of this tradition, acknowledging the demands of publication within universities, music academies and art schools.

Seismograf Peer is edited by Sanne Krogh Groth (Lund University), Meri Kytö (University of Eastern Finland), Andreo Mielczarek (Seismograf), Morten Riis, (Aarhus University), Ulrik Schmidt (Roskilde University), Holger Schulze (University of Copenhagen), Stefan Östersjö (Luleå University of Technology)

Seismograf is supported by the Danish Arts Council and Danish Composers' Society.

For more information, please contact Seismograf Peer editor-in-chief Sanne Krogh Groth at [sanne@seismograf.org](mailto:sanne@seismograf.org).