

# „Sound Of Contagion“ – An artistic research project exploring A.I. as a creative tool for transmedial storytelling

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## **Beitrag zur Konferenz:**

„Artificial Intelligence – Intelligent Art? Human-Machine Interaction and Creative Practice“

## **Keywords:**

#ArtificialIntelligence #Art #Pandemic #Narrative #Composition #Illustration

## **Abstract:**

“Sound of Contagion” is a transmedial art project addressing the cultural narratives surrounding global diseases and pandemics through different media. It is borne out of the collaborative partnership between the University of the Arts in Berlin and the University of Oxford and explores the use of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) in creative processes to build a storyworld that serves as the basis for narratives, illustrations, musical compositions and live performances. Texts written by a machine learning algorithm and trained on narratives about pandemics from the last 2000 years serve as the starting point for the project.

Besides the aesthetic and creative output, the project is a research endeavor that explores the usage of A.I. as a creative tool. Through the collaboration of artists and technology, the imaginary that AI can independently and consciously create art is shifting to the notion of A.I. as a tool that supports and encourages creative processes. In this way the project points to the aesthetics and cultural-semantic flaws that are unique to the creative output of A.I. works, and challenges the myth that A.I. could replace authors, poets or other creators of art, entertainment or fiction in general. Thus the work follows a collaborative paradigm and acknowledges A.I. as a creative tool with its own agency and a unique aesthetic. By

using them in a creative process, A.I.s make an important contribution to new art forms, foster inspiration for artistic practices and thus promote independent modes of expression.

This talk is an insight into this project understood as a case study of how Artificial Intelligence is used as a creative tool within an interdisciplinary collective working in fields like literature studies, cultural studies, composition and visual arts.

<https://www.soundofcontagion.com/>

## **Biographies**

Robert Laidlow is a composer and researcher based in the UK. Robert's music has been commissioned and performed across the globe and broadcast on television and radio. His compositions blur the boundary between science and music and are often the result of close interdisciplinary collaboration. Robert is the PRISM Researcher in Artificial Intelligence in association with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra - a relationship that has recently resulted in several new works exploring intelligent technology.

Wenzel Mehnert is a futurologist who focuses on the imaginaries of new and emerging technologies. He researches, writes and teaches experimental methods of futurology. In his work, Wenzel Mehnert focuses on the intersection between speculative fictions and the evaluation of new and emerging sciences and technologies (e.g. A.I., SynBio, Internet of Things, etc.). He worked as a researcher at the Berlin University of the Arts, co-founded the Berlin Ethics Lab at the Technical University of Berlin and currently lives in Vienna, where he works at the Austrian Institute of Technology and develops ethical guidelines on new technologies for the European Commission.