

**Vreemdeling** (*noun, Dutch: stranger, alien, foreigner, outsider*)

Proposal for the creation of an electronic composition and for the study of the compositional process.  
By Robert van Heumen (<http://hardhatarea.com>).



### [concept]

*Vreemdeling* is an electronic work that starts with the basic questions of life: How do we control our lives? Can we control our lives? What does it mean to die? Does it matter if we know when we're going to die? Does anything matter? What really is empathy? What does it mean to be human? What can it mean to know another person, to understand another life? Is it possible to break free from the bonds of the familiar, from existing concepts and beliefs?

*Vreemdeling* is inspired by Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* and Philip K. Dick's *Do androids dream of electric sheep*. And as always by L.E.J. Brouwer.

Similar questions to the ones stated above will arise in the choice of sounds and the structure of the processes and the composition itself: How do we choose sounds and processes out of many? Can that process be arbitrary, even random, or should every sound and every process be weighted again and again until we know it's right? What does that mean, 'it is right'? What is it to create a piece of music? Should the judgement of others be considered in making a composition? Is it even possible to create a unique piece of music? Does it matter whether it is unique or not?

The obvious metaphor: a composition as a life.

The ultimate goal is two-sided: to create a composition and to research the way a composition comes to life. And maybe this can help to cast more light on the questions that started it all.

### [execution]

*Vreemdeling* is a composition in three versions: the mother piece in stereo, a multichannel version and a derived live version, using similar sounds but different structures and different movements.

Both the composition and the sounds used will be structured using the *family tree* concept (see fig.1). The axioms or starting points for the tree will be source material taken from the already much sampled film *Bladerunner*. Audio processes will be defined as basic operations on the axioms, performed in a number of iterations as to grow the family tree, as to create a collection of sounds. Finally the tree itself will structure the composition and dictate the order of the sounds by taking vertical cross-sections in the tree. In all three parts of the composition process there will be various degrees of randomness and conscious selection by the composer, as well as sometimes just rigidly following of the tree structure.

During the process a public blog will be kept, as a means to research the way the composition is conceived. Various intermediate versions during the process will be discussed with composers, musicians and others, trying to get a grip on the creation of a piece of music, and the role of randomness, rigidity and conscious choice.

## **[process]**

There are 4 phases to distinguish:

1. Collect source material and determine the processes. Perform iterations of the processes starting with the source files to build the family tree. Software to use: LiSa X, SuperCollider 3, Adobe Audition.
2. Construct the composition using the family of sounds generated in 1, according to the structure of the tree. Make different versions and discuss these. Decide what version to use. Software to use: Nuendo 4.
3. Construct a multichannel version. Again make different versions and discuss.
4. Distill the core of the composition and build an environment in LiSa X and SuperCollider 3 to perform it live.

## **[schedule]**

Feb 4 - 10: work on phase 1 (as described above) at EMS / Stockholm, Sweden.

March / April / May: work on phase 1 & 2 in Amsterdam (home studio & STEIM studio)

June 2 - 15: work on phase 3 at the University of Newcastle, UK.

June 16 - 22: work on phase 4 at STEIM / Amsterdam, NL.

## **[support]**

Funding will be applied for at the Fonds voor de Scheppende Toonkunst / FAPK+. EMS and Culture Lab agreed on their support for this work. From STEIM I'd like the time to work on this composition at EMS and Culture Lab, with incidental studio, equipment use and feedback from the STEIM staff on the work.

## **[bio]**

Robert van Heumen is working with electronic, experimental, improvised and composed music, music-theater and sound art. Recent works include 5.1 surround compositions '12 Bullets' and 'Fury (after anger)', music for the choreography Drink Me by Anouk van Dijk, and the audio-visual sound art piece Solitude (with multi-media artist Arnoud Noordegraaf) based on a book by Paul Auster. As a musician he uses STEIM's live sampling software LiSa and real-time audio-synthesis and algorithmic composition software SuperCollider. He is active as a member of the electro-acoustic sextet OfficeR (with Koen Nutters cs.), electronic audio-visual trio SKIF++ (with Jeff Carey & Bas van Koolwijk), scratchband RKS (with Keir Neuringer & dj sniff), Shackle (working with Anne LaBerge on restriction), founding member of the N Collective, and has shared the stage with Tom Tlalim, dj sniff (Takuro Mizuta Lippit), Michel Waisvisz, Richard Barrett, Oguz Buyukberber, Luc Houtkamp, Guy Harries, Morten J. Olsen, Daniel Schorno, Roddy Schrock, Audrey Chen and Nate Wooley. His soundworld is a mixture of digital crackles, environmental sounds, voices, sounds from kitchen appliances, half of the time smashed beyond repair. Next to all of this he is Managing Director of the STEIM foundation in Amsterdam, curator of the Local Stop concert series and member of STEIM's Artistic Committee. In a previous life he was a mathematician, trumpet player and software programmer. He still reads L.E.J. Brouwer.

More info and soundfiles can be found at <http://hardhatarea.com>. An extended resume can be downloaded at <http://hardhatarea.com/RobertVanHeumenCV.pdf>.

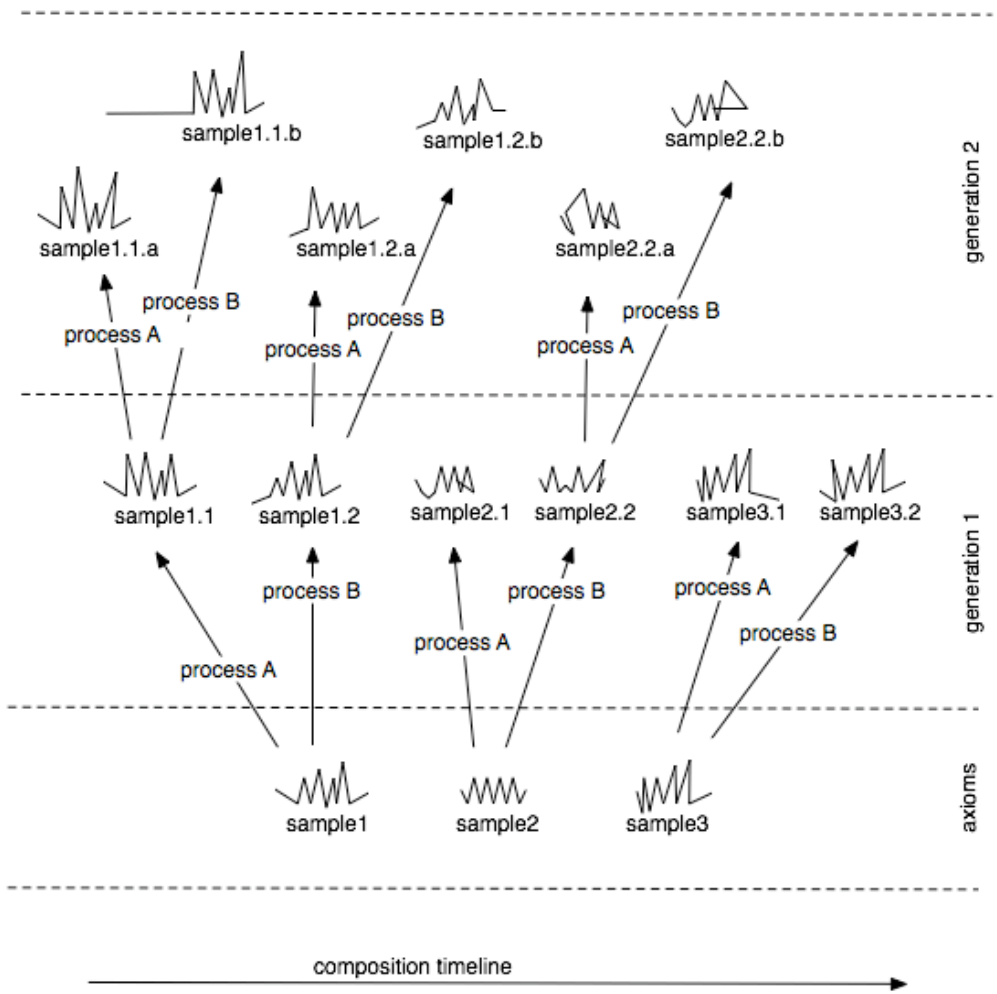


fig.1 family tree concept