

Tacet, issue: Sounds of Utopia

Deadline: Apr 15, 2015

Matthieu Saladin

Call for papers for the next issue of Tacet – Sound in the Arts (issue 4, 2015), dedicated to « Sounds of Utopia ».

Sounds of Utopia

Utopia is one of those concepts that haunt the history of ideas as well as the history of artistic practices. This persistence conveys both a contemporary malaise and the need, if not urgency, for the ideas about difference that are shaped in part by the conception and enactment of a utopia, ephemeral and circumstantial though they may be. The history of sound art and experimental music is no exception: in it we find reflections on utopia, understood in terms of space (enclave, island, or heterotopia) or of time (uchronia, heterochrony or projection of a possible future, based on present concerns). But the concept of utopia might present itself firstly as a radical alternative to the dominant musical and artistic forms, or even to the traditional aesthetic categories intended to distinguish among practices according to the media used. This gap is as much a matter of the creative processes used as of the sounds produced, heard, recorded, installed, organized, or improvised, but also of their mediation. In all cases, it seems that utopia comes into play at the heart of the dynamics that nurture experimental sound practices, past and present.

Following on from the research gathered in the previous issue of TACET, which dealt with sound space, the purpose of this issue is to invite introspection on the sounds of utopia, in a variety of manners. Firstly, in archeological fashion: What manifestations of and thoughts about sound came out of the past century's utopias, whether in their political, military, and scientific achievements and plans or among the artistic and poetic theories and movements that supported them? What about their dystopian side? What representations and renegotiations came about there in the relationships between time and space, language and communication, silence and noise, and, more broadly, the aesthetic experience? In what ways, from a sound perspective, was the social ambition of (for example) the improvised and experimental collectives of the late 1960s and early 1970s expressed? What were the environmental or urban concerns of the first sound artists working in public space? What ideologies, implicit or explicit, went hand in hand with such investigations? What were their relationships to technology or to daily life? But also, what legacies or perceptible reformulations of those utopias are present in contemporary practices today?

One of the possible relevances of the expected research on these matters lies in the light that they may shine, even if indirectly, on the issues presented today by sound art and experimental music. But this issue also seeks to concentrate on the specific relationships that current practices maintain with the concept of utopia. What sound utopias are specific to our contemporary

world? In what ways are they expressed in the sounds explored by works and in the projects of new media artists (from free software to nanotechnology)? In another vein, how can these practices allow us today to seize the “utopian impulses” that pepper everyday life, according to Bloch? How are those impulses problematized in these practices? What do recent experimental sound practices have to tell us about the principle of micro-utopia, which is supposed to have replaced the global scope of traditional utopia? While ecology seems to be ever more present among the concerns of sound artists, in what ways – from the perspective of utopia as well as of dystopia – is this interest manifested in the sound processing of works, in auditory representations of nature, or in sound design? On yet another level, it can be noted that (in particular) the institutional interest that sound art has enjoyed for some time now has been accompanied by the development of courses devoted to these practices. What relationships do these teachings have with regard to the elements mentioned above? What thoughts about utopia can be observed among these experiences?

Science fiction films and literature remain among the primary media through which the concept of utopia reaches into our imaginations. Thus this issue also seeks to inquire into the relationships between these genres and experimental sound practices, identifiable in their respective histories. What sound worlds and representations can be observed in the utopias and dystopias dramatized in these genres? What links do they maintain, whether through film soundtracks or sound descriptions of books, with the experiments being carried out in the field of sound art and experimental music? To what collaborations might they give rise? And conversely, what are their influences on these sound practices?

Finally, in the line of science fiction, another approach could go in a more speculative direction, taking interest in a fictional perspective on the future of sound art and experimental music, but also in the way that the prospective approach could come to problematize their current forms. What futures exist for these practices? What will be their sounds, their points of interest, their modes of creation, and the devices used for listening in an individual or group context? What relationships to society and the environment will they reveal? What will be their thoughts about utopia, and how will these be expressed?

This new issue of TACET seeks to tackle these various questions from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. The intention is to gather a group of studies (transversal, general, or based on the analysis of specific cases), conducted by researchers as well as by artists and musicians, in which the sounds of utopia – but also of its underside, dystopia – will be examined in their various echoes and in the heterogeneity of the problematics that they convey. Authors shall first inform the editorial committee of their planned article via e-mail, noting the title of the contribution and attaching an abstract thereof. The articles themselves are to be sent via e-mail by April 15, 2015 to: revue.tacet@gmail.com

The article should be accompanied by an abstract, a few keywords, and a brief biography of the author. We ask that authors follow the instructions (article formatting, bibliographic standards) available at the following address; respecting these guidelines will facilitate the editorial process and shorten the production process.

Arthist.net

Publishing: October 2015.

Kind regards,
Matthieu Saladin
Editor in chief of Tacet

Reference:

CFP: Tacet, issue: Sounds of Utopia. In: Arthist.net, Jan 6, 2015 (accessed Jul 16, 2025),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/9165>>.