

SoundEffects



An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience

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Editorial

Sound and Listening in Healthcare and Therapy

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SoundEffects | vol. 6 | no. 1 | 2016

issn 1904-500X

Sound and Listening in Healthcare and Therapy

This special issue of *SoundEffects* vol. 6, no. 1 reflects the ways in which sound and listening, acoustic environment and mediation can be approached within the areas of healthcare and therapy through research and design. This is in the spirit of *SoundEffects* approached through a diverse range of disciplines, methods, fields and practices such as music therapy, sound studies, sonic interaction design and research-through-design. The issue *Sound and Listening in Healthcare and Therapy* offers broad insight into concepts, theories, methods and tools for analysing, designing, evaluating and unfolding the shared acoustic environment considering site-specific as well as individual, social, technological and cultural listening circumstances in relation to health. Investigations of the psychological as well as somatic effects of perceived sound are central in this issue of *SoundEffects*, and the articles address sound and health in relation to specific media, genres, needs, disorders and social and cultural behaviour.

In Western healthcare settings the impact of the environment on our general well-being is being highlighted as a key area of interest. Kristensen, Edworthy & Özcan and Højlund explore acoustical perspectives and auditive experiences entangled with other essential parameters such as the physical, technological, embodied and multisensory conditions in relation to the overall hospital environment. Both articles stress the importance of reflecting on acoustical issues of e.g. noise and alarm fatigue through the lenses of such ‘non-acoustic’ conditions.

In society in general as well as in healthcare settings we experience an increasing interest in different kinds of digital self-help audio material, storable in smartphones and suitable for mobile, modern everyday life. Various therapeutic audio material (spoken, musical, sound-designed) is offered by psychologists, pharmacies and therapists to support general well-being as well as to help patients with diagnoses. In this issue of *SoundEffects* Björkén-Nyberg discusses the therapeutic qualities of the voice in audiobooks. And Lund, Bertelsen & Bonde present a project that empowers psychiatric patients to choose music suited to their individual needs during hospitalisation. The project builds on theoretical and empirical research in music medicine and music therapy and is integrated into a larger research study on the application of sound and music in a hospital environment in Denmark.

Another interest reflected in the issue is the potentials of using interactive sound and music to promote and support physical activity in relation to age-related health challenges such as Alzheimer’s disease and various disabilities (Rosseland; Bergsland & Wechsler). Both Rosseland and Bergsland & Wechsler explore how interac-

tive technology can be used to motivate users to engage in activity through gestures and movement that control dynamically adapting musical elements.

The article by Epstein broadens the scope and speculates about how sound-related categories such as noise, quiet and silence relate to health. She questions whether recommendations on 'healthy soundscapes' should be based on individual preference, or if there are universal principles that apply regardless of circumstances? Are there such things as toxic and nourishing sounds, comparable to elements of nutrition? She argues that the Acoustic Ecology and Sound Studies movements have grown into a promising matrix for public education on the influence of soundscapes, but that disputes about the values of such categories are counterproductive and must be moved upon.

We are very proud to present these seven distinguished articles.
Welcome to *SoundEffects* vol. 6, no. 1.

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