

Unfamiliar territory

alternative landscape reading of disturbed sites' particularities

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Abstract

In an age when it is becoming increasingly apparent that disturbed sites (or any other sites for that matter) can never be fully managed, nor can their future development be entirely predetermined, this paper looks at disturbed sites' landscape as a complex and metastable system. While it deals with disturbed sites in particular, more broadly it aims to encourage a general re-examination of landscape design that relies on the world in harmonious balance and the experience of visual pleasure, which, according to long-established structures, may please or offer timeless experiences but in most cases hold little power and no potential to change, enhance or diminish (our own) bodily capacities to act – to stimulate thought, influence ideas, judgements and desires.

In order to explore ways of moving away from the desire for a stable portrayal of 'the natural' that often motivates disturbed sites' immediate ecological remediation and later programmatic transformation, the paper firstly, in order to clarify the understanding of the proposed alternative, imagines landscapes where such an approach is driven to extreme. Next, it places focus on the concept of territory and through the processes behind territory-making argues for a rethinking of the common ways of reading, intervening in and representing complex (in this case disturbed) sites. Alongside this, it proposes a reinterpretation of the notion of place, presents an alternative search for 'the specific' and questions what could specificity, once cleared of any 'essence', actually stand for.

Ideas and concepts developed throughout this paper begin with writings on territory by Deleuze and Guattari on one side, with further elaborations by Bogue, Brighenti, Grosz, and others. On the other side, ideas of post-humanism and new materialism provide a new view on disturbed sites to broaden the conception of territory as a relational, process-driven and open-ended mode of organization. They are accompanied by diagrammatic mappings that describe and analyse a very particular place – Fort de Vaujours, an abandoned uranium-contaminated site near Paris.

Keywords

territory; specificity, dynamism; disturbed sites; landscape architecture

Landscape and the Familiar

Identifying particular places goes beyond the spatial understanding that forms the basis of appreciating landscape's particularity in itself. In cultural terms, landscape is everything around us that we see at a particular moment in time (Cassels and Badrock, 2016). Therefore, to understand a piece of territory as landscape at its most basic requires two things: vision and distance. Furthermore, it means to convey the territory through the medium of a static picture frame and charge it with values conditioned by a particular larger cultural framework. It means to familiarize and normalize it in order to understand it and make it operative.

Such distancing, along with familiarization and appropriation, transforms territory into landscape, objectified by human gaze, and allows for the reinforcement of distance between polar terms such as culture and nature, human and non-human. Operating from such a privileged position, territory becomes viewed as a commodity to be exploited for economic development, political interests, technological growth, and more generally, for whatever human needs reside in contemporary culture at any given time. In this way the interpretation of nature is always a political act, heavily charged with cultural projections and the idealized image of the 'natural'.

Following on from this understanding, one way of contextualising landscape architecture would be to view it as a boundary-drawing practice, familiarizing selected pieces of land by means of framing, allowing certain processes to unfold and certain practices to take place. Landscape architecture is traditionally regarded as the curator of the land for 'the good of the people' and when the fixation with the stable and the familiar is driven to extreme, its boundaries become fixed, marking out a territory presented as familiar landscape, characterised by words such as good, predictable, balanced and safe. Myths of nature's equilibrium, manageability and human control remain in place, making the issues regarding comfort, pleasure, the pristine and the authentic, and the search for permanent solutions, etc. prime topics informing landscape design.

For the purposes of comparison, and in order to clarify the understanding of the proposed alternative approach, let us imagine such an extreme characterisation of one specific area of interest – transformations of disturbed sites. While this is not to suggest that there are no exceptions to the approach to such landscapes as described below, the characterisation serves as a point of departure to form an argument for the rethinking that is required.

Disturbed sites result as the by-product of economic, political and social decisions that view nature as commodity and accept environmental degradation as an inevitable result of technological progress and economic growth. After ceasing to provide us with necessary space or resources, they themselves go through the same mechanisms of projection and familiarization through the masking of the violence done to the land. With the use of the image of the 'natural' and the carefully drawn boundaries marking out what is allowed to be seen, practised, experienced or even thought of, they become what is by now an all too familiar image of predictable and scripted nature subservient to human needs. What stays (or becomes) obscured and hidden are the relations between different actors in space (and their outcomes) that transformed the territory into what we now perceive as an 'unhomely' landscape. Disturbed sites are extensively complex and uncertain, composed of human and non-human, material and chemical flows, natural, social and industrial processes that cannot be isolated or described solely by relying on the 'measurable' nature of ecology.

Instead of remaking them into fixed and generalized images of the familiar, they call for an approach that would focus on relations between different actors that together compose such landscapes and would,

through landscape reading and potential design intervention, acknowledge the past, present and future processes on site. The complexity of such sites cannot be read simply by observing what lies on the surface, nor can it be immediately recognized by the naked eye. Rather, the task is to go beyond the purely visual domain, move beyond mere representation and see beyond things, to change the register and become consciously involved in the continuous processes of landscape production (O'Sullivan, 2001). In these great times, changing the order of things (or in fact any order of things) might seem pretty far-fetched, but it is possibly only when this occurs that new viewpoints can be found and new practices established.

Fort de Vaujours

In order to develop and describe a methodological transgression of landscape reading that goes beyond the visual domain and focuses on what things do, how they are formed and how they could be otherwise, this paper applies theoretical concepts and research findings to a specific site of interest – Fort de Vaujours.

Fort de Vaujours and its surrounding area are a specific case among the many unfamiliar territories around us. They are leftover products of a particular territorial production where different human actors use overcoding (a series of “*phenomena of centering, unification, totalization, integration, hierarchization, and finalization*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)) to categorise, divide and appropriate the earth in order to achieve their political or economic aims. Such places are commonly characterised by unfamiliarity, uselessness and disorder, regarded as having little or no value as they contradict our idealised image of ‘the natural’ (or the ‘cultural’). Keeping such places outside the discourse reinforces thinking in opposing dualities and continues to view their development as something outside of the domain of human society, albeit subservient to it and therefore possible to control.

Fort de Vaujours, an abandoned uranium-contaminated area near Paris, has been the subject of power struggles, territorial claims and conflicting interests from the day it was envisioned, created and named. It was built at the end of the 19th century, primarily for the purposes of defending the city, but during the Second World War was transformed firstly into a German military base and later into a research centre for France’s Atomic Energy Commission or CEA. For four decades the site was used as a nuclear weapons testing site, where scientists detonated hundreds of miniature bombs containing combinations of natural or depleted uranium and explosives. Before moving to one of the nuclear testing bunkers, these explosions took place outdoors, with radioactive debris found within a one-kilometre radius of the fort. At present, the site is exposed to radiation, closed-off, and demolition of buildings is underway, as the grounds are planned to be excavated as part of a new gypsum mine. It has been stated that the excavation pit will later be covered with a fresh layer of clean soil, creating a ‘natural’ place, a forest rich in biodiversity.

Approaching Disturbed Sites through Territorology

In order to rethink the common ways of reading, intervening in and representing disturbed sites this research focuses on territorology, a general science of territory as developed by Andrea Mubi Brighenti, which views territory as a relational, process-driven and open-ended mode of organization. Therefore, research focused on territory does not focus on territory as a given but rather on how territories are established, by way of which processes, and on their material and affective outcomes.

Territory is, at least in political geography, mostly known as an organized and bounded area of sovereign states. However, as Brighenti argues, the simple interchangeability between territory and state is highly questionable. Territory as *“the passive spatial recipient of the state”* can never be ultimately established, nor can it fully delimit and control the variety of spatial functions and processes intertwining within its borders (Brighenti, 2010). Building on Foucault and Deleuze, Brighenti proposes looking at territory from a relational perspective, where *“territory appears precisely as what keeps sovereignty and government together”* (Brighenti, 2010). Power relations that are usually primarily discussed in relation to territoriality are not excluded in this approach, and are important, if not sufficient, in describing the workings of a territory. Thus, territories are never static entities but active processes of de- and re-territorialisation (decontextualization and repurposing); they are effects of relations rather than objects in themselves. As soon as new actors appear or old ones disappear and new territorial markers are set up or old ones change, territories reconfigure. Brighenti’s dynamic approach expands the understanding of territory from a delimited and controlled geographic area to the production and reproduction of territories through interactions. Borders and subsequent control over the area are seen as results of territorialisation; they are the material outcomes of social relationships. What is important is that they could be otherwise - in territory-making borders do not precede the socio-material processes that set them up (Brighenti, 2010). Turning to Fort de Vaujours, it would make little sense to speak of it only in terms of a certain arrangement of political or economic power, without taking into account the technologies, practices, various human and non-human agents and their social relations that have transformed and continue to transform it.

There are multiple forms of territorializing and multiple actors territorialize. Territorial animals, for instance, mark their territories using scent markers or visual and auditory signals, with the main aim of controlling resources. This enables them to have control over a certain area, to increase individual fitness and freely reproduce (Bogue, 2003). While markers used by animals are of various kinds and are often intangible, building fences and walls as the most common practice of securing territory is exclusively human. However, it should be noted that while territory exists as a bounded entity, its boundaries can materialize in multiple, or infinite, ways, and may be implicit or even invisible (Brighenti, 2010). Territory’s edges can be marked by phenomenon, forest edge, the trunk of a tree, a ditch, hedges, stones, variation in material, etc. In this way, territory is freed from connotations that link it to large-scale tracts of land, or organized and bounded areas of sovereign states, to become conceptualized as a mode of organization, as an act or a practice, rather than a physical space that precedes the relations and inscriptions that define it. Territory becomes an ordering device that exists across different scales, creates space for interaction, and in turn needs interaction to exist. It is defined through and along the emergence of matters of expression - markers that tie territory to expressivity, which precedes territorial domination or aggression. (Bogue, 2003) Markers put forward territory’s initial construction, describing how new forms of expression (new territorial markers) emerge, mark spaces and consequently give rise to territory. Particular markers transform space into a specific place that consequently becomes something more than mere location but does not yet obtain an ‘identity’.

In comparing territory to landscape, it could be said that while an understanding of landscape always involves the setting up of borders, striving for stability and a final perceived image, territory, as a relational construct, is inherently unstable. This is not to suggest that territories and landscapes cannot coexist, overlap or move from one to the other. However, this initial emphasis puts forward from the outset the idea of territorial production rather than a landscape image. In this way, approaching disturbed sites through territory-making initially involves looking into processes and relevant relations as well as into territories' functional and expressive components. Secondly, it proceeds from the understanding of territory to a renewed understanding of landscape, landscape design and landscape project. To bring territorology into discussion about landscape is an attempt to move away from the environmental and landscape discourse that praises change on the surface, yet below the neatly maintained green carpet hides an enduring conservatism that fears unrestrained emergence and continues to embrace landscape manageability, stability and homogeneity of landscape experience. To think of territory is to think primarily about how things might be done differently, how we could forget about landscape as totality and rather think of it as being always incomplete, actively contributing to the search for alternative futures while showing that the world is not set in stone.

The proposed methodology that focuses on reading the site through territorology involves three parts (three analytico-synthetic tools) – two mappings / diagrammatic representations and an experiment that tries to communicate the affective side of 'unhomely' landscapes. Each of the parts draws out the specificities of the site as found and works towards designing-from-within. While all three components are applied to the site in order to approach it as a complex system, produce alternative descriptions and later inform the design, the first and second components are the ones that serve as a basis to move towards design stage. Their outcomes and use in the design process are described below.

Describing Complexity

Landscape architecture uses landscape reading to try to provide answers to questions such as: What is a landscape? What defines a particular landscape? Where lies 'the particular'? What is most significant and characteristic of the site? What were the natural and cultural processes that produced it? What is the most appropriate form of intervention? and so on. Landscape reading conventionally focuses on landscape analytical methodologies that gather information about the site through collection and interpretation of the site's largely measurable qualities. Such reading examines the 'nature' of the site by looking into natural factors (geology, soil, topography, vegetation, animal life and climate), historical factors (development, cultural significance and heritage) and human factors (social aspects, landscape experience, spatial and visual quality). To a large extent, the measurable, 'ecological' values prevail, being understood as 'objective' information about the reality of the site. Since values that are more or less immeasurable, such as cultural significance, social aspect or landscape experience cannot be simply traced and mapped out, they are transformed into categories that, at best, only partially cover what they initially demanded - recording of age, patterns of use, smell, light, colour, etc. (Raxworthy, 1997) Gathered data is most commonly communicated through mappings or diagrammatic representations of different layers that come together to form a piece of landscape. Once mapped out, these layers serve as a powerful tool to find connections and relationships between different landscape components, though the relations that initially produced the chosen layers remain unquestioned.

Timeline / Virtual diagram

In order to go beyond the strictly physical location or visual expression of landscape components and to describe the conditions that led to materialization of both – their location and expression, the first part of the proposed reading approaches the site as a complex entanglement of various processes and agents, impossible to isolate and divide between distinct layers. It does not put emphasis on preformed layers but on the relations that produced those layers – it traces patterns of activity and agency (what happened, how it happened, which agents were present) and looks at the processes of the site's production (Fig. 1-6). It focuses on groupings of diverse agents that occupied and intervened in the site during the selected interval, and serves as a tool to describe its objective material conditions. Human and non-human processes/actors are considered on an equal basis, differentiated only in terms of the visibility of their effects and the agency they possess during a certain period. Once described, the understanding that underlies the connection between the site's materialization, and the processes of its production at any given time, serves as a useful tool to move towards design stage as it makes it possible to speculate on future distribution of various actors and its spatial outcome. It is important to emphasize that this type of reading is by no means sufficient to obtain the whole picture of the site. Rather, it is a promising start to begin to describe it.

The diagram should be read from left to right (horizontal axis deals with site's past, presents and future – fig. 2, 3, 6) and from top to bottom (vertical axis focuses on selected interval of 150 years to describe the processes of site's production in more detail – fig. 3, 4, 5).

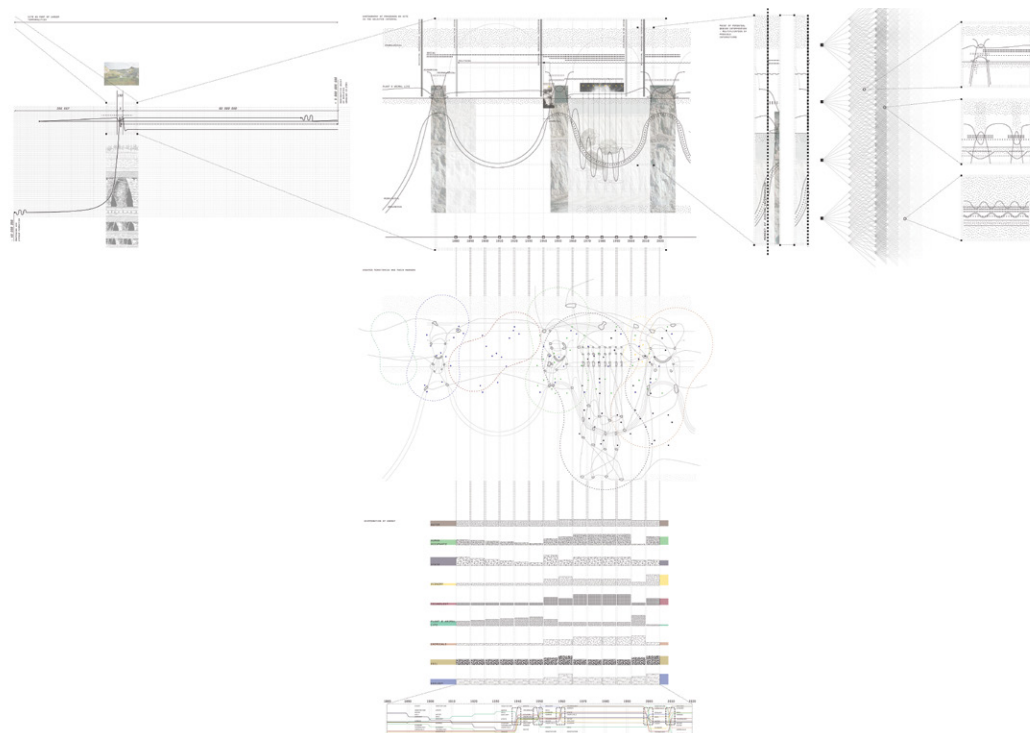


FIGURE 1 Processes of site's production.

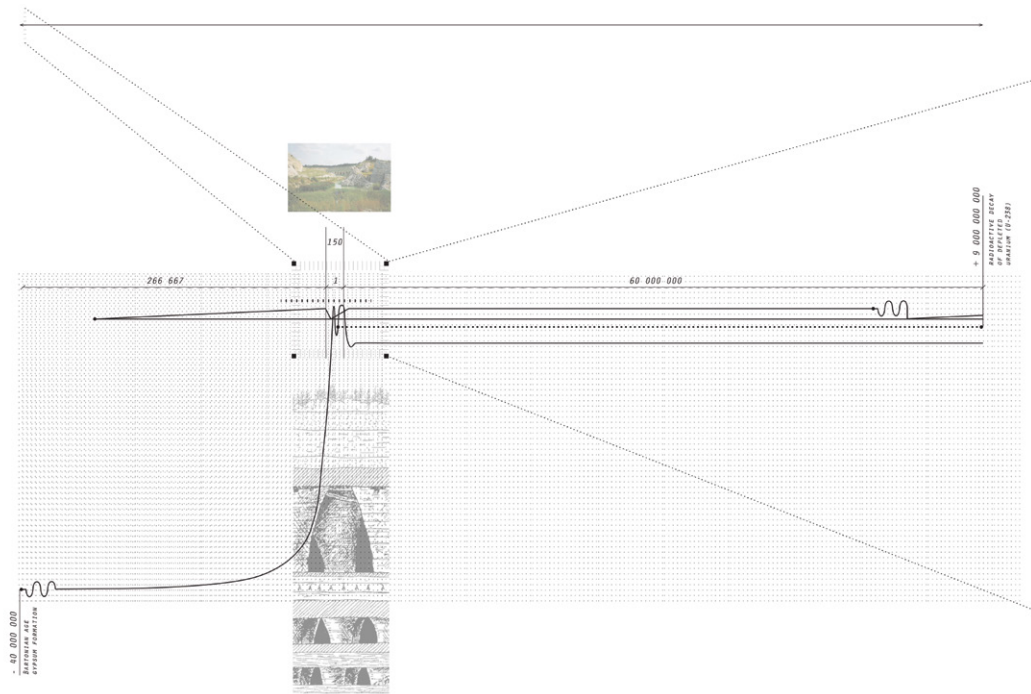


FIGURE 2 Timeline part 1. The timeline begins by positioning the site in the context of larger temporalities. In the case of Fort de Vaujours this means, on one side, the geologic past that formed the area and on the other side the long nuclear future. The last 150 years (the period of constant human presence on site) are marked, and presented as definitive in the future development of the site. (Diagram by author with image sources from: Carrières de gypse Vaujours. Retrieved from <http://fr.topic-topos.com/carrieres-de-gypse-vaujours>; Munier, D. Schéma montrant l'exploitation des trois masses de gypses reliées par des puits d'extraction. Retrieved from <http://ruedeslumieres.morkitu.org/apprendre/gypse/>) doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1501

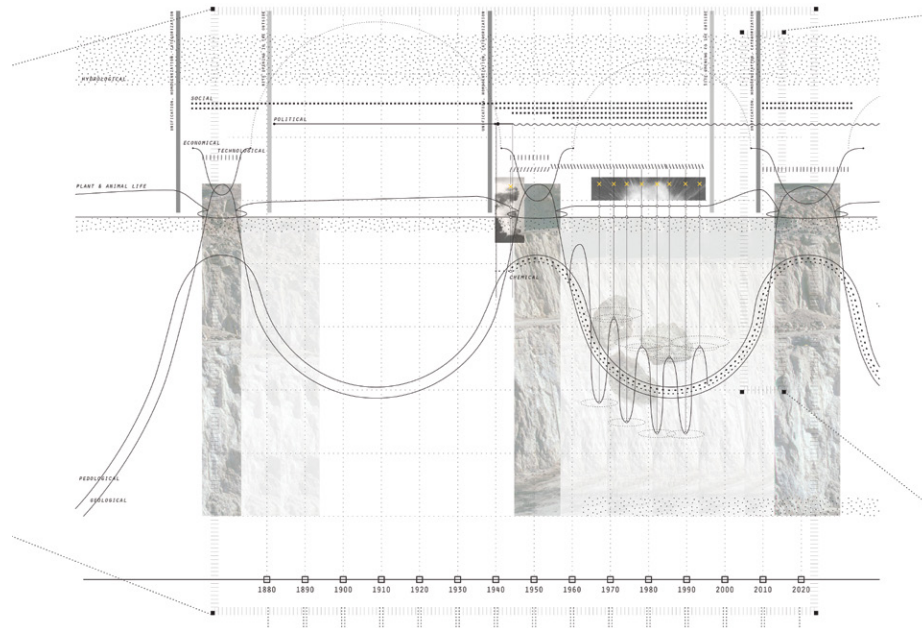


FIGURE 3 Timeline part 2. This section of the diagram describes the processes that shaped the site during the selected interval, looks at their interactions and traces moments when transformation occurred - points when relations were liberated or reaffirmed. (Diagram by author with image sources from: Raudin, M. Explosion de munitions au fort de Vaujours. Retrieved from <http://sauvons.dhuis.fr/page/2/>; Archive CEA., Tir froid à l'air libre. Retrieved from <http://sauvons.dhuis.fr/page/2>, 2014). doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1502

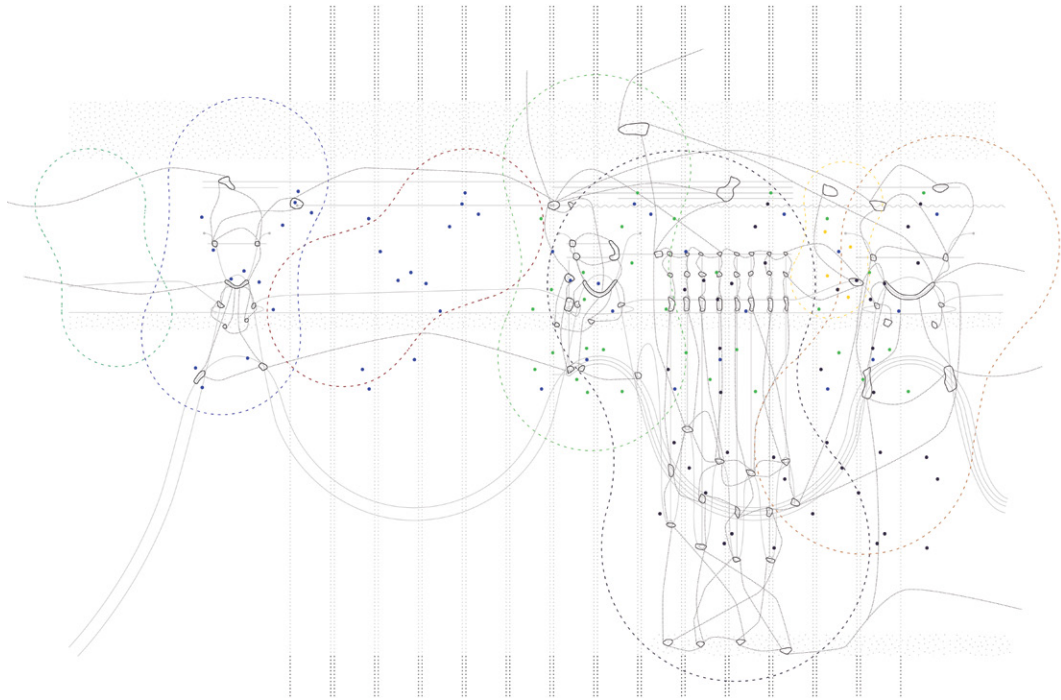


FIGURE 4 Timeline part 3. This part traces moments when particular interactions between processes in the same interval left a mark in space and created a territory. The mapping tries to show how territories shift, overlap and move from one to another, and how certain markers may be destroyed, while others are changed or retained. It should be mentioned that this mapping only maps a small selection of territories on site and only those that are perceivable from a large 'site scale'. More than being a completely accurate description of all the territories that took place in the selected interval, this mapping serves as a tool to begin to visualize and work with the theoretical findings.
 doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1503

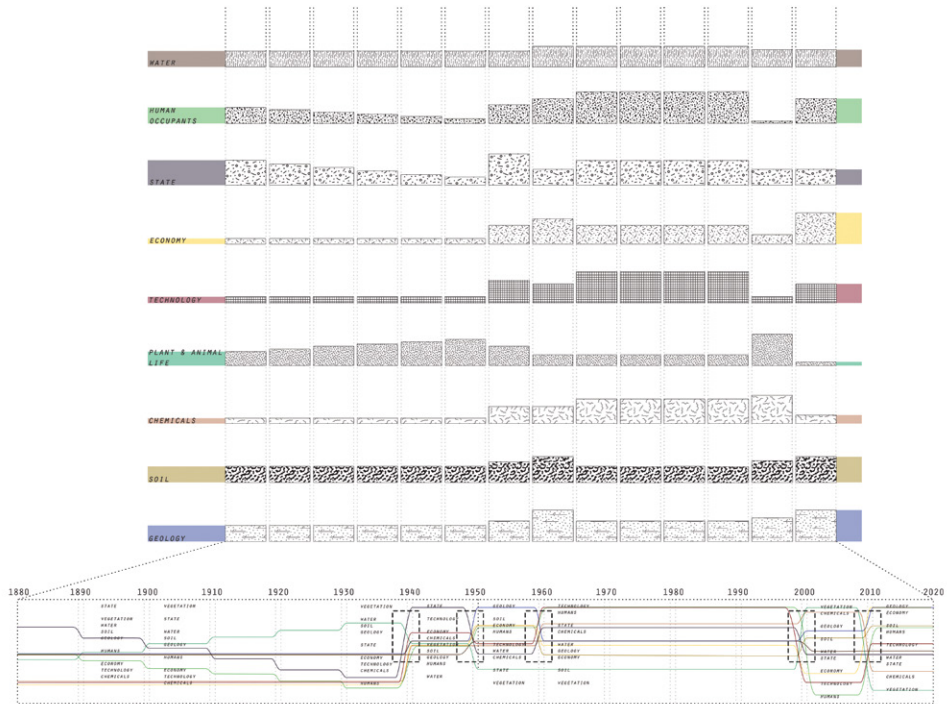


FIGURE 5 Timeline part 4. This part looks at the distribution of the agents that shaped the site in the same selected interval. It focuses on points when the agency possessed by different agents changed, resulting in site transformation and its effects.
 doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1504

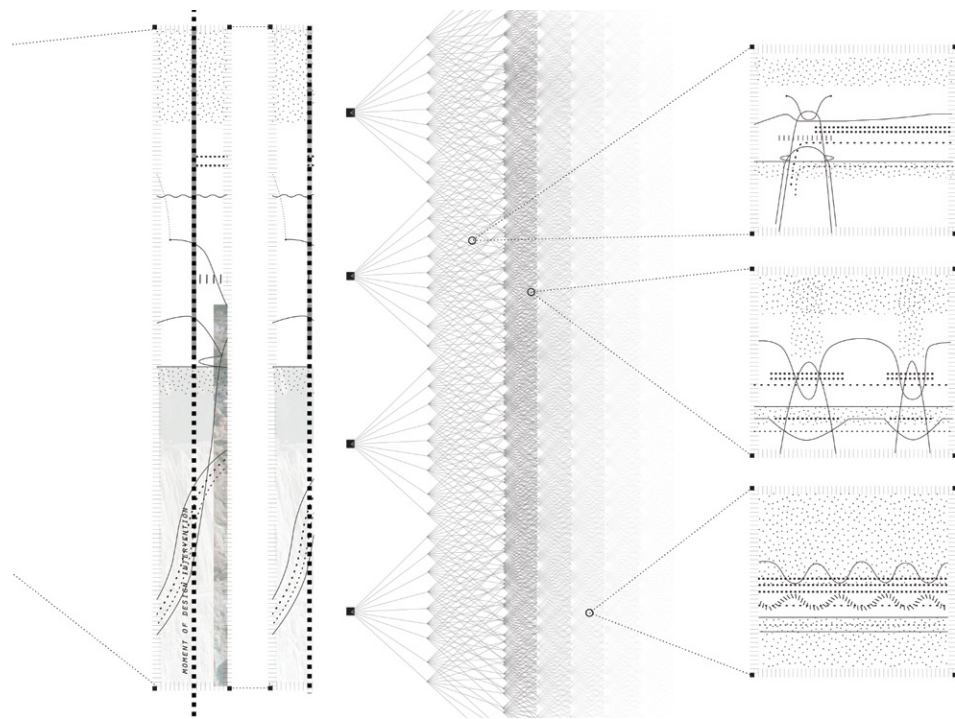


FIGURE 6 Timeline part 5. Last section of the diagram speculates on site's future and marks a point of potential design intervention, which is understood here as a guided choreography of processes directed towards multiple possible interactions and creative connections. It aims to show how an intervention could strive for diversity, and open up possibilities instead of close them. Three moments in the course of site development are isolated to show the possible distribution of different processes and practices at those chosen times.
doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1505

Locating 'The Particular'

Every territory works through a certain rhythm or repetition that sets up the theme for the marking of space. (Wise, 2000:302) In landscape, these rhythms are not so much landscape processes (when purely functional) but rather practices and actions that acquire a dimensional, spatial component through markers. However, landscape processes should not be completely neglected - there are many that shape landscape in such a way that certain qualities or matters of expression are produced (erosion, freezing, corrosion, sedimentation, drought, industrialization, deforestation, etc.).

Rhythms form a set of relations produced by landscape components, and the way they come together into a territory is part of its specificity, of 'the particular'. For instance, foxes, as territorial animals, leave scent markers on prominent landmarks or otherwise visually conspicuous elements such as hedges, fences, tree stumps, rocks, etc. While it is they who leave the markers and defend their territory, a whole set of relations between the fox, fox's urine, the potentially marked elements, included and excluded space, area's species distribution, fox's predators, etc. is an experimental, space and time specific, territorial assemblage that sets up the theme for the marking of space. Importantly, this kind of understanding removes any 'essence' from specificity and we could say that when searching for 'the specific' one might be searching in vain if not acknowledging that 'the particular' lies in landscape's dynamism, changes through scales and is always, when pinned down, given a certain duration. It is heavily determined by the chosen way of looking at it, and never pre-exists.

Territorial Markers

In order to find 'the specific' from where to form the basis of a design intervention, the second part of the proposed landscape reading involves looking deeper into a set of markers that together bring about a territory (in this case the territory of Fort de Vaujours). Similar to the previously explained part of site's analysis, the selection of markers is described through diagrammatic mappings that go beyond the visual domain and trace ongoing processes and practices on site as well as the distribution of agency that led to the materialization of chosen markers in this particular moment in time (Fig. 7-10). However, in contrast to the previous mapping, the markers' diagrams do not focus on development in time but rather on the specific arrangement of conditions. They are to be seen as spaces of marker's capacities, meaning that they allow us to think of the unactualized capacities and tendencies of a marker - of what has yet to come. They make clear that markers are greatly intertwined with processes and are, when not fixed but temporary stabilized, always subject to change. They help us understand that an object is not only defined by its actual properties but also by its unactualized potentialities, by what may not yet be visible but is nevertheless imminently present, waiting for the right moment or the right trigger to actualize (Grosz, 2013). In this way, the mapping is not a matter of tracing or of description and representation only, but becomes an analytico-synthetic tool that can move on to 'territory-making', to invention.

Approaching the site through territorial markers means going beyond the strictly visual appearance to question what is it that brings about the production, not only of the site's territory but of a specific territorial marker (of a smaller territory inside the larger territory of the site) - it means looking into its inner territoriality, into its conditions of production. The arrangement of processes and relationships that forms a marker and shows us how it could develop further is part of landscape's specificity, of 'the particular'. Site specificity, therefore, is seen as relational specificity, as a particular arrangement of intensive differences that for a certain duration drive specific processes on site, as an arrangement that results in specific material configurations and spatial experiences. This kind of approach moves the search for specificity from the visual realm towards the processes of individuation - towards that which comes before the separation of the world into singular and discrete entities, in this case that which comes before the materialization of a marker.

Diagrams should be read separately, as each one focuses on a particular marker. In the centre of each diagram lies a satellite image of the marker's location along with a description. The top right corner of the diagram shows an image of an object taken from the marker's location along with a process or an actor that had the most influence along its development. Moving clockwise, one can find the most relevant processes/actors that shaped marker's location prior to direct human involvement. Further, moving to the left side of the diagram, are the processes/actors that are the result of human intervention on site, with the last one being possible design intervention (processes/actors that share relations with which a design intervention could possibly experiment are circled). Arrows mark points of interaction between different processes, showing how, through time, the relations that form a marker become more complex. Line widths that stand for a particular process/actor vary and change, based on their effect or the agency possessed by them during the marker's development. All the dots around and between the processes represent possible points when a marker had a particular spatial expression based on the overall arrangement of relations, with the top illustration showing its present materialization.

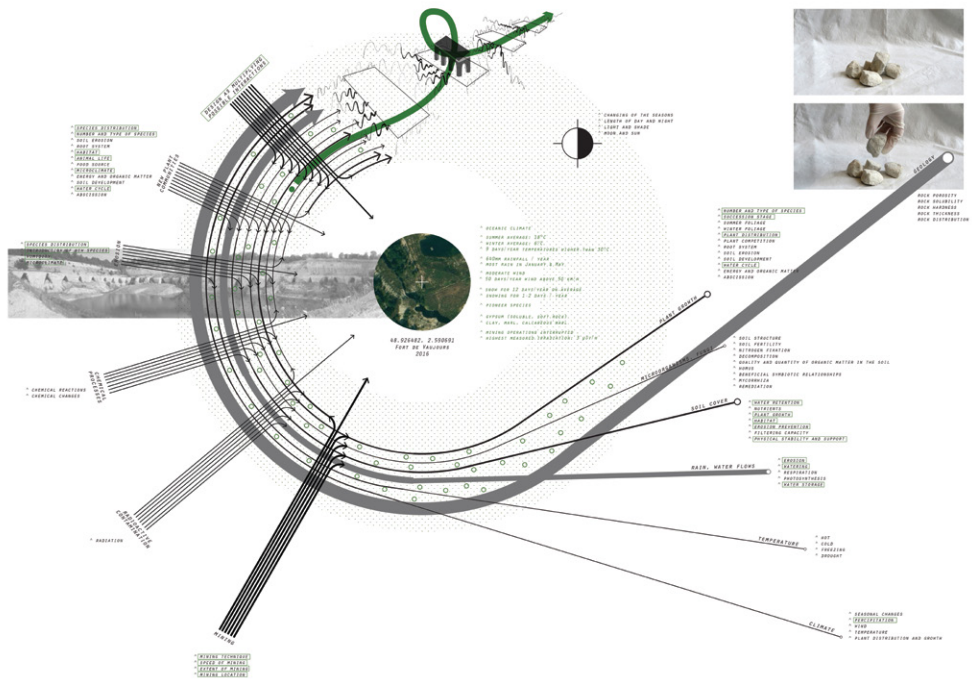


FIGURE 7 Post-mining gypsum quarry. (Diagram by author with image sources from: Carrière de gypse abandonnée de Vaujours. Retrieved from http://ruedeslumieres.morkitu.org/apprendre/gypse/histoire/index_histoire.html Zoom Earth. ©2016 GeoEye ©2016 InterAtlas ©2016 IGN ©2016 Blom Earthstar Geographics SIO ©2016 Microsoft Corporation. Retrieved from <https://zoom.earth/#48.927103,2.593213,17z,sat,2016>) doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1506

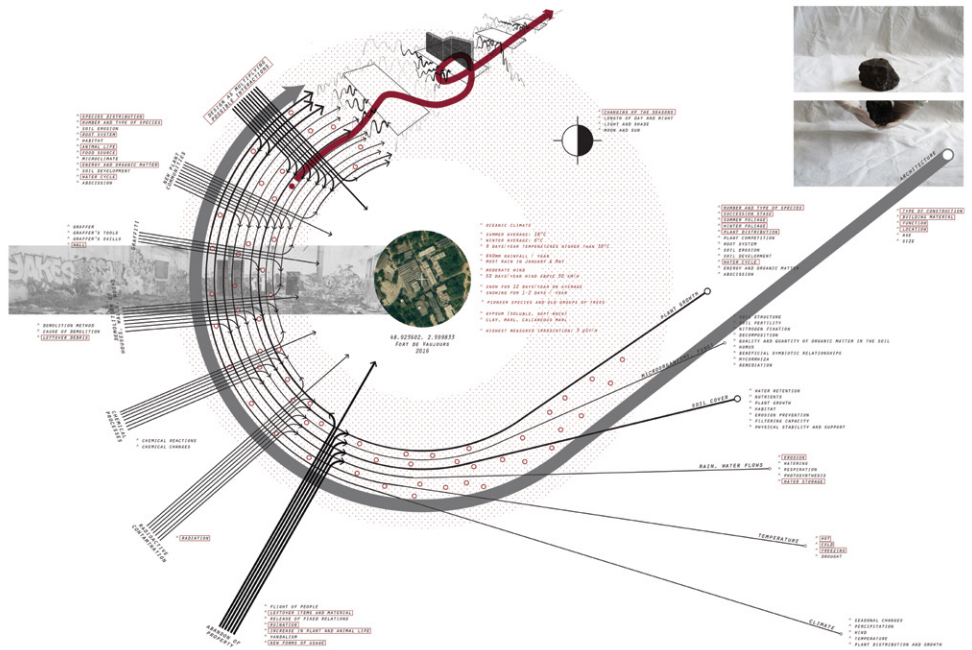


FIGURE 8 Building ruins and debris. (Diagram by author with image sources from: Zoom Earth. ©2016 GeoEye ©2016 InterAtlas ©2016 IGN ©2016 Blom Earthstar Geographics SIO ©2016 Microsoft Corporation. Retrieved from <https://zoom.earth/#48.923923,2.600069,17z,sat,2016>) doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1507

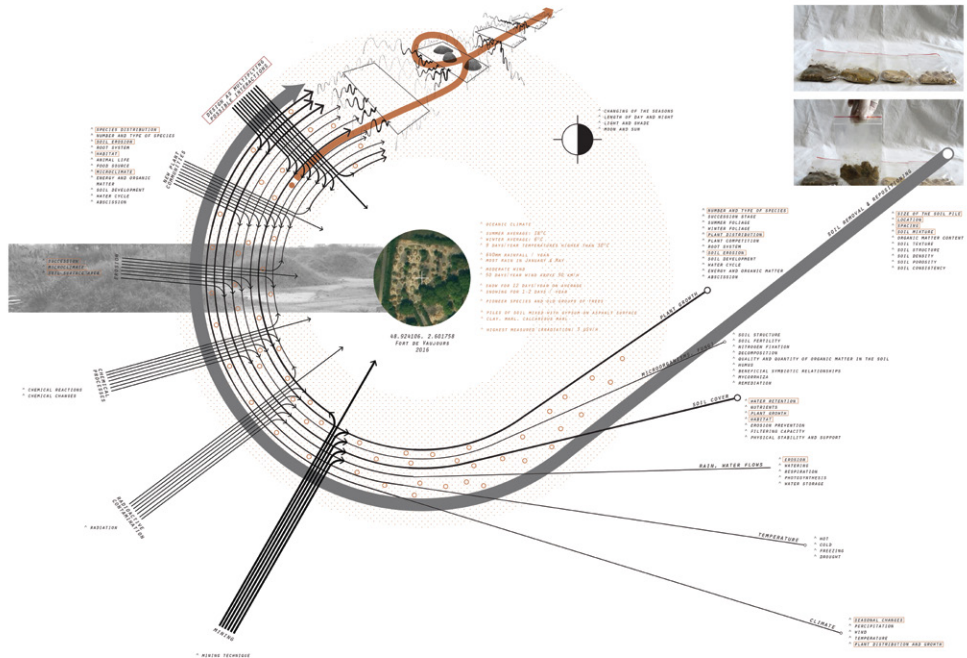


FIGURE 9 Soil piles. (Diagram by author with image sources from: Zoom Earth. ©2016 GeoEye ©2016 InterAtlas ©2016 IGN ©2016 Blom Earthstar Geographics SIO ©2016 Microsoft Corporation. Retrieved from <https://zoom.earth/#48.923923,2.600069,17z,sat,2016>) doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1508

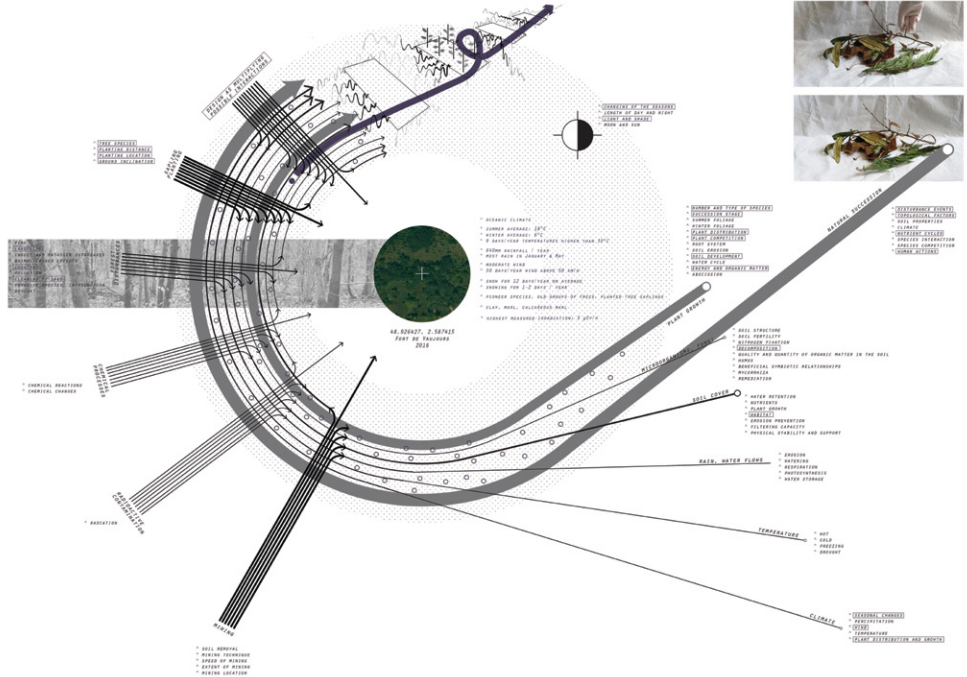


FIGURE 10 Pioneer woodland on top of old mining site. (Diagram by author with image sources from: Zoom Earth. ©2016 GeoEye ©2016 InterAtlas ©2016 IGN ©2016 Blom Earthstar Geographics SIO ©2016 Microsoft Corporation. Retrieved from <https://zoom.earth/#48.926623,2.586443,17z,sat,2016>) doi:10.7480/spool.2016.2.1111.g1509

Defining Place

Just as markers appear stable but are actually very much fleeting, so is 'place'. Despite the fact that we usually think of place as something fixed, a stable point in space that awaits our arrival and keeps on waiting, places are not static and are in fact constantly shifting. We change them just by living or they change according to the contingency of their surroundings. Places cannot be created once and for all; they require continual attempts at placemaking, continual interaction, and the setting up of a set of markers that invests space with quality that sets it apart. They are products of repetition and, produced by various assemblages of agents, result from a process of constant becoming (Massey, 1994). Rather than being there in a finalised or permanent state, they are time and space defined configurations of relations, a pause, a temporal interruption, specific but brief in their present formation. Like an assemblage of diverse components that expresses a distinct character and particular qualities only as long as its pattern of relations retains its composition. Therefore, when asked to intervene in a place, important questions one should consider are which relations are worth holding on to, for how long and at what cost, as well as what the proposed constellation of relations is capable of doing and what its possible patterns of changing may be.

Following the research on territorology, design intervention could be conceptualized in two ways. Firstly, one could start by changing the aim from the creation of a timeless landscape to proposing an intervention of a becoming-landscape / becoming-image instead. Becoming characterises events, encounters. An event is seen not as a definite outcome but as a synthesis generated in a given moment when different forces interact to produce something new and open up new relations (O'Sullivan, 2006). An ongoing separation and fusion where relations that become fixed are unleashed to enter into new entanglements. Becoming-landscape moves away from one final point to a space that strives for variety. It works with interactions of different processes and practices, where the role of the designer is to carefully study relations on and beyond the chosen site, propose a direction and guide the choreography of individual processes in order to temporally actualize a selection of potentialities present on site (Hiller & Abrahams, 2014). Secondly, in order to further elaborate the territory and, with precision, trigger what otherwise would not happen, design intervention could be approached as 'marking', as leaving more or less permanent traces that mark territories and are created and re-created under specific conditions. Such an approach does not pre-assign a final form to a landscape entity but designs for an open-ended future, leaving space for the unpredictable to evolve out of the site (Barnett, 2013). The outcomes of such an emergence are impossible to predefine but possible to guide and give direction - open-ended futures are in this way envisioned through precise definition. Designing in markers allows the marker to acquire a certain constancy, but recognizes that as such it is always already on its way to becoming-different as it alters and is altered by the processes that designing can never fully envision, let alone determine.

Conclusion

Disturbed sites are places where we are confronted with too much contingency to imagine a linear cause and effect relationship of how the site came to be or a simple action - solution plan of how to proceed. They are highly 'particular'. While this particularity expresses itself through their unknowability and unfamiliar appearance, even more particular are the underlying processes and relations on site that we now perceive as

'disturbed'. Particularity as presented in this paper moves beyond the purely visual domain to question what is it that brings about specific landscapes and particular places in the first place. It looks into the processes of a site's production to suggest that site's present particularity cannot really be captured once and for all – at best, it can be described and held on to until the moment when it transforms to become 'another kind of particular'. Such an understanding opens up possibilities to imagine how particularity could be redefined, how it could lead to seeing design intervention not as a complete or final thing but as a constant action.

An approach that looks into relations that produced either the entire site in question or a selected landscape component should not be understood as applicable to disturbed sites alone. In today's globalized world with its many complex landscapes, any given site should demand more than being simply read through the spectacles of subjectivity. Only once we are looking beyond mere appearance, can we begin to see that there is room for change and discover what it would take to move forward. Perhaps today true novelty (or novel particularity) will not come with constant progress but with things unmade, constraints released and relations set free.

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