

## Island Nex(us) – Arquipélago

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**ABSTRACT:** Island Nex(us):Arquipélago is an augmented reality soundwalk present at Invisible Places 2017 in Ponta Delgada, Azores, Portugal.

Island Nex(us):Arquipélago connects the community of São Miguel island with the sounds and stories of island communities in the Asia Pacific region who are facing ramifications of climate change. This soundwalk will enable people a different and unique experience of their surroundings, and through this dynamic, present difficult issues of climate change in an interactive and immersive way. This report describes the technical details of the implementation, the creative process and future developments.

## 1. Introduction

“Soundscape composition is as much a comment on the environment as it is a revelation of the composer’s sonic visions, experiences, and attitudes towards the soundscape. Audio technology allows us as composers to sort out the many impressions that we encounter in an often chaotic, difficult sound world. If “listening is as much a ‘material’ for the composer as the sounds themselves” (Katherine Norman), then daily sound impressions play a significant role in the compositional process itself.”

Linking Soundscape Composition and Acoustic Ecology by Hildegard Westerkamp

The possibility of creating new forms of interaction between people and their environment is an important factor of connection at multiple layers of dynamics – social, cultural, political, environmental – in the Anthropocene era. Our detachment from natural rhythms and cycles implies a significant impact in the way Nature shapes itself. Not fully understanding the consequences and balancing our needs leads to a significant human impact on the Earth’s geology and ecosystems. These new forms of interaction foster the awareness over these impacts and purpose ways of researching and working with a deeper knowledge and understanding of our environments.

Island Nex(us):Arquipélago is an effort to combine both engineering advances with artistic practices and explore the topic of acoustic ecology. It investigates the relation with our soundscapes. Collecting sound field recordings, an aural mapping is created to guide participants through a series of 39 chapters connected to Asia Pacific regions.

## 2. Soundwalking

Soundwalk is a process of active listening, where the goal is to listen to the environment and expose the ears to every sound around us no matter where we are. This process brings forward the proposition of a different perception of the environment, one that accounts for the soundscape, and thus, one that goes beyond the visual capabilities. The new perception requires the listener to be aware of its surroundings, to be able to identify and characterize a whole spectrum of sounds and above all its relation with them.

An augmented reality soundwalk builds on top of this notion to explore other realms of perception and awareness. The contrast between what is listen and what is seen can be a great tool to indulge people in interacting with information that would not happen otherwise.

Feedback from Island Nex(us):Arquipélago participants shows precisely this behavior. When presented with strange sounds to the surroundings, their attention and interest became higher to listen and explore new sounds and stories at the same time their appreciation and sensitivity towards the soundscape and landscape that surrounded them was also higher.

### 3. Mapping

Ponta Delgada was built on the slope terrain that characterizes the typical geography of the island and the whole Azores archipelago. It also resembles the traits of a city where the community relies on the ocean and sea activities: the big harbour, the fisherman community, the weather.

A proposed mapped of 39 locations was created to lead participants from the university campus to the harbour. There was no intention to force participants to follow this particular path, but in fact give them the time to listen to each of the recordings and the city soundscapes.

There was nevertheless a narrative intent to walk the listeners through different soundscapes. In the university campus, recordings and sounds recorded were mostly facts related with the tribal communities and cultural manifestations of the Asia Pacific regions, particularly the islands of Vanuatu. The relation with water and the importance of this element to the way tribes lived their personal lives and communities' dynamics. The impact of climate change on both geographic level and in the cultural heritage of these people. Walking closer to the harbour, to the sea level, new and different sounds appear. Just as participants go down the slope towards the water, these sounds reflect that descent to utterly and detailed sounds of aquatic environments. Shrimps, shells, whales and other animals that are also affect by the impact of climate changes.

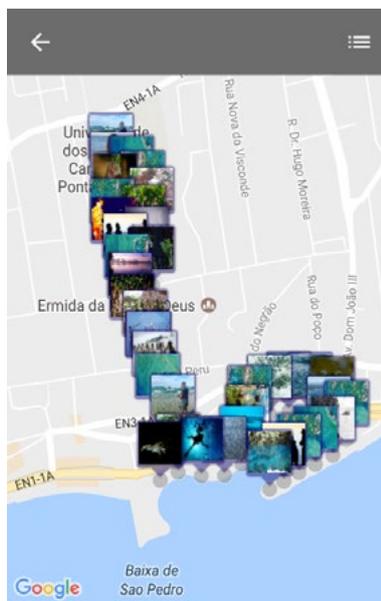


Figure 1. Echoes.xyz full map.



Figure 2. University Campus map.

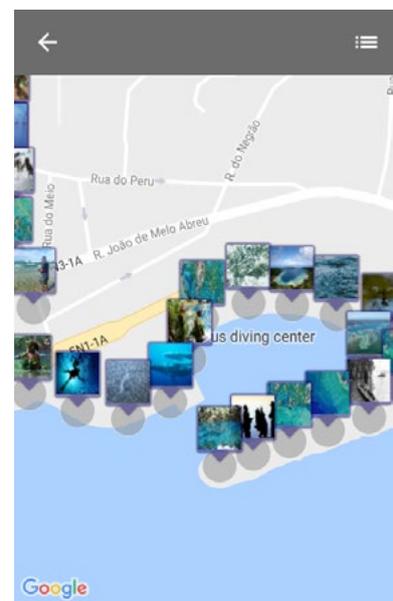


Figure 3. Harbour map.

## 4. Implementation

Island Nex(us):Arquipélago was implemented using Echos.xyz, an application used to create and explore immersive geolocated experiences and programmed to map (tag) certain places, carefully selected for their important surroundings, cultural heritage and feasible pathway. When experienced on location, these geolocated soundscapes are linked with actual surroundings, offering the possibility to perceive the soundscapes differently, through active listening.

In Ponta Delgada, the 3-D binaural soundscapes were based on environmental field recordings (both aquatic and terrestrial), cultural ceremonies and community collaborations that will be composed into dynamic soundscapes revealing the ecological interconnections inherent in all of us.

For the binaural recordings, a 3DIO Free Space Pro II microphone set and hydrophones were used. Since the time available during the conference was quite short, the plan was to spend the first day visiting the city and conceiving a practical and interesting map for the storytelling.

During the conference' days people were able to access the soundscapes at any time of day or night, listening either in groups or independently.

## REFERENCES

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