

# Locative Sounds , Sounding Locations

Van DAAR naar HIER. En dan weer verder.

Peter Mertens & Harold Schellinx (studio ookoi)  
[ Presentation at the International Symposium "Locative Media and Sound Art",  
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**Abstract:** "Jij bent altijd daar. Ik ben altijd hier."

The ookoi (<http://ookoi.nl>) came to be at the turn of the millennium when, after more than two decades since their earlier collaborations in the 1979/1980 post-punk experimental pop and independent art scene in Amsterdam (nl) [1, ULTRA], Peter Mertens and Harold Schellinx met on top of the Eiffel tower in Paris (fr) for an impromptu sonic performance [2, ParisOK].

It is a historical contingency that many of their artistic endeavours since were localized on the waddeneiland Ameland (nl) that within the borders of the Netherlands is situated at the longest possible travel distance-in-time from the Dutch capital.

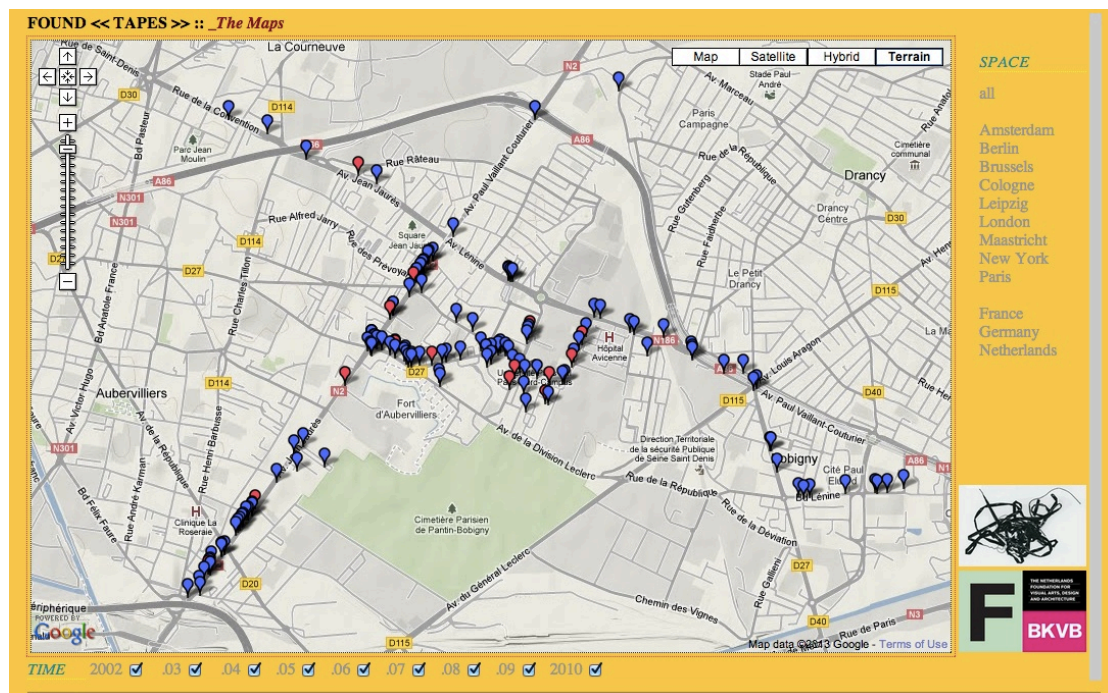
In 2003, when Ameland had only recently received a connection to the internet worthy of that name, the ookoi were commissioned by hotel-gallery *Dit Eiland* to create an interactive online sound map of the island. The duo roamed Ameland on foot and on bicycle, with portable audio cassette machines, recording sheep, wind, bells, sea, birds, wind, birds, sea, bells, sheep and wind. Sounds that, in those pre-Google maps days, were subsequently integrated in a Flash animation, enabling one to virtually retrace the ookoi's paths and listen to the island [3, Geluideiland].

It is thus that the isle of Ameland became the ookoi's principal instrument, of which, over the years, they became and remained the only and ever more virtuosic players.



## Locative Magnetic Media

Maps continued to be among the ookoi's multiple focal points, via the documentation in location, text, image and sound (since 2002) of publicly discarded magnetic media, i.e. the tape trash that, until a couple of years ago, was ubiquitous pretty much everywhere in public space, due to the massive use of audio compact cassettes as sound carriers in personal (walkman) and car stereo equipment which meanwhile has become obsolete. A-chronically projecting the Found Tapes Exhibition's combination of tape trash travelogue and digital archive, the Found Tapes Maps draw the patterns of the ookoi's quotidian movements within a timespan of more than a decade via markers of locations of media debris that they stumbled upon. The corresponding sounds emanating from the restored, mostly badly degraded, magnetic media supports moreover sketch the contours of a surprising sonic sociography of our cities and their neighbourhoods [4, FTE].



## Locative Sound: Universalia

The ookoi's in-depth exploration and exploitation of the sonic universe of the isle of Ameland has included collaborations with, among others, a local brass band (the *Hollumer Gromkes*), a local singer-songwriter (Martin de Boer), a local vocal ensemble (*Vocalis*) and a local beachcomber (Dirk Visser). It included a resplendent eight hours live audio art stream performance that saw the green-tailed duo high up in the vintage metal lighthouse of Hollum as its temporary keepers. It brought you 'l'Ecoute', a soundless one hour public screen flex time (*jamkaret*) video, shot on one of the island's soccer fields; the acclaimed 'Muziektafel/Tafelmuziek (2004)' CD [5, MT]; '2525' [6, 2525] and other films of different durations; '1024', a random walk through a set of 1024 local sonic snippets each lasting precisely seven seconds, originally programmed for playback on DVD, but recently re-published as a HTML5 web application [7,

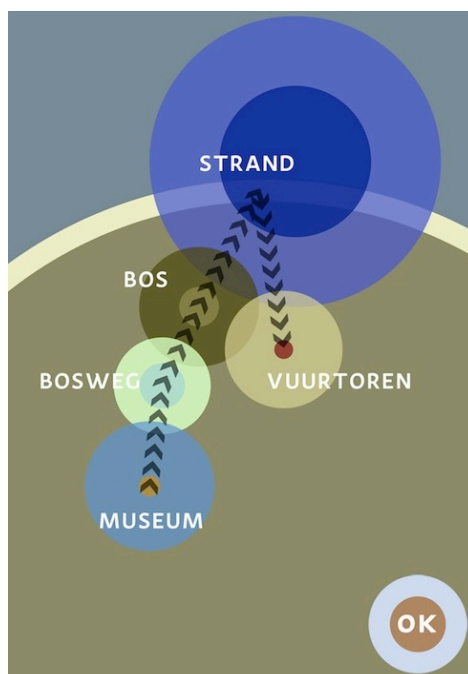
1024]; 'Wudy wudy', an as yet unpublished animation movie (*machinima*) situated – of course – on the isle of Ameland; and still more, more, more...



*Locative or not: iThings*

Almost all of the ookoi's highly localized sound works are globally accessible via their application for iPhone and iPad, RAUDIO IIIII, a collection of 21 +1 no-beginning no-end 24/7 streaming audio art channels, which by their very nature lack any possible restriction as to place or time [8, RAUDIO].

Such restrictions obviously *are* at work in 'Wandelzand', a GPS empowered iPhone 'sing along' sound walk application for Ameland, commissioned in 2013 by the *Stichting Archipel* [9, Wandelzand]. In order to experience 'Wandelzand' one has to undertake a trip to and on the island.



There a user of the app is guided and ultimately abandoned by the untrustworthy poetic Rambler *Zander*, from the museum in Hollum, via the woods, on to the beach, and then to the light house, through cycling circular sections of sounds and sonic fog that is as much the ookoi's as it is originating locally, there and then on the island. For could there by now be a difference at heart?

### *Schizophrenia* [10, SchPh]

The schizophrenic disconnection of music and sounds from their original physical sources, and hence from their original location in space and time, was possible only through the discovery and subsequent development of the technologies of sound recording, storage and transmission. The schizophrenic aural experience is a very *modern* one. But in the course of the past fifty, sixty years it has become a predominant mode of human hearing. Today but few listeners still realize that until not so very long ago it took a trip to Paris to be able to hear – within a certain limited number of strictly defined temporal borders – the majestic reverberation of the Notre Dame pipe organ, and not just the pushing of a button, in your limo somewhere on the highway between New York and Washington or in a chair on the lawn of your Abkhazian dacha, at any moment in time. And it is only now that we are able to experience soundscapes from regions at a faraway distance in space and/or in time otherwise than exclusively via a rendering in words, grumbles and gestures by someone that has been there and came back again.

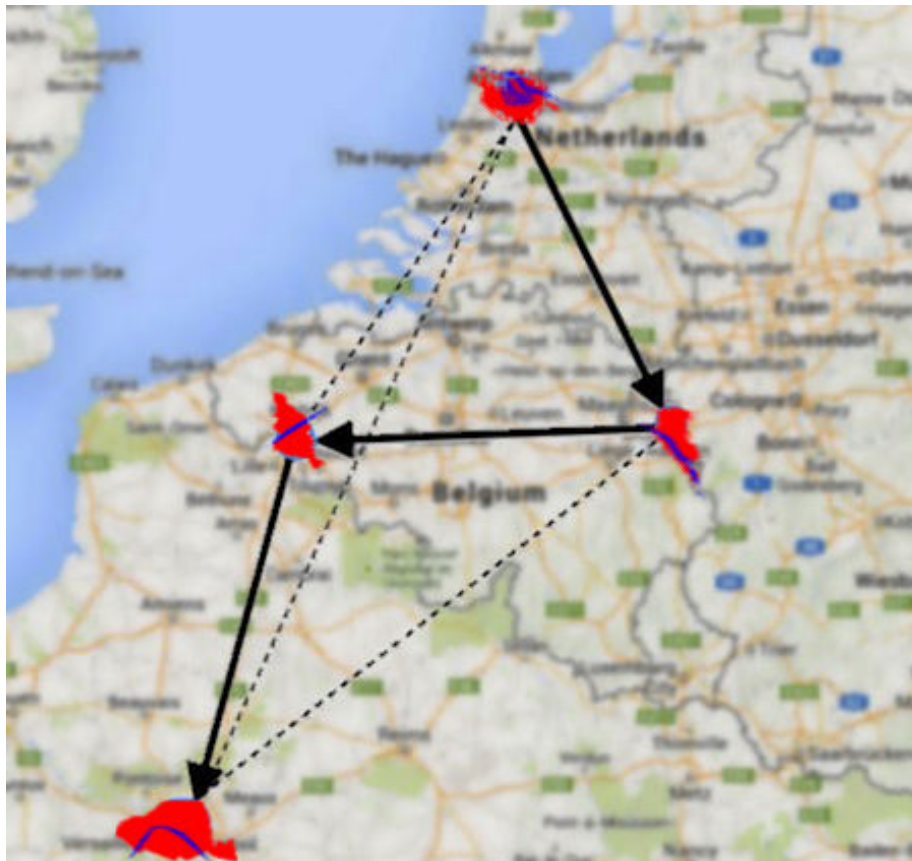
Even more recently it also has become almost unimaginable that a *physical* effort is required of a listener in order to access recorded sounds and music. Whereas in the pre-digital and pre-internet age it often took a lot of patience and many a trip to many a record store to track down a sought after vinyl disc, cassette tape or CD, the recent, still ongoing, digitization and storage in 'the cloud' of all thinkable sound recordings has made almost anything accessible at any time from anywhere via a multitude of internet channels.

### *Localized Future Popp: HIER*

These are among the considerations that have led to HIER, the ookoi's latest work: a four track EP released as a GPS empowered iPhone application, which limits playback of each of the four tracks to a specific European city [11, HIER]. The first track can only be heard in Amsterdam (nl), the second one only in Heerlen (nl), the third one only in Kortrijk (be) and the final one only in Paris (fr).

HIER is based upon recordings made by the ookoi during the *Cultuurnacht* at *Kunstencentrum Signe* in Heerlen (nl), on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2013. Whereas Harold Schellinx at that time indeed was physically present in *KuS*, Peter Mertens was at home in Amsterdam and joined him virtually, via a streaming audio connection: from *daar* to *hier*. The ookoi's live performance, schizophrenic and dislocated, at the very beginning of that night's events, was neither seen nor heard by anybody, not even – arguably – by the ookoi themselves. It is also – but not only – for this reason that the space-time warping duo speaks of their art as: *Future Popp*.

Here is a map showing HIER's very basic geo-metrics.



A user of the app who wants to experience all of HIER will have to make a city tour. From *hier* to *hier* to *hier* to *hier*... She may of course start in any of the pyramid's four vertices, and do the HIER-tour in any of the 24 possible ways, over any period of time that will suit her. (It is a very patient work...)

The current version of the app, HIER 1.0, is limited to this track-by-track, city-by-city, playback of the EP. The update to HIER 2.0, available later this year, will allow owners of the app to store the tracks that they accessed locally, in a playlist for subsequent playback. But that playback will only be possible when a user is not in one of the four playback enabled locations.

It has to be that way.

For almost everybody, almost almost always, is NOT hier...

*(Kortrijk - May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014)*

STDUIO OOKOI

HIER

YOU ARE NOT HIER

but only 2619 kms from Paris

and 2837 kms from Kortrijk

GO TO AMSTERDAM, KORTRIJK, HEERLEN OR PARIS  
A LOCALIZED WORK OF FUTURE POPP

### *Notes, links and references*

[1, ULTRA] Harold Schellinx – *ULTRA. Opkomst en ondergang van de Ultramodernen, een unieke Nederlandse muziekstroming (1978-1983)*. Lebowski, Amsterdam 2012. ISBN 978 90 488 1240 0

[2, ParisOK] <http://soundblog.bandcamp.com/track/parisok>

[3, Geluideiland] <http://oud.diteiland.nl/sounds/>

[4, FTE] <http://www.harsmedia.com/Chronson/FT/Maps/>

[5, MT] <http://soundblog.bandcamp.com/album/tafelmuziek-muziektafel-2004>

[6, 2525] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd2Twd7rW04>

[7, 1024] <http://www.harsmedia.com/1024/ynoty1024.html>

[8, RAUDIO] <https://itunes.apple.com/app/raudio-iiii/id336199314?mt=8>

[9, Wandelzand] <http://wandelzand.ookoi.nl/>

[10, SchPh] Schizophonia is a term coined by the Canadian composer and writer R. Murray Schafer for the splitting of a sound and its electroacoustic reproduction. Even though it intuitively seems to be obvious, it is an interesting question and open to debate what, in the context of a sounding sound, is the meaning of the adjective 'original'.

[11, HIER] <https://itunes.apple.com/nl/app/id866983849?mt=8>