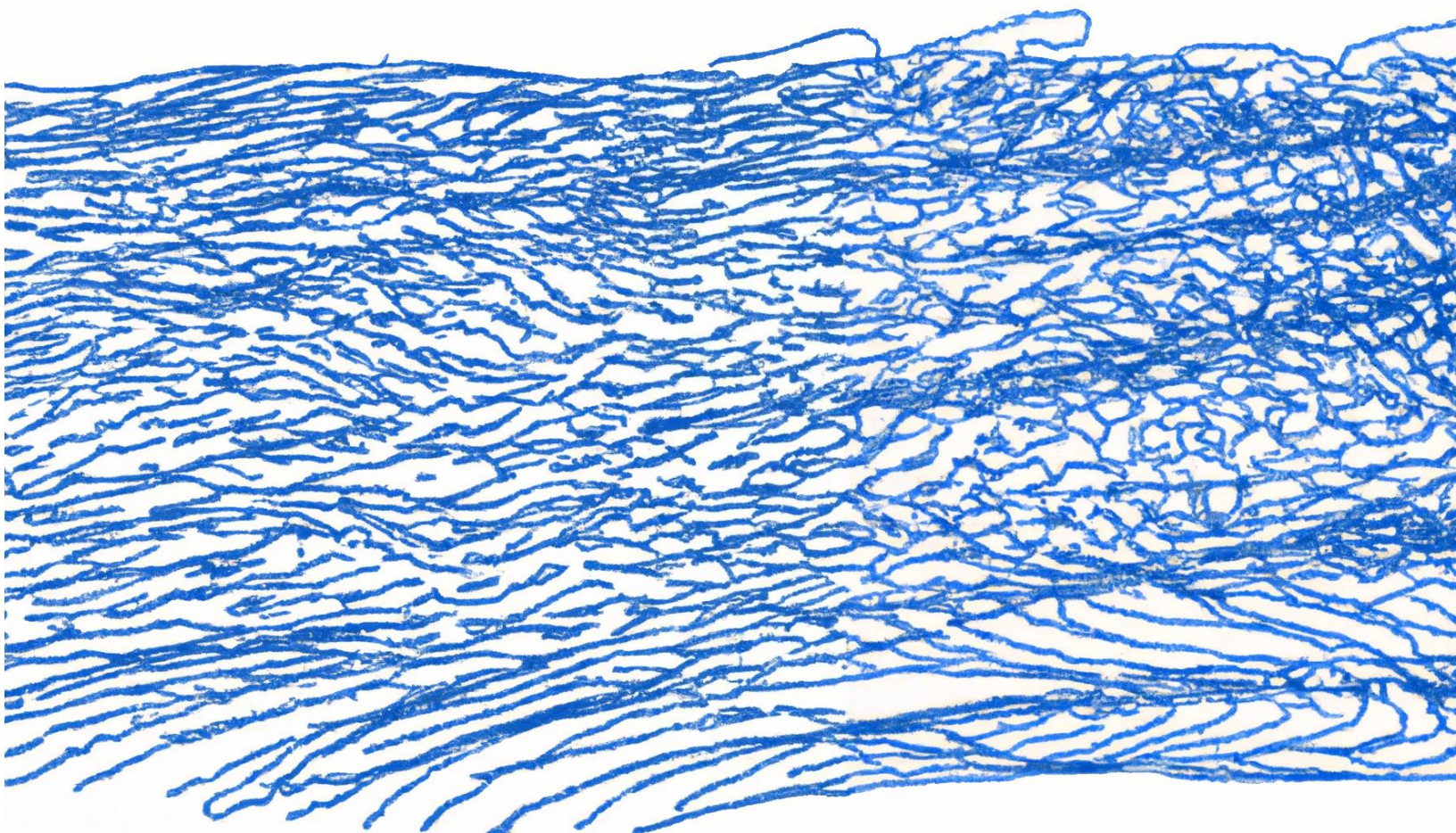


*Soundscape
Architects*



To those who first visited:
Ileanna, Tim, and the form-finding expedition.

Soundscape Architects.
Alejandro PdL, 2023.
Berkeley, California.

This is the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the original landscape of the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County.

V. 06.03.23.

This booklet is in constant transformation. Please reach out if you have comments or suggestions or want to share your soundscape.

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Places, like people, keep a rhythm.

They pulsate.

Pulses that pullulate life.

That force you to go fast-er.

Consider a highway and its velocities.

Now, consider that break when you suddenly had to
s l o o o o w down.

And W-A-I-T.

It's the end of the day, and you are caught in a traffic jam.

You knew better, but it's *not* your problem. It's this
city/neighborhood/street; as if everyone here was
keeping the same tempo.

Isn't time-space just one long continuum?

But rhythms, like people, make places too.

Think about the last time you danced.

Weren't you caught in *something* else?

Just look up to the stars as they dance. Their choreographies,
synchronicities, and rhythm. If their dance stops, everything we know
will turn into dust.

"Rhythm is gonna get you" (Stefan & Stefan, 1987).

Places and rhythms coming together in form-
finding practices that wish to orient and disorient
the body (human, ecologic, social, otherwise).

This is the melody that this game explores.

Soundscape Architects is a role-playing game and a proposal in correspondence art. You and your friends will assume the role of place-makers: cosmic forces, explorers, cartographers, or rhythm machines.

"Rhythm is a dancer,
It's a soul's companion,
You can feel it everywhere" (Snap!, 1992).

Together, you will build a world out of vibrations, chart its geographies, transform them, dwell on them, maybe meet new people, nap, and drink some tea. A sonic-eco-social-in-between-ness, not here nor there, where kindness and kinship are the common denominators that bring people together.

Soundscapes can be vast, unpredictable, and full of breathtaking instances. They may also be hiding portals to other dimensions, where time-space dissolves. As ecologies, they are living, breathing, moving forms, constantly changing and reacting to what's around them.

Being a soundscape architect, then, is not an easy task.

Soundscape Architects is oriented towards curating a playlist and writing about your experiences, in a playful spirit. The game is designed for 2-4 players. You will need a set of polyhedral dice, colored pens, a streaming platform (Spotify) where you can curate the soundscape-as-playlist, and a common physical copy of the booklet that all participants can use.

The game unfolds over seven rounds—plus setup before the fun begins. Each round is divided into turns—one turn per player. Players assume the role of a sonic architect (the character), and in each round, players will engage with the playlist in ways that correspond to the character's unique characteristics. Players will also write short pieces during each turn, inspired by the soundscape's current state and how their characters encounter it. As the game progresses, players-as-characters will have to shape the playlist into a livable soundscape while reflecting on the experience of dwelling in these aural territories. The game ends in turn seven when everybody rests.

As a tool for RPG gaming, you can use this booklet to create robust discrete locations, ideally a 6-mile hex with enough varied terrain and critters. As an aesthetic proposition, however, **Soundscape Architects** invites participants to form affective territories among players through sonic experiences and writing compositions. This territory will push you towards forgetting where the "here you are" begins and where "end" ends.

This game will take some weeks to complete. Before you begin, define your group's weekly goals and mode of communication. The form-finding expedition recommends playing **Soundscape Architects** via snail mail – players sending the booklet to one another in a given periodicity. You can also play using an online notebook.

What matters is that you do not rush the experience.
–Become an explorer, wander.

Setup: When the earth was void and without form

Before the game begins, players will define and learn about their characters and throw together 2-4 hours' worth of rhythm and melody, forming a fluid yet interconnected soundscape –think about it as the 'raw' materials that will compose your world.¹

Character development

The first player –whoever's birthday is next— begins by defining an archetype for their character. Each archetype represents a unique perspective and contributes differently to how the game unfolds. The archetype is also the perspective you will adopt in play, so select one that resonates with you. You can also roll a six-sided die (1d6) and randomly determine it. However, only one person may choose a given archetype.

1. The Starborn: You navigate life with an eye on the future, bringing a sense of destiny and a higher purpose. [A:3/S:2/F:1]
2. The Poet: You bring honesty and depth to the game, using your insight to uncover hidden truths about the soundscape. [A:3/S:1/F:2]
3. The Judge: Your discernment guides the group. You help ensure this place is safe, true, and just, making decisions that advocate for harmony and fairness. [A:2/S:1/F:3]
4. The Destroyer: You are here because someone brought you. You introduce unpredictability, change, and challenge, which may be growth and renewal opportunities. [A:2/S:3/F:1]
5. The Healer: Your role is to restore and sustain the soundscape. You help the group remember what's important to them and return to the central themes, even when melody and rhythm stray. [A:3/S:1/F:2]
6. The Seed: You are potential and growth. You inspire new ideas and possibilities, contributing to the cohesive development of the soundscape from the beginning to the end. [A:2/S:1/F:3]

¹ Here's an idea for you once you're done playing the game. Instead of composing with music, try composing with writing using the same game mechanics. You can consider one song to be equal to 120 words, so four songs would be a total of 480 words. All the rest can stay the same.

Did you see those weird numbers in brackets? Archetypes have unique values for each of the three core attributes in the game. These values will range from 1 to 3 and help you determine the outcome of an encounter or challenge your character faces. These are:

- Affect [A]: Character's capacity to affect or be affected, their ability to inspire ideas or provoke sensations in others.
- Substance [S]: The depth and weight of the character's "materiality" – its body or otherwise.
- Flow [F]: Character's fluidity, adaptability, and ability to navigate change and improvise.

How does this work?

For example, as a Starborn, your character's strengths lie in affecting others [A:3]. However, your focus on the future makes you less adaptable to unexpected changes [F:1]. As a Destroyer, you are of great strength [S:3], though you might not adapt quickly either [F:1].

Now, let's delve into the core game mechanics. During each round, your character will face a situation that tests their attributes. The outcome of this encounter depends on a roll of a four-sided die (1d4). If the number you roll is less than or equal to your character's value for the indicated attribute, you succeed in the encounter and transform the soundscape. If it's higher, it fails –and what failure means is for you to define in the narrative.

For example:

Let's say you're playing as the Starborn, and you encounter the "Teams" situation in round 2. This would require you to use your "Affect" attribute to influence the outcome. In the narrative, this may involve introducing yourself to other architects or shifting the emotional tone of the situation. Your "Affect" attribute value is 3. Thus, you would roll a four-sided die (1d4), and if it lands on 3 or less, you have successfully navigated the challenge and you may make changes to the playlist –per round rules: Move four songs added by another player up four positions in the soundscape. Let's assume you

rolled a 2. This means you have succeeded! Writing as the Starborn, you narrate seamlessly weaving in a new, hopeful friendship, adding a new texture to the soundscape. However, if you had rolled a 4, this would have been higher than your "Affect" attribute value of 3, so you would have failed. You will not be editing the playlist but, in writing, you could explain that you were too focused on your future and failed to address the present needs of your peers.

Each round offers specific rules for editing the soundscape, which correspond to the outcome of a die roll. Regardless of outcome, your character must grapple with the consequences in your writing.

Now, write your name next to the archetype you selected using colored pens. This color should remain a constant whenever you take notes, as it will serve as a visual cue to who is writing, when, and in what condition.

Archetype	Attributes	Player's name
1. The Starborn	[A:3/S:2/F:1]	
2. The Poet	[A:3/S:1/F:2]	
3. The Judge	[A:2/S:1/F:3]	
4. The Destroyer	[A:2/S:3/F:1]	
5. The Healer	[A:3/S:1/F:2]	
6. The Seed	[A:2/S:1/F:3]	

Sonic meshwork development

Once you define your character, you will add songs to the playlist. If you are the first player, you will be responsible for setting the initial tone and theme for the aural exploration. Here is a table of 20 words that can serve as an inspiration [roll 1d20, if needed]:

1. Uplifting	6. Introspective	11. Nostalgic	16. Whimsical
2. Energetic	7. Dreamy	12. Romantic	17. Experimental
3. Melancholic	8. Cinematic	13. Groovy	18. Eclectic
4. Mysterious	9. Serene	14. Anthemic	19. Ambient
5. Playful	10. Epic	15. Soulful	20. Hypnotic

Once the tone is set, each player should add around an hour's worth of music. If the average song length is 4 minutes, a 1-hour contribution would contain approximately 15 songs. Try to be as experimental but cohesive as possible. Think about this process as painting with frequencies – each layer and texture adds depth to whatever you try to put out there.

After adding their songs to the playlist, players should write some brief notes in the shared notebook, exploring –as creatively as they want— how their song choice reflects the contours of this yet formless soundscape. These notes –maybe a Haiku?— will help other players follow connections that may –or may not—impact their own song choices.

What is this place?

Who are you?

Why are you here?

What brought you here?

Once you are done, pass the booklet to the next player –this is a good excuse to know one another's birthdays. They should follow the same process –character development & song adding.

The round concludes when all players have defined their characters and contributed their designated number of songs.



Round 1: Divide the light from the darkness

During this round, characters begin an initial exploration to familiarize themselves with the new soundscape. They will breathe the air, gaze upwards, and seek their guiding North Star. Players will shape the soundscape by removing, swapping, or adding songs – constructing bridges, shifting boulders. On their turn, each player rolls a six-sided die (1d6) to determine the situation from the table below. They will then roll a four-sided die (1d4), compare the result to their archetype's attribute value, and determine whether their character's action is successful. If it's not, they will only write about how the situation unfolded.

Roll	Situation	Attribute	Success?
1	Something blocking	Substance	Remove three of your own songs from the soundscape
2	Jump!	Flow	Move three songs added by another player, in three different directions
3	Move it	Substance	Swap the positions of eight songs
4	Follow	Affect	Add three songs that offer "light"
5	Hide!	Affect	Add three songs that bring "darkness"
6	Faster	Flow	Remove five songs added by another player

After engaging with the playlist –or not—, each player writes a 50-to-200-word piece inspired by the soundscape's current state and their actions during their turn. Think about orientations; describe the forces that drive this place. The round concludes once all players have taken their turn.

Round 2: Let there be a firmament amid the waters

Groundwork. During this round, characters will initiate the significant task of reorganizing the land. Pushing things around. Dividing. Ordering. Making space for life and living. On their turn, each player rolls an eight-sided die (1d8) to determine the situation from the table below. They will then roll a four-sided die (1d4), compare the result to their archetype's attribute value, and determine whether their character's action is successful. If it's not, they will instead write about how the situation unfolded.

Roll	Situation	Attribute	Success?
1	Boulders	Substance	Move four of your own songs up two positions in the soundscape
2	Structure	Substance	Move four of your own songs down two positions in the soundscape
3	Teams	Affect	Move four songs added by another player up four positions in the soundscape
4	1, 2, 3, push!	Substance	Move four songs added by another player up four positions in the soundscape
5	Away	Flow	Swap the positions of six of your own songs
6	Encounter	Affect	Swap the positions of six songs added by another player
7	Barter	Flow	Swap the position of four of your songs with songs added by another player
8	Volunteer	Affect	Choose another player, move six of their songs in any direction

After engaging with the playlist—or not—, each player writes a 50-to-200-word piece inspired by the soundscape's current state and their actions during their turn. Think about the feeling of expansiveness and separation, of movement as place-making. The round concludes once all players have taken their turn.

Round 3: Let the earth bring forth grass

Growth. During this round, players will add, make grow, and metaphorically give new life to the soundscape by composing with and through the songs, based on a d10 die roll. Consider beat, tempo, intensity, and collective composition as your allies during this round.

Roll	Situation	Attribute	Success?
1	Bring	Substance	Add a cluster of 4 new songs that evoke a sense of growth
2	Carry	Substance	Add a cluster of 6 new songs that force a geological contrast
3	Attend	Affect	Compose a haiku using the titles of 3 songs
4	Traveling	Flow	Reorder 6 songs to evoke a journey from land to sea
5	Encounter	Flow	Add 7 songs that share a common theme already present in the soundscape.
6	Moving	Affect	Add 6 songs to produce a smooth transition
7	That feeling...	Flow	Produce a cluster of 9 songs that evoke the feeling of a lush, green landscape
8	Limits	Affect	Produce a shore with 9 songs. Pair songs that evoke "land" and "water"
9	Sublime	Affect	Produce a vibrant cluster of 9 songs
10	Seed	Substance	Add 10 new songs into an arboreal form

After engaging with the playlist—or not—, each player writes a 50-to-200-word piece inspired by the soundscape's current state and their actions during their turn. Explore the relationship between the songs and the feeling of liveliness in the soundscape. The round concludes once all players have taken their turn.

Round 4: Created the sun, moon, and stars to govern the day and the night

This world is fragile, as part of a universe in a constant process of composition, recomposition, destruction, and creation. In this turn, players will make planetary transformations to the soundscape, leaving a permanent mark on it based on a 1d12 die roll.

Roll	Situation	Attribute	Success?
1	Planetary bombardment	Substance	Delete 5 songs that don't fit the current curvature of the soundscape
2	Comet impact	Substance	Delete 5 songs to produce a distinct division in the soundscape
3	Solar flare	Flow	Rearrange 9 songs and have them follow a celestial journey
4	Asteroid impact	Substance	Delete up to 8 songs, replace them with new songs
5	Atmospheric collapse	Affect	Delete up to 6 songs
6	Tidal disruption	Flow	Delete up to 8 songs
7	Mass extinction	Affect	Delete up to 10 songs
8	Space-time singularity	Affect	Produce a journey from the Sun –first song— to the farthest star –last song.
9	Stellar explosion	Substance	Move up to 20 songs to produce a sense of cosmic imbalance in the soundscape
10	Planet fracture	Substance	Divide into two different soundscapes
11	Magnetic pole reversal	Flow	Rearrange the soundscape into a new constellation
12	Galactic merger	Flow	Delete 10 songs, add 12 new songs.

After engaging with the playlist –or not—, each player writes a 50-to-200-word piece inspired by the soundscape's current state and their actions during their turn. Explore the relationship between the soundscape and the planetary forces remaking it. The round concludes once all players have taken their turn.

Round 5: created sea creatures and birds

And then came the sea creatures, birds, and all the pretty critters. In this round, players will study the lifeforms inhabiting the environments of the soundscape. They will identify, examine, and collect these critters by editing the playlist using a 20-sided die (d20) roll. During this round, characters will focus on observation, so no attribute rolls will be necessary, and every roll will automatically be considered a success –architects also have limits.

Roll	Action
1	Rearrange 6 songs into a journey to the depths of the sea
2	Rearrange 6 songs into a form of underwater life
3	Produce a cluster of 6 songs that evoke a sense of flight
4	Swap the positions of 8 songs. They are your birds
5	Produce a cluster of 8 songs. They are a school of fish
6	Add 4 new sea creatures to your shores and lakes
7	Form an 8-song marine ecosystem
8	Replace 8 songs. They evolved
9	Move 8 different songs up 5 positions. They migrated
10	Move 6 different songs up 10 positions. They returned
11	Produce a food chain with 6 new songs.
12	7 songs that do not match, have to be together. Co-habitation.
13	9 songs that match, have to be separated. Regional differences.
14	Pair a 4 sea creatures with 4 birds
15	Evolution, from sea to land: 10 songs
16	They got into the boat: Swap positions of 12 songs
17	Rearrange 4 songs: this is a study of four seasons in a bird's life
18	Assemble 10 songs into a coral reef
19	Rearrange 8 songs: the lifecycle of a sea turtle
20	10 songs to form a deep-sea exploration

After engaging with the playlist, each player writes a 50-to-200-word piece inspired by the playlist's current state. Explore the connections between the songs and the diversity of life present in this soundscape. The round concludes once all players have taken their turn.

Round 6: created land animals, including humans

And now, you are *here*.

Instead of editing the soundscape, players will write about their felt experiences living in it, connecting with the rhythms and melodies –and those who live here— on a personal level.

In this turn, each player should take a moment to review the current playlist, and attune themselves to the sonic present.

Consider how the soundscape resonates with you; how it has changed –and what has changed— throughout the game.

Attend to its human contours, to the stories that the soundscape now carries.

Think about how it captures your own felt experiences or those of people you now know.

After attending to the soundscape, each player writes a 50-to-200-word piece inspired by their edits and current state.

The round concludes once all players have taken their turn.

Round 7: Rest and Reflection

On the seventh day, players and characters will rest. They will collectively and compositionally listen to the soundscape, attending to their shared experience.

Bring your nice speakers out.

Set them up in a comfortable room
—with low lights.

Invite others to join.

Immerse yourselves in the music.

Nap. Drink tea. Rest.

Share feelings, insights, connections, and highlights.

You're free to explore.

The game has reached a purposeful stop.

[Use the space below to record the URL of your soundscape. That way, you can easily return and immerse yourself in it whenever you wish]