Philosophy and music in struggle? How can “noise” be the focus of this struggle? Historically, based on concepts of order, organization and systemic thinking, music has been defined as organized sound; with sound understood as discrete pitch relations within a variety of scale systems. This definition places, sound and noise as antagonistic formations; sound is not noise, and therefore, noise is not music. Such a Western, colonial definition of music is at the core of what in Latin American audiences know as “European music” and which has led to distinctions like “art music” vs. “popular music”, marking not only consumer choices but also the way we understand cultural practices linked to sound. However, in the last decade, scientific and technological developments in sound and noise generation have crossed and are challenging these boundaries; as they change the world we know, they are also a reflection of this changing world. This means that noise, as an expressive form, is becoming accepted as a legitimate “musical” form. In this chapter we discuss the ways in which the “noise” generation is becoming culturally accepted in Costa Rica and how this is opening new artistic spaces beyond the traditional dichotomy music/sound.

We will focus on the case of experimental artist Sergio Fuentes (Sergio Wiesengrund), a “noise” or “electro-acoustic music” artist who received the prestigious 2013 Premio Nacional Aquileo Echeverría in composition. Until last year, this award had been only given to formally trained composers. Sergio Wiesengrund won the award with the experimental music of his Wiesengrund Project pieces, composed entirely with a computer. This young artist, a sociologist, has no formal training in music and is not well known in the country; his compositions are entirely experimental and detached from what in Costa Rica is considered formal European music. This is not the first time an award is given to electro-acoustic music; in 2010 the same prize was given to Otto Castro a composer formally trained in academic electro-acoustic music. The difference lies in the fact that Wiesengrund is self-taught and has no formal musical training.

In this chapter we argue that this event marks the beginning of an important paradigm shift in the Costa Rican contemporary music scene. The impact of which can have profound consequences in the development and production of music in Costa Rica. Using interviews with local artists, producers, and music related professionals we hope to map out the dynamics of this musical revolution that challenges ethnicities and pre-conceived ideas about music.