Dilemmas and Delights of Designing with *Terrain Vague* and Postmodern Concepts

by

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Abstract

Title: Dilemmas and Delights of Designing with *Terrain Vague* and Postmodern Concepts

Solà-Morales’s *terrain vague* reconceptualises underused and derelict lands using a postmodernist lens concluding their worth is in their contrast to conventional space. However, this stands in opposition to the traditional modernist thought, which perceive these spaces as detritus, whose only value lies in its redevelopment. As postmodern thought gains traction in landscape architecture, the question of how designers respond and utilize the *terrain vague* context is becoming more relevant. Through a case study of three spaces that utilize their respective *terrain vague* conditions “as material” in their reimaging, this thesis explores the strategies and results of designers referencing this oft dismissed phase of neglect. Using a structured case study approach, this study finds that sites invoking *terrain vague* as context to their design invariably destroys the *terrain vague* condition, make temporality explicit in their new design, and employ an inclusive, multi-stakeholder design process.

**KEYWORDS:** urban design practice, postmodern design, lost spaces, interstitial spaces, temporal landscapes
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

An architecture of complexity and contradiction has a special obligation toward the whole — its truth must be in its totality of implications of totality. It must embody the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion.

The myriad social processes that act on our landscape impose an unfolding pattern of development and degeneration. Cities are living entities that change and renew over time: the dilapidated are renewed or replaced while the developed fall into neglect over time. Deindustrialization, economic stagnation, and sociopolitical conflict create landscapes that lose purpose starting with marginalization, obsolescence, and abandonment. Disused rail lines, quarries, and depopulated urban cores dot the landscape of North America and Europe just as the Roman ruins span the Mediterranean. Even though these spaces are geographically within the urban landscape, due to their obsolescence or poor planning and building practices, these spaces become virtual “non-spaces” where the city used to exist. These landscapes have been given various names, including: wasteland (Lynch & Carr, 1979/1990), lost space (Trancik, 1986), derelict land (Kivell & Hatfield, 1998), superfluous landscapes (Nielsen, 2002), vacant land (Northman, 1971), urban wildscapes (Sheridan, 2012), badlands, blank space, empty places, dead zones (Doron, 2007), and *terrain vague* (Solà-Morales, 1995). Each one of these terms strives to delineate aspects of these spaces to describe a sort of uniqueness from their surrounding, to establish a difference so that they can be understood, managed, and maybe even colonized.

Of note are two competing interpretations that illustrate the poles of conceptualizing these spaces. The first view generally criticizes the disorder that these spaces represent and recommends their transformation into normative urban space. In contrast, the
opposing view calls attention to the potential for these spaces to accommodate freedoms not experienced in an increasingly regulated urban environment.

Aligning to the first view, Roger Trancik’s *Finding Lost Space* (1986) laments losing a traditional cohesive network of pedestrian spaces in the city to the proliferation of what he terms *lost spaces*. These are the vacant, unused land in the urban core that forms major gaps in spatial continuity. Created by automobile centric urban planning, planning policies that favour single function land use, and substituting density at the ground level with high-rises erected on free flowing horizontal planes, these spaces often take the form of surface parking lots, sunken or raised plazas, highway edges, and abandoned waterfronts and industrial complexes. They fragment social spaces in the urban fabric, which in turn lower the vibrancy of residual social spaces. Trancik terms these non-social spaces *lost space* to signify their undesirability and potential to become “found space” once rehabilitated.

Ignasi De Solà-Morales (1995) coined the term *terrain vague* to encapsulate a different perspective on abandoned and derelict landscapes of the post-industrial metropolis. Unlike Trancik’s idea that lost space represents a *tabula rasa*, Solà-Morales re-examines these spaces under an optimistic lens in which abandonment, supposed lack of productivity, and marginality transpire a sense of excitement; its otherness avails itself to explorations and experimentations with urban experiences free of normative expectations in traditional public spaces. Instead of a loss in productivity, Solà-Morales sees a different set of productivity being played out in these spaces. These are spaces where artists seek inspiration or use as canvas, where urbanites can appropriate for recreation or social activities without fear of retribution from those who disagree. It is, in Solà-Morales words, a “refuge in the margins of the city precisely when the city offers them an abusive identity, a crushing homogeneity, a freedom under control” (1995 p.122).

These two competing views, one bemoaning disorder and economic stagnation while the other celebrating emancipation from a hegemony of capital and commerce, are
different in only their idealism (Lévesque 2002). The first view sees wasteland as contrary to the ideal city: an image of a prosperous, organized and plentiful urbenscape. Being vacant, unused or underused, and sometimes deteriorating is seen as interruption to the general “found space” and its otherness is a problem to be fixed. The underlying premise for this perspective, however, is merely a preference on what a functional city should look like. *Terrain vague* conversely places a romantic notion to escaping an increasingly homogenous and privatized urban experience where spontaneity and creativity live under the suffocating auspices of capital and political power. Ironically, it is precisely the out flow of capital that has created the contemporary urban realm from which spontaneity and creativity benefits. Further, in not suggesting that the dilapidation may foster more nefarious consequences such as illegal activity or overall citywide degeneration, is unrealistic at best.

These spaces are what they are: temporary voids where risk and opportunity coexist defined by intriguing irrationalities and vague limits (Careri 2014; Doron 2007; Königstein 2014). These are conventional places in holding, defined by a vagueness of fate (Lévesque 2014) and purpose (Radovic 2014). *Terrain vague* is not new (Doron 2007). As seen in revered cities of the world, human progress, violent interruptions, and natural reclamation leave vacancies on the cityscape, adding to the layered stories that together give a city its character. As cities change, the landscape undergoes cycles through form, function, and usefulness. This layered character, sometimes described as messy and organic (Jacobs 1961), is a prominent and attractive feature of the world’s successful cities (Florida 2003).

Moving forward, the question for designers is not which of the competing views should be legitimized, since one offers little in recognizing the beauty of marginalized spaces while the other regards little for the negative consequences of unfettered marginality. Solà-Morales (1995) suggests that the challenge to contemporary architects and urban designers is no longer in replicating the legitimated city using old traditions; rather, it is in creating new experiences without destroying the continuity of a place, including its *terrain vague* condition. Lévesque (2002)
hypothesizes a path that treats “terrain vague as material” for building new hybridized urban experience that neither prioritizes the temporary and natural, nor the permanent and planned, to effect an innovative landscape that expands the idea of urbanity. To consider “terrain vague as material,” then, is to draw on the qualities of terrain vague to create new landscapes that embrace both its decrepit and emancipatory qualities.

This thesis’s goal is to investigate how designers have responded to and utilized terrain vague in interventions. In addition to revealing the je ne sais quoi of using “terrain vague as material,” the research explores the consequences of intervening in terrain vague, since interventions undoubtedly change the characteristic and purpose of a landscape. Therefore the analysis will also answer the following questions:

- What is lost in the transformation from terrain vague to post-terrain vague?
- What terrain vague qualities are retained post transformation?
- What strategies do the designers use to retain terrain vague qualities?
- What is gained in the post-terrain vague landscape?

In order to achieve these goals, the following objectives are achieved:

1. Define lost space and terrain vague and their philosophical foundation.
2. Define modernist and postmodernist design strategies
3. Create a case study framework using Girot’s (1999) Trace Concepts as an overall framework to capture the context and design solutions to a post-terrain vague site.
4. Analyze three (3) post-terrain vague cases using Sheridan’s (2012) eight qualities of terrain vague to reveal the intricacies of designing with terrain vague traces.
5. Analyze the consequences of these interventions through a comparison of terrain vague and post-terrain vague conditions.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Lost Spaces
In contrast to legitimized spaces, the streets and squares occupied by people, businesses and institutions, and day-to-day activities of commerce and socialization, there are spaces in the urban realm that are sometimes vacant, usually unkempt and derelict, and are generally considered undesirable. These urban spaces of geographical, economical, and/or social marginalization are given many names and in each of these terms, the author discusses their physical forms, origins, characteristics, and utility. While there is not a consensus on a definitive quality or form that make a space a terrain vague or derelict land, the literature indicates that a set of general commonalities exist between the different conceptions of these “loose” spaces: loose spaces occupy the margins of society and have limited economic productivity, exhibit a sense of incompleteness, and most agree that these are result of obsolescence, abandonment, or that they occupy a developmental or spatial interstice (being in-between phases of development, or being physically in-between developed spaces). Created by the fragmentary nature of contemporary urban planning policies (Bowman & Pagano, 2004; Trancik, 1986), taxation policies (Rahmann & Jonas, 2014), and as leftover space between freestanding architecture (Doron, 2007; Sankalia, 2014), these spaces appear in an overwhelming variety of forms. While some contend the act of categorizing these spaces into a typology automatically negates their mutable and ephemeral nature and is seen to be counterproductive (Barron 2014; Nielsen 2002), it is imperative, for this discussion, to compile characteristics and forms if terrain vague is to be treated as material. Therefore, this portion of the literature review will discuss the form, characteristics, and utility of terrain vague.
Form

Franck (Franck 2014) suggests that *terrain vague* is marginal geographically, socially, economically, or any combination thereof. An abandoned inner city warehouse is not geographically marginal, but its lack of economic and social activity makes it marginal. A residential developer’s greenfield on the border of rural and suburban land is geographically and socially marginal, but not economically marginal as it indicates a sizeable investment and potential for even larger return. A highway’s vegetated median is marginal in all those senses. Northman’s (Northman 1971) vacant lands focus on economic marginality and are separated into five mutually exclusive categories:

1. Remnant parcels of land leftover from zoning that have never been developed (ranging from few hundred to few thousand square feet);
2. Land with physical limitations like steep slope or flood plain;
3. Parcels reserved by commercial interests for future expansion or relocation;
4. Land held for speculation in anticipation of profitable sale in the future;
5. Parcels reserved by public or quasi-public institutions for future developments.

Doron (Doron 2007) suggests industries that used to be at a city’s 19th or 20th century boundaries relocate outward as cities expand, leaving behind large tracts of vacant land inbetween downtown and old suburbs. These spaces vary in form from empty lots to dilapidated structures that hide barely accessible spaces. Bowman and Pagano (2004) suggest that a sixth category, derelict land, should be added to Northman’s five categories of vacant land. These derelict lands fit into one of three categories:

1. Formerly productive and valued sites abandoned by owners (e.g. factories, plants, warehouses);
2. Formerly productive and less desirable industries unwanted by owners (e.g. tannery, slaughterhouse, paper mill); and
3. Unused parcels of overgrown land that have not been redeveloped (e.g. mineral extraction sites)
Lynch and Carr (1979/1990) and Trancik (1986), in contrast, focus on social marginality in their terms “wasteland” and “lost spaces.” These places take the physical form of at-grade parking lots, vacant lots, dumps, highway edges, borders, abandoned industrial areas, and spaces without maintenance. Solà-Morales’s (1995) conception of *terrain vague* is a positive gaze towards the same marginal areas as Trancik and Lynch. *Terrain vague* celebrates the physical marginality of derelict land, unused ports and railway stations, rundown neighbourhoods, and unofficial settlements (e.g. tent cities, favelas) as emancipation from control of the city (Barron, 2014; Lévesque, 2014; Solà-Morales, 1995).

Lastly, some authors argue that *terrain vague* can be any space that has the potential to be transformed for uses beyond its intended function (Franck, 2014; Nielsen, 2002; Stavrides, 2014). For example, a strip mall’s parking lot becomes a social space for the local car club after-hours, or a stately square becomes staging grounds for alternative and disruptive political activities. Some also contend that *terrain vague* is the inverse of contemporary city space in form, function, and character, implying that these take the forms of anomalies in the landscape rather than appear as a definitive set of forms (Rahmann & Jonas, 2014a).

**Characteristics**

Characteristics of these loose spaces are often described as opposite of legitimized spaces. The discussion of these spaces often invokes negative connotations. Whether it is the term wasteland, lost space, derelict land, or dead zones, it gives away the author’s underlying assumptions of an ideal landscape. “Lost space” is opposite from “found space” where it exists as a singular empty lot, underused and empty, not maintained, has no purpose and is not conducive to social gathering or business (Trancik, 1986); these are places for the young and derelict for risk and adventure (Lynch & Carr, 1979/1990). Bowman and Pagano (2004) assert that the negative aspects of having vacant lots and derelict land in the city can indicate economic stagnation and overall undesirability and is a condition that can spread like a contagion. Conversely, Bowman also asserts that having vacant lots may symbolize...
hope, as they are vacant land for redevelopment. But ultimately, according to Trancik’s (1986) perspective, vacant lots fragment legitimized space and it is best to transform them into found space.

In contrast to the above views that take the primacy of legitimized spaces as a priori, terrain vague supposes a different value judgement in which terrain vague is presented as an alternative space in the urban realm aligned with the perspectives of post-structuralism and deconstructionism. Rather than theorizing space based on binary opposition (e.g. lost space is opposite from found space/legitimate space) and assigning a value-laden hierarchy (e.g. lost space is bad, found space/legitimate space is good), terrain vague comes from a theoretical background that is anti-reductive, which concludes that heterogeneity, even paradox, enriches meaning. Terrain vague is different to the typical tidy urban public landscapes: these are not manicured parks or consumer-centric streets and squares (Careri, 2014). Instead, these places possess an aesthetic of ruins and lack formal usage (Barron 2014; Doron 2007; Nielsen 2002; Solà-Morales 1995), offering mystery and risk (Franck 2014). Thus, terrain vague can be characterized as a form of heterotopia: not utopia where everything is good, or dystopia where everything is bad, but heterotopia where it is just different (Mead 1996). To understand terrain vague, one should begin at the etymology of the term. Solà-Morales (Solà-Morales 1995) uses French to convey a wider range of meaning without the negative connotations found in English counterparts. Terrain in French connotes an urban quality not found in the English land, while terrain in English invokes a more pastoral image not suitable for the discussion.

The etymology of vague draws three definitions from Latin and Germanic roots. The notion of vagus (Latin, root of the English vague) is to mean indeterminate, uncertain, imprecise. Yet these analogs in English tend to only carry negative connotations that unnecessarily colour the way in which these landscapes are perceived. The French vague is not purely negative and takes on also a sense of liberty, a freedom from limits and prescriptive definitions. Their imprecision is argued as a result of the unorganized, palimpsestic nature of the landscape, congruent with heterotopic
concept where spaces can exhibit dual or multiple meanings, even if those meanings are paradoxical (Foucault 1984). These sites are spaces of intriguing irrationalities where contradictions (e.g. wilderness in urban space, occupied vacant lots, alleys as art gallery) (Rahmann & Jonas, 2014a; Sankalia 2014; Solà-Morales 1995) and imperfections (e.g. patina, rust, wabi-sabi aesthetic) (Radovic, 2014; Rahmann & Jonas, 2014a) force viewers to process and interpret their multiplicities (Königstein, 2014).

Secondly, vague takes the meaning of movement, of fluctuation, and periodicity, from its Germanic roots of *woge* to mean wave, as in sea swell. A site, in this sense, is no longer a static object; rather these are places perpetually on the verge of new transformations (Sheridan, 2012; Lévesque, 2014) as users and natural processes repeatedly act in them. Furthermore, exposed layers of the past lay bare forgotten histories in the ruins and clearings for all to discover (Barron, 2014). These sites can be superfluous for years or just hours (Nielsen, 2002). During this period where use is in suspension, *terrain vague* occupies a threshold state that connects and separates what was and what will be (Stavrides, 2014). A strip mall’s parking lot is thus much more than a container for vehicles. As cars leave the lot at the end of a business day, it has the potential to take on the identity of meeting space for a community of automotive enthusiasts, or any other appropriations for that matter.

Lastly, the notion of *vacuus* (Latin, root of the English vacuum and vacant) is to mean empty and unoccupied. However, these sites are not at all empty. In addition to emptiness, *vacuus* also signifies being free and available. *Terrain vague* then can be seen as a vessel to be filled and ready to accommodate any interpretations, whether hopeful or pessimistic (Radovic, 2014). Natural succession often reclaims these sites filling them with flora and fauna, people appropriate them for unofficial uses (Barron, 2014). The temporary vacuum of economic development and political pressures set *terrain vague* free from formal usage or programs, thus opening up for activities that transgress original or official use (Doron, 2007), limited only by negotiable social norms (Lévesque, 2014; Rahmann & Jonas, 2014a).
By rejecting the binary opposition lens used by Trancik and Lynch, tension between order and chaos dissipates into a steady state of paradox, exhibiting complexities and volatility hardly found in legitimate space (Careri, 2014; Königstein, 2014; Nielsen, 2002). The tripartite definition of *terrain vague*, therefore, is not three distinct interpretations, but rather is understood as tensions and possibilities between the three poles. In this interpretation, the *terrain vague* condition embodies all three definitions at once with all its complexities and contradictions intact (1).

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**Figure 1: Terrain vague’s tripartite definitions are inseparable, paradoxical, and complex.**

*Terrain vague* is “wavering, unnamed, open to any possibility, and settled on none” (Radovic, 2014) making it conducive to unexpected or spontaneous encounters. It is an alternative to mainstream spaces that provides freedom to innovate, collaborate, and redefine the idea of society (Barron, 2014). However, one may argue that defining *terrain vague* as the opposite of “found space” and as a free form space available for appropriation lacking substance. Sheridan (2012) offers eight distinct sub-qualities that make up the tripartite definition of *vague* and argues that designers using *terrain vague* need to address these qualities in their interventions. See Table 1.
Table 1. Eight qualities of *terrain vague* (Sheridan, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Quality Description</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Registration of change</td>
<td>There is an unmediated experience of physical traces (e.g. structures, surfaces, industrial artefacts, landforms, vegetation). Unlike the built environment, the physical traces are not maintained in a fixed condition, nor are they interpreted from a fixed perspective. This state of flux, whether it be growing or weathering, is clearly legible. The juxtaposition of change and stasis is not framed or presented in an orderly fashion (as in a traditional space). Rather, the contrast needs to be discovered. The process of discovery, which in itself occurs over time, creates surprise as contrasting elements reveal themselves through exercising other senses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Indeterminacy and ambiguity</td>
<td>Lack of classification or identification maintains an air of ambiguity that leaves space for interpretation. The indeterminacy asks questions instead of providing concrete answers. This allows subjectivity, appropriation, adaptation and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Temporal and temporary interventions</td>
<td>Mirrors the organic process perceivable in urban wilderness. The strategy is incremental and temporary by nature, which is in stark contrast to the regulatory and professional practices of conventional architecture and urban design projects. Designers must eschew the conventional means of designing a finished product to designing a process that can adapt to evolving conditions. This strategy may include temporary structures where its uses are reversible or adaptive. However, to truly reflect <em>terrain vague</em>, the strategy cannot allow revision of unsuccessful development. The space must evolve without erasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mobility - roving subjectivity</td>
<td>Temporal approach necessitates a strategy of mobility. As conditions and opportunities change and expire, activities and inhabitants migrate to new locations of opportunity. The strategy necessitates movable spaces/architecture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Incompleteness</td>
<td>Related to temporal and transient approaches. The strategy is not to design for a final state, but design by incremental steps to test interventions and evolve design as condition changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Performative properties

Highly performative activities are drawn to *terrains vague* because regulated spaces come with pervasive set of assumptions and expectations that predetermine and limit uses favouring only those that meet organization and visual order. Space needs to allow for performance and appropriations.

7. Participatory process

Self-initiated projects/activities emerge out of spaces and opportunities found in *terrains vague*. The bottom up approach, driven by local communities and interests, involves processes of negotiation and participation.

8. Diversity

*Terrains vague* are often appropriated by multiple groups of people. New spaces must also retain the interests, expressions, and activities of a diverse group. It is a space of inclusion rather than exclusion.

**Utility**

Primary public life is characterized by consumption of services, entertainment, and goods (Nielsen, 2002), which require cohesive and imageable public realm (Lynch, 1960; Trancik, 1986). Lost spaces, vacant land, and *terrain vague* are considered as land supply for urban space development. Trancik (1986) urges their transformation back to found space to mend the fragmented public realm of the 1980s. Bowman and Pagano (2004) propose that vacant land be reconceived as opportunities for urban growth and be managed as a resource. They contend that an insufficient supply of vacant land hampers the economic potential of the city while an oversupply depress land prices and may indicate economic downturn.

Though *terrain vague* is usually coloured in negative hues, the users often consider them assets. *Terrain vague* holds a variety of spatial, natural, architectural, and social qualities that cannot be found in, and are often excluded from, other urban spaces, especially formal public spaces like institutional squares (Doron, 2007). Alternative public life is defined by individuals or subculture groups practicing activities in *terrain vague* considered not productive (Lévesque, 2002; Solà-Morales, 1995) or difficult to
integrate inside controlled and semipublic spaces (Nielsen, 2002), but exceptions to the rule exist as sometimes these spaces are appropriated as storage space, social space, living quarters, performance space, or commercial space (Franck, 2014; Lévesque, 2014; Rahmann & Jonas, 2014a; Stavrides, 2014). These spaces are also deemed necessary emancipation spaces that free individuals from the structures of power and order (Solà-Morales, 1995, Barron, 2014) so that a purer democratic citizenry can be practiced (Stavrides, 2014), and serve as spaces of reflection external to the daily circuits of commerce (Barron, 2014). These different experiences are neither superior nor inferior to ones in organized space. They just are different, and they are a part of the urban experience.

Yet, these spaces are being defined every time they come into use. These derelict abandoned spaces are not without their own sets of rules and customs. With every layer of graffiti and patina, a space’s identity is more established. Repeated use builds territory and traditions, turning even wasteland into ordered space (Lynch & Carr, 1979/1990). The poetic value of existing paradoxical spaces is in their faulty and incomplete nature that cannot be planned or deliberately improvised (Königstein, 2014). A complicated dilemma develops if authorities decide preservation of these spaces is needed. If they do not undergo preservation, then they will succumb to the pressure of development; if they undergo preservation, then they will lose the ephemeral and mutable attributes described above and become dead ruins (Doron, 2007). The challenge for the designer is not to preserve terrain vague, but to create conditions that allow new paradoxical spaces to occur (Königstein, 2014), “through attention to continuity… of the flows, the rhythms established by the passing of time and the loss of limits… [treating] the residual city with a contradictory complicity that will not shatter the elements that maintain its continuity in time and space” (Solà-Morales, 1995, p.123). Lévesque (2002) suggests that this can be achieved by capturing terrain vague’s conceptual and experiential dimensions and “treating them as material,” to generate new ways to imagine and experience the city, using compositions that

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1 E.g. skateboarding, unsanctioned art projects, public drinking, and spontaneous large gatherings.
2 E.g. pop-up restaurants, parks, and stages.
employ contradictory tonal qualities and embrace the unexpected, openness, relationship, and transformation. In other words, the terrain vague condition is to be transformed into “found space” that is not afraid to showcase the brutality of industry, the messy vitality of the ecosystem, and the plurality of urbanity’s imagination, in a new order that prioritizes fluidity rather than rigidity. However, Sheridan (2012) questions whether professional practice with its regulatory framework is compatible with the ambiguous nature of terrain vague.

These spaces need not be derelict either. A successful public space is activated terrain vague (Radovic 2014). A public square is a utility space with more potential to be understood as a metaphor or symbol rather than by its form. Its purpose is varied and can carry different meaning, depending on utility, event or circumstance. For example, a square has the potential to be a place of celebration (e.g. New Years Eve at Yonge and Dundas Square, Toronto), a place of political and real conflict (e.g. Occupy Wallstreet using Zuccotti Park, New York; Tiananmen Square crack down in 1989, Beijing), as a place for community (e.g. public yoga at Time Square, New York), or a place of remembrance and contemplation (e.g. Memorial for murdered Jews, Berlin). Stevens and Adhya (Stevens & Adhya, 2014) contend that architecture and landscapes are to be fully engaged in the context of the space, where design solutions should adopt terrain vague qualities that foster user generated activity.

**Evolution of Contemporary Design Principles**

**Landscape perceptions**

Landscapeces are inherently subjective and objective. Natural systems can be understood as a domain with universal laws and can be objectively observed³ (Meinig, 1979; Tuan, 1979b). Landscape perception is tied to human-landscape interactions which are subject to variability in the observers’ aptitude in reading landscapes and biases accrued from previous experiences, personal preferences, moralities, and aesthetics, making perception and conception of landscape highly subjective and

³ E.g. rate of CO₂ uptake for evergreen trees or structural stability of a slope.
contextual (Girot, 1999; Marot 1999; Meinig, 1979; Tuan, 1979b; Zube, Sell, & Taylor, 1982). Additionally, hearing, smell, taste, and touch contribute the characteristics of place (Lynch, 1981; Tuan, 1979a), and landscapes serve as a container of a people’s memory and aspirations, alluding to the inseparability of time and space when constructing the identity of landscape (Descombes, 1999; Fung, 1999; Lynch, 1981; Tuan, 1979a).

Lynch (Lynch 1960) posits that underneath the subjectivity of a person’s experience of place is recognition of five landscape types (i.e. path, edge, node, district, landmark). By knowing how parts fit together and being able to orient oneself helps to identify and create a sense a place - distinctive qualities that separate one space from another. Other clues like time and distance, aesthetics, and activities help establish structure of a place, to which people can ascribe personal feelings, memories and values (1981).

Landscapes have also been compared to language (Spirn, 1998). Like language, landscapes have grammatical rules and order and a reader’s recognition of nuances affects their ability to discover the significance of a landscape and to develop individual meaning (Spirn, 1998). When one can read the landscape, one can piece together a narrative of the actors (human and non-human) sequencing and structuring experiences into coherent relationships that tie time, event, experience, memory, feelings, and place together, even if they might be competing views (Potteiger & Purinton, 1998; Spirn, 1998).

An overview of modernism and their critics

Criticisms of previous design paradigms are plentiful. Criticisms of urban and public realm design in the past thirty years have placed modernism and its Functionalist city paradigm squarely in the crosshairs. Modernism ignores regionalism and environmental identity in favour of a formal, abstract, and universal model which serves to treat humanity as one identical collective (Trancik, 1986; Sarup, 1989). Moreover, functionalism offers fast and economical construction with its boxy and
unadorned architecture, usually in a futuristic, high-rise package that proved attractive in the shadows of the First World War, resulting in a Corbusian style that scattered urban buildings over park-like landscapes (Trancik, 1986). The original intention to liberate the workingman from their bourgeois cities ends up creating residential blocks that are entirely foreign from their historical and physical contexts with a public realm that focuses on a singular duty of transporting high speed private automobiles.

In ignoring local heritage in favour of an idealized collectivism, modernism has been criticized for intellectual elitism and falling into a fallacious logic of architectural determinism. Of all the faults, the departure from an intimately scaled public realm, single use and introverted spaces, replacing pedestrians with automobiles in streets, and segregating functions of the city over large areas are seen as most detrimental to the cohesiveness of the public realm (Jacobs, 1961; Trancik, 1986). Despite pushback from Jane Jacobs and others of her ilk, urban renewal under the modernist philosophy continues to fragment the public realm, and by the 1980s, functionalism edges out civic design as a determinant of urban form (Sandalack & Uribe, 2010).

Post World War II urban design

In Cuthbert’s (2007) analysis and criticism of urban design theories since the mid 1950s, he notes four significant works that offer a summary of theory in urban design since the Second World War:

- Rowe and Koetter’s Collage City (1979);
- Gosling and Maitland’s Concepts of Design (1984);
- Roger Trancik’s Finding Lost Space - Theories of Urban Design (1986);

And four significant works that propose unified theories on the production of urban space:

- Rob Krier’s Urban Space (1979);
- Kevin Lynch’s A Theory of Good City Form (1981);
- Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson’s The Social Logic of Space (1984);
Trancik’s contribution is especially of note to this investigation on the grounds that the premise of *Finding Lost Space - Theories of Urban Design* is the elimination of *lost spaces* created by modernist planners and architects.

According to Trancik (1986), expertise in urban design can be developed by:

1. Understanding how historic precedents of urban spaces adapt to their context and function. His historic precedents often compare traditional and modernist cities illustrating the inhuman scales of Modernist streets and squares and segregation of functions across vast landscapes.
2. Developing an understanding of three underlying theories of urban spatial design, namely: Figure-Ground Theory, Linkage Theory, and Place Theory.
3. Building skills through synthesizing and applying above theories in the design process. Trancik describes the design process in four steps that start with an in-depth study of place and an objective spatial analysis to establish baseline knowledge. It then culminates with identifying intervention opportunities and lastly synthesizing findings that inform a design intervention.

In practice however, the most prominent element of his integrated approach to urban design rests on five spatial configuration principles that can be universally applied to stitch up and fill in a fragmented urbanscape. These principles are as follows:

1. Link important sites and landmarks in the city with pedestrian spaces,
2. Create outdoor rooms by focusing on human scaled lateral enclosures (e.g. streets) and edge continuity (i.e. recreate the continuous wall of buildings in traditional cities).
3. Create multi functioning social spaces that connect disparate parts of the city (e.g. Ponte Vecchio is famous for integrating a shopping street on a bridge spanning the Arno River in Florence, Italy).
4. Use straight lines and simple grids to connect important sites in the city and to establish visual order.
5. Fuse indoor (e.g. lobbies of large buildings) and outdoor functions to expand the public realm into the indoors to take advantage of year round accessibility.
Similarly, Sandalack and Uribe (2010) propose that cities must refocus their attention onto creating good public realm with replicable best practices in form creation, rather than using programming or spectacle to draw population back into the city. Their typological study strives to highlight successful interventions of public realm types, most notably the importance of streets and plazas with edge conditions that feature uses that are highly porous and varied.

Cuthbert (Cuthbert 2007) chastises the prevailing attempts at providing a theory of urban design as being an axiomatic and environmental deterministic paradigm. He proposes that urban design theory must link the designing of urban space to the multifaceted societal processes that create cities. Regarding Trancik’s work, Cuthbert (2007) criticizes it as a regurgitation of Modernism and its philosophy of physical determinism while only giving a cursory overview of social and other factors. Regarding Lynch (1981), Cuthbert (2007) criticizes his work as being based on seemingly intuitive and anecdotal experiences.

In addition to arguing that modernist position is losing explanatory power for contemporary urban space production, Cuthbert (2006) posits that postmodernist perspective is gaining position in urban design theory and that there is an upsurge in discussions of urban space design by fields not previously linked to urban design (e.g. urban sociology, economics and geography, cultural studies, art history, and other disciplines from anthropology to philosophy). For urban design theory to be relevant it needs to acknowledge that urban design is a domain shared by many knowledge producers external to the design field and to incorporate the myriad fields that have interest in space production. He suggests that the theoretical foundation of urban design should find the study of spatial political economy appropriate due to its breadth and it being grounded in the fundamental processes of how space is produced (2007).
Postmodern landscape architecture principles

Postmodern urban and landscape design theorists are mostly aligned with deconstructionist philosophy. The relationship between the designer, user, and landscape have shifted away from the modernist rigid dichotomy of users being solely consumers of space and designers being solely producers of space. Rather, in the new paradigm users are expected to be part consumer and part producer of meaning and experiences in the public realm (Descombes, 1999; Franck 2014; Stevens & Adhya, 2014; Wall 1999). Similarly, the designer is expected to shed the role of maestro responsible for total design and take on the role of manager for structural and process networks that penetrate a project site (Marot, 1999; Wall, 1999), as curator for the identity of a place (Descombes, 1999; Girot, 1999; Høyer, 1999; Marot 1999), and facilitator for emergent experiences not yet conceived by the public (Descombes, 1999; Marot, 1999; Wall, 1999).

Following in the footsteps of the Nietzschean idea of a world in perpetual state of becoming, landscapes are always in transformation. Instead of an object-based interpretation of landscapes and their elements, postmodern theorists view the local condition as a complex system of processes and relationships. Landscape architects work in relational areas between objects (Marot, 1999), work with open space networks, transportation networks, production and consumption networks (Wall, 1999), and natural processes (Høyer, 1999). The element of time is an essential part of the landscape as well. Høyer argues that to treat the landscape as static images, as they usually do in heritage landscape preservation projects, is to deny landscape elements that are arguably the strongest and most durable: change and dynamisms in the landscape (1999). Over time, a landscape’s accumulated events and narratives (Descombes, 1999) become its local identity, which collectively constructs a national identity whose richness is afforded by shared values and aspirations contrasted by regional differences (Girot, 1999).

A deep reading of the landscape is needed to capture the mutable nuances of the landscape, especially in terrain vague, where its contexts are so different from
conventional urbanscapes (Sheridan, 2012) Landscape architects must resist reductionist interpretations that oversimplify the experience by stripping the landscape of ephemeral details that are not captured in maps, soil analysis, and demographic distributions (Descombes, 1999). Instead, the interpretation process must encompass qualitative assessments beyond the requirements of the commission such as spending time in the landscape with locals and researching the history of the landscape in order to find the je ne sais quoi of the site (Girot, 1999; Marot, 1999). Coincidentally, this process is analogous to Trancik’s four steps in Finding Lost Spaces.

However, unlike Trancik’s five spatial configurations, postmodernist designers reject the universality of a philosophy, and instead rely on subjective context to inform intervention strategy. By not relying on dogma, the spectra of intervention principles resemble good advice rather than theory e.g. do not treat landscape as a blank canvas to which style is applied (Høyer, 1999); extend the legacy of place via an innovative or transformative reaction to context (Girot, 1999); focus on emphasizing a small suite of unique local elements (Descombes, 1999); make modest interventions that do not compete with the existing landscape, and allow room for user ingenuity by not overly programming the space (Høyer, 1999; Wall, 1999). Spirn (1998) urges designers to pay attention to temporal processes both natural and human, and to pay attention to structure of the landscape rather than shapes and forms. Curiously, even though Lynch (1960) argues that a landscape’s illegibility negatively affects one’s experience within it, he (Lynch, 1981) later qualifies that there is pleasure in puzzles and mysteries and legibility is not a quality to be maximized but rather used strategically to create a legible first order. Nonetheless, people experiencing the landscape should first experience an obvious first order, after which the act of unfolding should allow more extensive meaning creation from experiencing higher order structures of the landscape. Though admitting that the specific layering of elements is difficult, Lynch eloquently argues that undefinable elements, rather than defined ones, are preferred and “a city that invites ordering is surely better than an orderly city” (Lynch, 1981, p. 144).
Heatherington (2012) proposes that in designing with the *terrain vague* condition one can manipulate their traces i.e. remnant elements that give the landscape its *terrain vague* character, to construct narratives in the landscape. The new interventions would be wise to forgo prescribing meaning in the landscape and in turn use landscape analogues to literary devices to infer meaning. These strategies are:

1. Tabula rasa
2. Heritage approach
3. *Symbolic: narrative*
4. *Process as framework*
5. *Extended relationships: Intertextuality*

To round out the five strategies, a sixth strategy of no intervention in which traces are left as is, to maintain *terrain vague* in its rawest form is added. Each of these strategies erase, curate, and/or modify traces to satisfy a condition, whether it is to establish a desired narrative for the new landscape or simply to satisfy a budgetary measure. Of the five strategies three are identified as appropriate for intervening using *terrain vague* condition as a necessary or even celebrated context in the new design. Please see Table 2 for descriptions of each strategy.
Table 2. Terrain vague intervention strategies (Heatherington, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tabula Rasa</strong></td>
<td>Traces of its former self are completely erased for economic, compatibility, aesthetic, and/or practical reasons. The new development is a brand new creation that has little to do with the former conditions of the site. Example: City Place in Toronto, Ontario is a residential high rise development built on former railway lands. It takes little cues from the former purpose save for a memorial to railway workers on Blue Jay Way by the Rogers Centre (former Skydome). The Pruitt-Igoe public housing project in St. Louis, Missouri completely removed traces of its former neighbourhood. Ironically, the housing project was demolished eighteen years after its construction in 1972 due to its social issues and undesirability. The Pruitt-Igoe site is currently a <em>terrain vague</em>.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heritage approach</strong></td>
<td>Usually only large traces (e.g. heritage structures) are saved and restored to a specific temporal and physical state to support a narrative determined by the developer. In this strategy, aesthetics are restored to a like-new state and frozen to support a museum-like effect to showcase desirable features that support the new purpose. <em>Terrain vague</em> qualities like decay do not fit into this approach that emphasizes restoration. Example: Distillery District in Toronto, Ontario, is an entertainment, commercial, and residential area that incorporates restored Victorian-era heritage industrial buildings from the now defunct Gooderham and Worts Distillery. The design freezes the heritage buildings in a like-new state as decorative features for the current multi-use development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><strong>Symbolic: narrative</strong></em></td>
<td>Trace is used to symbolic effect, bridging former <em>terrain vague</em> conditions and new functions. Traces in this strategy are treated as objects of nostalgia whose purpose is to create a foundation of wildness as anchor for the new intervention. The symbolic inclusion of these traces strives to create an unbroken narrative of the place’s identity. Since traces are to fulfill a symbolic function they may sometimes be refurbished or abstracted to resemble artefacts found in <em>terrain vague</em>. Example: High Line in New York City, is a linear park atop a disused elevated rail line. It utilizes refurbished rails found onsite and a planting scheme that mimics spontaneous vegetation on the derelict site to anchor the park’s new identity to the heritage of the neighbourhood and rest of the city.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast to the static use of trace to illustrate changes in the previous strategy, processes on the landscape (e.g. ruination, decay, new growth) are made explicit by the changing conditions of the elements. The traces in this case are the processes as made evident by the changing condition of the remaining artefacts. To make flux visible, the strategy opts to defer any signal of completion, leaving ruination as is, and embrace natural succession. Designs are seen as in a state of perpetual development.

Example: Südgelände Nature Park in Berlin, Germany is a park built on a rail yard reclaimed by nature during its disuse. Even though the park features a grassland landscape type that has been preserved from natural succession, the rest of the park is allowed to develop naturally with minimal interventions. The industrial traces (e.g. rails, signals, turn table) are left to decay behind the dense foliage while new graffiti overlays old works to illustrate an ever-changing park.

Through structuring views, traces from terrain vague are composed in such a way to illustrate relationships in the landscape. Since terrain vague are usually characterized by uncertain purpose and contradictory groupings (e.g. wilderness and remnants of industry existing in the middle of a bustling metropolis, or intricate art on the exterior walls facing an alleyway), traces and other elements are juxtaposed to illustrate an interrelationship between the objects to give meaning that would not have been generated in isolation. This is analogous to the literary device “intertextuality,” which through referencing another work whilst reading one text, a new or deeper meaning develops. Traces in the landscape are used to develop intertwining relationships that illustrate a greater narrative that encompasses elements beyond the site.

Example: Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto, Ontario is on the former Don Valley Brick Works industrial site and quarry. It is currently a multipurpose complex that offers event space, social areas, nature trails, and houses the headquarters of the namesake non-profit organization. While the paradoxes at Evergreen brickworks are many (e.g. environmental organization head quarters on brownfield, re-established nature on industrial lands flanked by a highway to the east and exorbitant real estate to the west in the centre of a city), overall the interrelationships between the natural and cultural elements force visitors to participate in meaning creation through unfolding the complex layers.

*No intervention

Terrain vague is left in its raw form.
Chapter 3 – Methods

This thesis’s goal is to investigate how designers have responded to the *terrain vague* condition in interventions. Solà-Morales (1995) and Lévesque (2002) challenge designers to create new urban experiences that embrace the strangeness of *terrain vague*. As opposed to delegating *terrain vague* qualities to the proverbial cutting-room floor, *terrain vague* qualities of propensity for change or flux (*voge*), openness (*vacuus*), and uncertainty (*vagus*), should be used creatively in new interventions to continue the place’s identity. This thesis investigates how designers have interpreted the prior conditions and manipulated them according to design goals.

This thesis uses a case study method to operationalize the investigation. Francis (Francis 1999) offers the following definition of a case study as one that is suited for the field of landscape architecture:

“A case study is a well-documented and systematic examination of the process, decision-making and outcomes of a project that is undertaken for the purpose of informing future practice, policy, theory and/or education.” (9)

A case study is a useful method for studies trying to refine or test emerging concepts, and is useful at answering big questions at the intersection of policy and design (Francis 1999). Despite these strengths, case studies’ weaknesses lie generally in the lack of empirical and critical analysis and inability to compare across cases where different data types have been collected (Francis, 1999). To increase the rigour, this thesis takes a systematic approach in its investigation of cases as outlined in the framework below.

**Case Study Framework**

Case studies in landscape architecture benefit from a systematic approach that collects a common data set allowing meaningful comparison between cases (Francis 1999). To operationalize the case studies in this research, the method follows an overarching
framework called *trace concepts* (Girot, 1999), a series of four “operating concepts” which guide the investigation of a landscape’s identity. The method’s first three concepts, *Landing, Grounding,* and *Finding* illustrate gradual steps to finding the *je ne sais quoi* of a given site through a structured journey of discovery and inquiry that blends “direct, physical experience and intuition with local research” (p. 61). The process culminates in the fourth concept, *Founding,* which synthesizes the findings from the previous three concepts to inform a site-specific design solution. This breakdown of discovery, inquiry, and resolution closely matches that of an academic research project. However, the trace concepts’ heuristic approach has been found wanting as it only illustrates a general approach and mindset to investigating details of a site. Each concept is therefore supplemented with additional criteria to aid the research process. Since *founding* is a stage designed to guide the creation of an intervention, it is not approached in the main body in answering the research question, but will be addressed in the appendix following the conclusion.

![Figure 2: Girot’s Trace Concept (2012) as a framework for the case study method. Note that Founding is only covered in the Appendix.](image)

Further breaking down the research method, the case study is divided into two steps: site evaluation followed by results analysis (Figure 3). In the site evaluation stage, each site is investigated individually so that a comprehensive impression can be developed. Trace concepts *landing* and *grounding* are operationalized in this stage to investigate each case’s physical and historical contexts, design problem, and design solution. Following the individual investigations, the third trace concept *finding* resolves to reveal the *je ne sais quoi* of the interventions. The analysis examines the designers’
responses to *terrain vague* and the strategies in which they retain or transform *terrain vague* qualities, as well as the consequences of intervening in *terrain vague*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Evaluation</th>
<th>Results Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trace concepts: <em>Landing</em> &amp; <em>Grounding</em></td>
<td>=Synthesis=&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace concept: <em>Finding</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Major components of case study method

**Site Evaluation**

The terms for each *trace concept* (Girot, 1999) and the method in which it is operationalized are detailed below.

**Trace concept 1: Landing**

*Landing* advises that the first impression of a landscape should be made with an open mind and with judgements reserved (Girot, 1999). The landscape should be sensed with intuition, with wonderment, and with curiosity, letting the site counter any preconceptions and opinions the observer might have had prior to landing. This concept is interpreted as allowing the site to reset preconceived notions that one might have accumulated by establishing a personal experience as foundation to the investigation. This step is operationalized by a site visit. When a site visit is unavailable, then the experience is substituted by virtual tour, photo book, and other secondary sources that can elicit the senses described above. Even though a personal visit is preferred, the secondary methods can lead to discovery of elements unavailable to the untrained eye, especially if the source materials are produced by those familiar with the intricacies of the case site. However, the disadvantage of relying on secondary sources is the incorporation of its biases. Under this concept: the following are documented:

1. Method in which the site is approached (e.g. site visit, virtual tour, photo book)
2. Gathered materials (e.g. photographs, videos, short essays, journal entries)
3. Intriguing elements of the site, especially those that elicit a sense of passing of time and paradox.
Trace concept 2: Grounding

Grounding advises a repeated reading of the site through research and analysis of its environmental, social, and historical context to identify important landscape elements (Girot, 1999). *A Case Study Method for Landscape Architecture* (Francis, 1999) enumerates a comprehensive list of data types for collection in a landscape architecture case study. However, not all of the data types fall into the scope of this research nor are the data types organized into a cohesive narrative that supports this research; therefore the full complement of data types has been reorganized and abridged. Additional data types relevant to this research but not included in *A Case Study Method for Landscape Architecture* (Francis 1999) are added. See Table 3 for data types as adapted from Francis (1999).

Results Analysis

Trace concept 3: Finding

To reiterate, the third trace concept finding analyses the findings from the previous two trace concepts to answer the research question: how are designers responding to terrain vague in interventions that invoke it as a context? This stage of the research cross-examines the findings in landing and grounding with Sheridan’s (2012) eight qualities of terrain vague to determine which of the terrain vague condition is carried through to the post-terrain vague landscape and how the designers have integrated it into their designs. See Table 1 on page 11 for details on the eight qualities.

The analysis also examines the consequences of intervening in terrain vague. Interventions invariably change the characteristics and purpose of landscapes. Therefore the analysis will also answer the following questions:

- What is lost in the transformation from terrain vague to post-terrain vague?
- What terrain vague qualities are retained post transformation?
- What strategies do the designers use to retain terrain vague qualities?
- What is gained in the post-terrain vague landscape?
Table 3. Data types supporting trace concept *grounding*. *Asterisk denotes an addition to the Case Study Method for Landscape Architecture* (Francis, 1999).

**Baseline Information**
- Project Name
- Location
- Date Designed / Date Planned
- Construction Completion / Site Opened
- Size
- Landscape Architect(s) / Designer
- Client(s)
- *Other stakeholders - added to support multi-stakeholder process
- Managing entity
- Landscape type
- *Approach to terrain vague - added to identify terrain vague intervention strategies for site selection purpose

**Project Overview**
- A brief summary to the case and how it pertains to this research.

**Context**
The context heading is expanded to three sub-headings.
- Location and adjacency - documents the site’s location and immediate surroundings
- Historical context - documents major events leading up to the intervention genesis
- Physical significance - documents biological, geological, structural, or topographical significance of the site

**Project Background**
A narrative of project development process formulated from the following data types
- Genesis of the project
- Design, development, and decision making process
- Landscape architect and other professional input
- User and community input
- Client input
- Nature of the team and evolution of stakeholder roles

**Design Solution**
- Site plan(s) and visuals
- The problem the project was solving and the program elements supporting solution
- Key design concepts, goals, and design solution
- Challenge(s) of the site and unique constraints
Site Selection and Data Sources

This research uses a heuristic technique for data gathering. The variety of data types necessitates that the chosen cases hold enough acclaim to warrant study and documentation from a wide variety of sources. Further, the chosen cases must have adapted terrain vague qualities into their design to be eligible. To simplify the case selection process, three of Heatherington’s (2012) six strategies to designing with terrain vague traces are used as indicators for a site’s eligibility. Of the six strategies, Symbolic: Narrative, Process as Framework, and Extended Relationships are of interest to this thesis for their use of terrain vague qualities in new interventions (strategies preceded by an asterisk in Table 2 on page 22). Three cases that represent the breadth of these three strategies and possessing the necessary prominence are:

1. Südgelande Natur-Park in Berlin, Germany\(^4\)
2. Evergreen Brick Works, Toronto, Canada\(^5\)
3. St. Louis Ecological Production Line, St. Louis, United States\(^6\)

In addition to meeting the selection criteria, the ensemble of cases is organized by their varying stages of transformation. Since temporality is a defining factor of terrain vague, the first two cases represent how a post-terrain vague landscape has matured. The case at the Pruitt-Igoe site is of particular interest as it is still a terrain vague, but the competition submissions represent the most contemporary response to terrain vague.

The data to support these cases come from a variety of sources:

- Peer reviewed articles
- Books (academic publishers)
- City archives
- Newspaper archives
- Design firm archives

\(^4\) Opened 2000; main strategy Process as Framework
\(^5\) Opened 2010; main strategy Extended Relationships
\(^6\) Winner of 2012 Pruitt-Igoe Now! Design Competition; main strategy Symbolic: Narrative
While peer reviewed and academically published sources are preferred, the breadth of topics and material needed for the case study requires widening sources to include popular media and subjective reviews, despite their inherent bias. The non-academic sources, however, provide emotional sentiments that perhaps more objective investigations lack, thereby adding an extra dimension to the investigation of the cases. Nonetheless, their inclusion is subject to the unavailability of more credible sources, which appears to be the case for the newer and yet to be established sites.
## Case Study: Südgelände Nature Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Name</strong></th>
<th>Schöneberger Südgelände Nature Park (Südgelände)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Tempelhof-Schöneberg borough, Berlin, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Designed / Planned</strong></td>
<td>Rail yard constructed 1880-1890; abandoned 1952; Formal ownership transferred from Deutsche Bahn AG to the Senate of Berlin in 1995; Designated nature park in 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Completion / Site Opened</strong></td>
<td>Opened in 2000, selected as external project of EXPO 2000 in Hannover, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>18 ha / Protected area 3.6 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Architect(s) / Designer</strong></td>
<td>Masterplan: ÖkoCon (Principal: Ingo Kowarik), Planland Landschaftsplanung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client(s)</strong></td>
<td>Grün Berlin GmbH appointed by the Senate Department for Urban Development, Senate of Berlin (German city state government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>Bürgerinitiative Südgelände (Citizens’ initiative for Südgelände community group), Allianz Umweltstiftung (Allianz Foundation for Sustainability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managed by</strong></td>
<td>Grün Berlin GmbH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Type</strong></td>
<td>Community open space, historic landscape, recreational area, urban park, nature reserve, industrial land reclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to terrain vague</strong></td>
<td>Primary: Process as framework Secondary: Extended relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Project Overview**

Schöneberger Südgelände Natur-Park (Südgelände) is a former railway shunting station (also known as switch yard) that has been transformed to a nature reserve, art space, and passive recreation area (e.g. walks, interpretative trails) in the Tempelhof-Schöneberg borough of Berlin. Occupying a sliver of land no more than 180m wide (see Figure 4) between two active railway lines, Südgelände is the 1st official conservation area in Germany where industrial land reclaimed by nature is both protected and accessible to the public after more than 40 years of unfettered natural succession (Langer 2012). The nature park opened in 2000 and was declared a Global Project of EXPO 2000 hosted in Hannover (Grün Berlin GmbH n.d.). It is estimated that 50 000 people visit Südgelände each year (Kowarik & Langer, 2005).

The design focuses on integrating the natural succession characteristics developed over fifty years of natural succession, the industrial heritage of the site, and the creative appropriations that have shaped the former rail yard since then. The site exhibits a hybrid approach to integrating traces of *terrain vague*. While the design approach of Südgelände strongly highlights the processes on the landscape inline with the “Process as Framework” strategy (Heatherington 2012), it also exhibits the “Extended Relationship” and “Symbolic: Narrative” strategy. The intersection of industrial, natural, and artistic traces at Südgelände is a model and progenitor for the few nature conservation areas in Berlin (Lachmund, 2013). Its incorporation of such experiential paradoxes has sparked discourse and appreciation of sites conventionally regarded as symbols of neglect (Langer 2012).

**Site Context**

*Location and adjacency*

Südgelände is situated in the Tempelhof-Schöneberg borough 11km south of Mitte, Berlin’s central borough and historic core. Flanked on both east and west sides by active passenger railway tracks and heavily trafficked streets to the north and south,  

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7 The literal translation of Südgelände is “south area.”
Figure 4: Südgelände Nature Park Plan. Left image adapted from Grün Berlin GmbH
the 18 hectare Südgelände Nature Park has an island-like character despite its urban location. The park is served by three entrances on the west and south edges with the main entrance adjacent to the Priesterweg S-Bahn\(^8\) station on the south west flank.

Beyond the S-Bahn tracks to the west are the Priesterweg allotment gardens and Hans Baluschek Park where visitors can participate in more active recreation (e.g. sports, playground, picnic). Südgelände, in contrast, is intended for “rest and regeneration” (Weiler, n.d.). Nevertheless, more than 180 hectares, including Südgelände’s 18 hectares, surrounding the Priesterweg S-Bahn station are dedicated to park land and outdoor green space, creating a large swath of open green space for nearby residents. To the east beyond the high-speed railway tracks is the locality\(^9\) of Tempelhof, most

\(\text{Legend}\)

- Points of Interest
- Site
- Waterway
- Rail
- Subway
- Stations

Figure 5: Südgelände Nature Park is situated 11km south of the Berlin’s city centre (Mitte) and 2km west of Tempelhof Park. West of the park is an expansive allotment community garden.

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\(\text{8}\) Berlin’s S-Bahn is a regional rapid rail transit system linking Berlin’s boroughs and neighbouring municipalities to the city centre similar to the Parisian RER. Below the S-Bahn are the U-Bahn (subway) and Straßenbahn Berlin (Berlin street level tramway) tiers that have higher station densities, serving the core of the city.

\(\text{9}\) The term locality is used to describe former independent villages and cities that have since amalgamated into the boroughs of Greater Berlin. Each borough comprises several localities, with Tempelhof being one of six localities in the Tempelhof-Schöneberg borough.
well known as the location for the former Tempelhof Airport and now Tempelhofer Park. The area is home to a mix of residential, institutional, and commercial spaces.

*Historical context*

The railway yard at Südgelände was built between 1880-1890 and was in use until the end of World War II. Train service was reduced in the postwar period with the last service ending in 1952, after which, large sections of the rail yard were closed with few trains shunted on a few tracks and the locomotive repair hall still in use for another few years. Natural succession started to take hold as the site fell into disuse (Kowarik & Langer, 2005; Langer 2012).

The site's abandonment was brought on by political changes in the German state following the end of World War II. Plunged into a state of military occupation by the Allies, the city of Berlin and the rest of Germany were separated into occupation zones that eventually led to the creation of the British, American, and French backed Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland or FDR) in the west, and the Soviet backed German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik or DDR) in the east. The rail yard at Südgelände (and other yards located in West Berlin) fell out of use as Reichsbahn, the administration for rail services in the region, whose seat was in East Berlin, reduced train service to a minimum, then outright discontinued services in West Berlin (Lachmund, 2013). Secondly, with the site fenced off and guarded by security and its adjacency to large arterial roads, it was inaccessible for the general public, save for those who braved trespassing for a bit of adventure (Langer 2012).
During the post-war reconstruction period, residential neighbourhoods levelled by war maintained their residential designation. These wastelands were presented as problems to planners and city officials and thus not recognized as a legitimate part of the urban landscape typology. Twenty years after train services ceased, the abandoned Südgelände railway yard was still designated for rail use, awaiting resurrection. Planners sought to recreate the old spaces, preferring to keep them in stasis (Lachmund, 2013). In spite of this, an alternative and more positive place image for sites like Südgelände emerged in the 1970s as wilderness enthusiasts looked for alternative places to experience nature (Kowarik & Langer, 2005). Concurrently an intense interest in urban ecology developed in Germany. The first proposal to protect urban wilderness came in 1974 in recognition of the scientific value of successional nature in urban wastelands (Kunick, 1974 as cited in Lachmund, 2013).

As more redevelopment plans emerged in 1980s, the call for protecting wastelands came into the forefront of public discourse. In 1979, after years of disuse, the Berlin City of Berlin was located entirely within the DDR. The East-West Berlin border closed in 1961, which spawned the Berlin Wall complex. Movement in and out of the city was extremely difficult and forced nature enthusiasts to seek wilderness within the city limits.

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10 City of Berlin was located entirely within the DDR. The East-West Berlin border closed in 1961, which spawned the Berlin Wall complex. Movement in and out of the city was extremely difficult and forced nature enthusiasts to seek wilderness within the city limits.
Senate approved a plan to reopen the Südgelände shunting station. In response, local activist-planner coalitions (e.g. Bürgerinitiative Südgelände) and the press emerged in support of designating Südgelände as a nature reserve or open space (Lachmund, 2013; Letzner, n.d.). By 1981, a bioinventory of the site found significant species richness not seen in other parts of the city (Kowarik & Langer, 2005) and recreation activities (e.g. barbecues, dog walking, sunbathing) had gained a foothold in Südgelände (Lachmund, 2013; Langer, 2012).

**Physical Significance**

**Biological Significance**

The first bioinventory in 1981 of Südgelände found a species rich habitat that consisted mostly of dry grasslands and herbaceous plant colonies (64% coverage), and a developing shrub and woodland (36% coverage). A second bioinventory in 1992 found the coverage of woodland and woody plants doubling to 70% coverage of the site while grassland and herbaceous materials dwindled to 30% coverage (Kowarik & Langer, 2005). Further investigation in 1992 yielded that the grassland is a particularly species rich landscape that harboured rare and threatened species seldom found in the wooded areas (2005) (Table 4). This survey also confirmed that the species found within Südgelände were exotic in origin (Langer 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisms found in Südgelände grassland in 1992</th>
<th>n</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vascular plants</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeding birds</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrofungi</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasshoppers and crickets</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiders</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild bees and wasps</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural/Industrial Traces**
The remnant industrial traces were a point of interest for the users of the abandoned shunting station visitors who have appropriated the rail yard for recreation. The water tower, an obvious landmark for the area at 50m tall, drew adventurers and casual recreationalists into the space. The traces of the decaying infrastructure were curiosities that gave the rail yard charm and peace unlike other spaces in Berlin. Even though the beaten tracks that run through the site prior to the intervention had been covered up since the construction of the nature park, a clearing below a Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*) that was once used for a fire pit and social spot was kept in the park as part of its social heritage (Langer 2012).

**Project Background and History**

By 1985 the plan to reopen the shunting station was abandoned due to an adjustment in the evaluation of future Berlin traffic needs and the plan’s unpopularity. Berlin Senate’s landscape program earmarked Südgelände as a landscape and nature reserve and public open space, a first in Berlin.

Multiple stakeholders fostered the path to this designation. A perfect storm of pro-preservation politicians, experts’ analysis of pro-development plan’s effects on climate, noise, and traffic management, and public outreach efforts of grass roots community groups effectively persuaded the Berlin Senate to stop the redevelopment of the shunting yard (Lachmund 2013; Letzner, n.d. n.d.). As with many multifaceted groups, however, there were conflicts between the different interests within the pro-preservation camp. The most heated conflicts were between ecologists who wanted to preserve the landscape *in situ* to foster natural succession and those who wanted design intervention to create an aestheticized park (Lachmund 2013).

By 1991 following the reunification of the BRD and the DDR, the pressure to reconstruct Berlin as the national capital and a major international metropolis prioritized political and economic interests. Urban planning became a tool for economic development and political gain and saw wastelands previously earmarked for preservation go through redevelopment. The ousting of political parties
supporting wasteland preservation in the Berlin Senate by a development-friendly coalition paved the way for pro-urban development policies and a focus on real estate development thus severely marginalizing the nature conservancy and stalling the nature park movements (2013).

Figure 7: Südgelände Nature Park’s ghostly tracks and forest.

Amongst the development fervour, planners revisited the shelved nature park projects outlined prior to reunification to fulfill legislative requirements to compensate for

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11 The Federal Nature Conservation Act of 1976 and the Berlin Nature Conservation Act prescribes a duty to prevent ecological impairments for any encroachments that severely impacts ecological services. In the event that negative impacts on the site were inevitable, the regulation insists that compensations be made to rectify the damage on site over a given time, that compensations can be substituted at another site by means of landscape improvement, or under the most extreme situation where a lack of space limits any physical
ecological degradation in the fast developing reunified Berlin. In the case of Südgelände Nature Park, the Federal Railway Authority (Eisenbahn-Bundesamt) needed to provide compensation for new railway projects in the centre of Berlin. Südgelände rail yard was still officially designated for rail use, but its change to green space fulfilled said legal requirement. Throughout this time, the Bürgerinitiative Südgelände, Grün Berlin GmbH, a state owned non-profit company specializing in open space development and management in the Berlin region, and other allies, continued to pursue the project through community outreach and amassing 163 scientists from across the globe to petition the Berlin Senate to preserve the urban wilderness found in central Berlin (Letzner, n.d.). In 1992, a second bioinventory of Südgelände completed by ÖkoCon, found a rapidly changing site where over ten years the woody vegetation doubled its coverage. This prompted the senate to protect the area as a whole and gave the species rich grassland special designation (Kowarik & Langer, 2005). The site's ownership was transferred from Deutsche Bahn AG to the Berlin Senate in 1995 (Lachmund 2013). The park project soon secured financial sponsorship from Allianz Environmental Foundation in 1996 with an award amount of USD $1.3 million\(^{12}\), adjusted for inflation (Letzner, n.d.).

The planning process began before the site was supported by the Senate. Grün Berlin GmbH, commissioned two landscape planning firms, ÖkoCon and Planland, to plan out the nature park concept at Südgelände in 1992 (Lachmund 2013; Letzner, n.d. n.d.). Initial proposals for the park were met with hostility from allied community groups and the funder, citing a design too restrictive for public access and recreation (Lachmund, 2013). The original plan called for fencing the grassland while only supplying minimal pathways around the park to minimize disturbance. Following consultations and more debate between the designers, community, and funder, revision of the plan in 1995 added an elevated walkway through the nature compensatory efforts that the public authorities be compensated monetarily for nature or landscape protection measures.

\(^{12}\) Original Deutschmark figure of DM 1.8Million adjusted to 2015 Euro figure using DECP12005 Germany Index at fxtop.com inflation calculator (http://fxtop.com/en/inflation-calculator.php) and converted to US Dollars using June 17, 2015 Euro-USD exchange rate on XE.com
conservation area (Lachmund, 2013) and incorporated further aesthetic interventions to provide organization and interest to the park (Langer, 2012). The park opened in 2000 following official designation of nature reserve and landscape conservation area status in 1999 (Letzner, n.d.).

**Design Solution**

*What problem was the project solving? What are the challenges of the site?*

The terms of the land transfer stipulate that characteristics of the site in 1996 be retained whilst implementing a hybrid scheme of conservation and recreation area (hence “nature park”) (Langer, 2012). The design process reveals two main problems
with intervening in the Südgelände terrain vague (Kowarik & Langer, 2005; Langer, 2012):

1. Finding the balance between biodiversity and disturbing the ecosystem dynamics.
2. Finding balance between preserving the ecological value and providing access to visitors.

The Südgelände site and other post war abandoned spaces in West Berlin are unique sites where nature’s unhampered resurgence provides ecologists with a glimpse into successional processes in urban areas. Naturally, ecologists would like to witness this phenomenon. However, the species rich grassland, which had shrunk by more than 50% between 1982 and 1992, would disappear by early 2000s (Kowarik & Langer, 2005). Ironically, the ecologists would also like to preserve the species richness at the expense of flux.

The designers were also faced with resolving the contention between balancing ecological protection and public access. Community members and the funder had made it clear that public access was an important part of the new park and integral to conservation outreach, at the opposition of scientists and ecologists (Langer, 2012).

Were the grasslands accessible to visitors, the fear was that trampling would inevitably cause a decline in ecosystem integrity and a decline in most of the rare species (Kowarik & Langer, 2005). More importantly, the site had been an area of social activities championed by the Bürgerinitiative Südgelände with their outreach activities going so far as hosting organized tours and setting up a mobile information booth. The challenge was finding a suitable compromise that addressed the competing ecological and social interests.

**Key Concepts, Goals, and Design Solution**

Faced with the limitations and a predetermined concept of an urban nature park the designers set up three goals for the park (2012):

1. A spatial typology for the park that protects the ecologically sensitive grassland, give prominence to the natural processes that have given the site its character,
all the while organizing the park into distinct and varied experiences for the visitors.

2. Visitors accessing the park are to be directed by a pathway concept that establishes a physical link to the landscape while taking advantage of the railway infrastructure.

3. Preserve natural and cultural traces (both objects and processes) to connect visitors to the temporal dimension.

Unlike the first conservation-focused scheme for the park, the designers opted for a tripartite spatial typology of grassland, wooded groves, and denser woodland as the spatial organizational scheme to satisfy the varied needs of the park. Three-point-six hectares of the grassland in the park are protected in a nature conservation area where strict design maintenance measures maintain the rich ecological composition. Access is limited to a raised walkway designed by ODIOUS art group to separate the visitors from the sensitive vegetation while providing a higher vantage point. A maintenance scheme using goats to graze on woody suckers preserves the grassland typology from infiltration of woody plants. This scheme limits human disturbance to the most sensitive portion of the park.
Figure 9: The nature conservation zone lies beyond a modest plaque. It instructs visitors to stay on the path.

The rest of the park (14.4 ha) is designated as landscape protection area focusing on protecting the original experience of the park where the vegetation is allowed to evolve over time. The black locust, birch, and aspen groves, all of which are early woody succession species, are only managed by periodic thinning. These groves, in turn, will evolve into denser woodland. The juxtaposition of these three successional stages illustrates the park's ongoing transformation without sacrificing its ecological and experiential diversity. By cleverly controlling the rate at which succession takes place, the designers have created a site, which uses all three strategies to narrate the process of succession.
The park is accessed and experienced primarily through its paths throughout the nature and landscape conservation zones. The extent of design intervention evolved from a design proposal that was exclusively a simple pathway system to one that included more intensive interventions that invite users to interact with the landscape. The pathway concept utilizes the relic rail links and over and underpasses as basis for the circulation pattern. Connecting paths perpendicular to the rails create different size loops. The paths’ configuration determines the level of access suitable for the landscape typology. In the woodland and grove typology, paths are at grade without impediments facilitating direct interaction with the landscape. Other paths are defined in greater detail to limit porosity or deny outright access.

Figure 10: (Left) One of a few perpendicular paths in Südgelände.

Figure 11: (Right) A moment of choice as paths and rails diverge in the north end of the park.

In the most extreme case, artists have claimed the former underpass walls as canvas for a revolving set of street art, very much in line with the graffiti-friendly tone in the rest of the city. Traversing the paths and corridors originally reserved for rail traffic and rail operators establishes connection to the rail yard and the adventurers who first ventured into the abandoned yard.
Südgelände makes use of the natural and industrial traces to establish an aesthetic that has been championed by earlier projects such as Latz + Partner’s Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord in Germany’s Ruhr valley and Richard Haag’s Gasworks Park in Seattle, Washington. The park makes no effort in hiding its industrial past, but at the same time makes no effort in preserving the past in museum-like fashion. Rather, the industrial elements are strewn throughout the park just as they have been left to be reclaimed by nature. Most elements like the rails, signal boxes, and an old turntable are left in situ, hidden behind vegetation, decaying and waiting to be discovered by visitors.
The larger structures, such as the locomotive hall, have been refurbished to serve as a multi-functional space for theatre, dance, and performance space (Grün Berlin GmbH). ODIOUS, a group of metal work artists who once worked out of the former locomotive hall on site, contributed to the beautification of the nature park using steel and railway motifs in the *objets d’art* around the park (Lachmund 2013). With a forest growing out of a rail yard and decaying industrial elements, one cannot escape the poignant reminder of the passing of time and the feebleness of industry and human achievement. At the same time, however, the evolution from industrial space, to wilderness, to public green space is also a symbol of rebirth that is slowly cleansing past horrors and focuses the gaze towards the future of the Südgelände. No matter the viewpoint, evidence of change is always at hand. Sometimes the change is voluntary as in the many new additions to the park, but other times change is in the hands of natural forces.
## Chapter 4 – Case Study: Evergreen Brick Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Evergreen Brick Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Don River Valley, Toronto, Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Designed / Planned</td>
<td>Don Valley Brick Works founded 1889; kilns closed 1984; Land appropriated by City authorities 1989; Quarry gardens revitalization started 1992; Planning for adaptive reuse of industrial site started 2002; an expanded plan accommodating larger scale revitalization started 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Completion / Site Opened</td>
<td>Evergreen Brick Works opened in 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>16 ha / Evergreen Brick Works 5 ha, Weston Family Quarry Garden 11 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Landscape Architect(s) / Designer | Project Lead: du Toit Alsopp Hillier Architects Ltd. (DTAH)  
| Client(s)                  | Evergreen |
| Other Stakeholders         | City of Toronto, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Friends of the Valley citizens coalition |
| Managed by                 | Evergreen |
| Landscape Type             | Community open space, historic landscape, recreational area, urban park, nature reserve, institutional landscape |
| Approach to terrain vague  | Primary: Extended relationship  
Secondary: Symbolic narrative |
**Project Overview:**

Evergreen Brick Works (EBW) is a former shale and clay quarry and brick manufacturing plant that has been transformed to a multi-use campus focused on connecting the city to nature. Located not far from the banks of the Don River, the 16-hectare Evergreen Brick Works complex comprises the Weston Family Quarry Garden and industrial heritage buildings that make up the actual Evergreen Brick Works. Of note is the adaptive reuse of the old industrial architecture to house a large variety of uses, and the naturalized gardens situated in the defunct quarry. The site is surrounded by woodlands and trails typical of the Toronto ravines system and major arterials of the Bayview Avenue and Don Valley Parkway to the south and east. Up the quarry face to the north and west is Rosedale, one of Toronto’s oldest suburbs and most affluent neighbourhoods.

Opened in 2010, EBW’s 100-year history of heavy industrial use, abandonment, unsanctioned appropriations, and heritage sensitive redevelopment bestowed a multilayered aesthetic that exemplifies porosity and connection to history, nature, and culture. Juxtaposing the openness is its peculiar location, hidden away in a nook of the Don River Valley in the middle of Toronto, which in itself is a stark contrast to the urbanity surrounding it. The juxtaposing of new and old, urban and green speak to the ‘light touch and loose fit’ approach (Lobko 2011) that lets the traces silently narrate the evolution of the site and allow the visitors to draw on their imagination to create their own narrative of the Brick Works and its significance to the wider context.

Between the rawness of the industrial traces and the revitalized quarry garden is a sense of community pride awarding it accolades such as the National Honour Award from the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and Great Canadian Public Space from the Canadian Institute of Planners (DTAH 2015). In 2011, the site attracted more than 300 000 visitors and frequently attracts 2000 visitors just for the farmers’ market (Leszcz 2012).
Figure 14: Evergreen Brick Works is a multi-use space nestled in the Don River Valley, ~4km away from Toronto’s central business district (CBD).

**Site Context**

*Location and adjacency*

EBW is situated on the flood plain of the Don River sandwiched between the Rosedale neighbourhood and the Don Valley Parkway, about 4 kilometres from Toronto’s central business district (CBD). Nearby are the Belt Line Trail and Don River Trail that make up the bulk of Toronto’s ravine trail network. The Belt Line Trail itself was once the Belt Line Railway which fell out of use and was converted for pedestrian and cycle use. The Don River Trail across Bayview Avenue follows the course of the Don River and is one of the main recreational trails in Toronto, together with the waterfront Martin Goodman Trail. Its adjacency amongst the linear parks of the ravines makes the EBW a popular destination and hub for weekend excursions and nature activities.

The site is accessible via Bayview Avenue by car or weekend only public transit. Alternatively, the site is also accessible from the Castle Frank subway station via the Belt Line Trail.
**Historical context**

The Don River Valley has been an important landscape feature for the City of Toronto from its founding to present. In the developing Toronto, the Don River was an important source for city building resources such as timber, clay, fish, power, ice, transportation, and waste removal. As the city grew and steam power caught on, the centre of activity moved away from the Don River and transformed the Don River Valley into Toronto’s periphery, conducive to industrial growth, especially for brick works due to clay deposits (Bonnell 2014).

Founded in 1889, the Don Valley Brick Works began when the owner of the paper mill on site struck clay, which over the next century evolved into a 16 building complex (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.; Kryhul 2010; Leszcz 2012; Young 2012b). The Don Valley Brick Works quarry was mostly depleted by the beginning of 1980s. Since the brick yard’s opening, the City of Toronto grew from a settlement of Upper Canada to surpassing Montreal as the economic hub of Canada. Urban pressures, public support for conserving the Don River Valley, and declining profitability for a quarry in the middle of Canada’s largest city influenced the closure of the Brick Works in 1984. Given its floodplain location, the Brick Works offered to sell the property to the city for conservation purposes, but was promptly purchased by Torvalley Associates in excess of $4 million, who sought to rezone the site from industrial to residential (Irvine & Elliott). The TRCA and the City of Toronto expropriated the site from the developer in the mid 1980s with the support of the Ontario Municipal Board and local citizens groups, which lead to rezoning from industrial to open space and parkland (Chodikoff 2007; Irvine & Elliott, n.d.; Leszcz 2012). This lead to the eventual development and opening of the EBW some twenty years later, but not without a period of twenty years of abandonment when it became a hot spot for unsanctioned activities.
Figure 15: (Left) The Don Valley Brickworks circa 1891; (Right) Don Valley Brickworks Quarry was much deeper. Source: Toronto Archives

Physical Significance

Natural Significance
The deeply scarred landscape of the clay and shale quarry exposed geological strata that contained fossils that were significant in proving theories of glacial climate change in prehistoric North America (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.). The most significant is the north slope of the quarry, which exposes several thousand years of geological history. In the early 1900s, University of Toronto professor A.P. Coleman excavated fossil samples along the open quarry face and discovered woolly mammoth remains and evidence of two previous ice ages (Riddell, 2013; Lobko, 2011).

Cultural/Industrial Traces
The Don Valley Brick Works was once an industrial juggernaut in Toronto capable of producing 43 million brick annually in its heyday (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.). Its preeminence came to being following Toronto’s Great Fire of 1904, the consequences of which lead to revisions in Toronto’s building code favouring bricks over the more flammable wood for construction (Lobko 2011). Bricks from the Don Valley Brick Works were a major source of building materials for Toronto including well-known structures such as the Casa Loma stables, Old City Hall, parts of Queen’s Park, as well as significant buildings in Winnipeg, Montreal, and Moncton (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.).
The alternative use of the Don Valley Brick Works site is not a recent phenomenon. During the Great Depression, the Don River Valley and Don Valley Brick Works became home to unemployed men. These “kiln dwellers” occupied the cooling kilns at night with the permission from the General Manager. By 1931, the population who stayed in the brick yards numbered 100 while those who camped along the Don River Valley numbered 400 (Bonnell 2014).

After the site’s abandonment, the site became a hot spot for those with an adventurous and rebellious streak. In Toronto, the Don Valley Brick Works, Canada Malting Silos, and the Hearn generating station were the top three destinations for urban explorers (Reinhart, 2008/2009). Graffiti adorned walls and empty bottles were common evidence of clandestine late night revelries. These traces littered the work floor and walls, which resulted in a clash of punk-rock aesthetics, industrial decay, and opportunist plant colonies (Hume, 2007; Jacques, 2004; Reinhart, 2008/2009). The abandoned brick yard was an escape from the drearily predictable and familiar Toronto, drawing artists to not only reclaim it for themselves, but also to organize underground raves and other events. These acts of trespassing and breaking and entering gained traction with thrill-seeking amateur and professional photographers who are intrigued by the decaying built environment (Reinhart, 2008/2009). In contrast to the counter-culture movement, a conservation movement had already been active since the 1960s in the Don River Valley. Various citizens groups have called for the conservation of Don River Valley establishing a basis for naturalization movement in the area (Bonnell, 2014). Later on, it was the group Friends of the Valley that successfully pushed for the TRCA expropriation of the brick yards that culminated in the EBW in 2010 (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.).
Project Background and History

Hurricane Hazel ravaged Toronto in 1954 causing unprecedented flooding and damage to infrastructure and property across the city, especially in low lying areas. Following the disaster, the TRCA was created to manage the flood plains and rivers in and around Toronto. Properties in floodplains were expropriated and converted into the network of linear parklands that Toronto citizens enjoy today.

After TRCA’s expropriation of the brick works and quarry site from the developer, which “turned out to be the most complicated expropriation hearing in the history of
the province” ultimately costing the Government of Ontario approximately $24 million, the idea for a multi-million-dollar public garden and natural heritage centre was pitched, but failed to gain traction due to the recession in the early 1990s (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.). Despite the economic slow down, funds from public and private sources found their way to remediate the quarry. The City of Toronto and the TRCA together oversaw the remediation efforts that converted the disused quarry into the Weston Family Quarry Garden, a wetland and meadow habitat composed native plants. Evergreen participated in the planting of the site after the 50-meter deep pit was filled in with construction waste and aggregates (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.).

Several developments lead to the redevelopment of the abandoned brick works. Firstly the risk of trespasser accident and resulting lawsuit was too great for City Hall. They felt the liability for a sustained state of dilapidation only invited unregulated use and possible injury from the decaying buildings. Secondly, the newly acquired designation of “Area of Natural and Scientific Interest” for the northern quarry face and as a heritage site under the Ontario Heritage Act for the industrial buildings catalyzed the process (Chodikoff, 2007; Irvine & Elliott, n.d.). These circumstances were unique, allowing the TRCA to accept development for a not-for-profit campus in the Don River’s floodplain (Kryhul, 2010).

Evergreen’s interest in the site piqued during their involvement with the restoration of the quarry. Their original idea in 2002 involved a much smaller scale of utilizing two to three buildings for a small entrepreneurial venture to propagate native plants to augment its charitable mandate and to provide youth employment and skills development opportunities as per their organizational goals. However, the City and TRCA stipulated that the development must include the entirety of the site. With the expanded directive, Evergreen sought partnerships to utilize all 16 buildings of the site, which eventually lead to an expanded vision that positioned the brick works as an incubator for sustainable city building ventures. This attracted like-minded partners, public funders and private donors who would bring their ideas, expertise, networks, and resources to the project committee. While not all the initial partners remained to
the present, the EBW project attracted the University of Toronto, Outward Bound Canada, the YMCA, and others, which secured the bid for the redevelopment of the site in 2003 (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.).

Architecture firms and other technical professionals were brought on to the project team to create a bid for the redevelopment of the site. Starting from a master plan assessing the site’s programming limits and opportunities completed by architectsAlliance (aA) and E.R.A. Architects Inc., Evergreen selected a design team comprising a suite of professionals and local artists. Lead by Joe Lobko of du Toit Allsopp Hillier (DTAH), the team was rounded out by Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes Inc., Diamond + Schmitt Architects, E.R.A. Architects Inc., and consultants in the allied professions. Furthermore, Evergreen brought on internal candidates to the team who fulfilled the roles of environmental communications and public communications and director of site development that ensured a holistic approach in accord with Evergreen’s triple-bottom-line\textsuperscript{13} philosophy (Chodikoff 2007). By late 2006, Evergreen had won the bid to develop and manage the brick yards facilities for the next twenty one years in exchange for a $1 annual lease (Mozas 2012).

Evergreen undertook a considerable public consultation process for through out the design phase that liaised with environmental groups, the heritage conservation community and the general public. Many of these stakeholders, who had been involved in previous chapters of the site’s revitalization efforts, were consulted during open houses and site tours (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.).

In 2007, the project board felt it necessary to animate the site with farmers markets and plant sales to generate publicity before any construction of the industrial pad started. The highly visible events drew in large crowds each weekend, all before the first shovel hit the ground. Due in part to the collaborative process, the design phase

\textsuperscript{13} Triple-bottom-line accounting is an accounting system that considers sociological and environmental gains and costs in addition to standard financial accounting practiced by all corporations and companies. The purpose of a triple-bottom-line accounting system is to capture metrics not traditionally measured in financial accounting, allowing an organization to make decisions based on financial, social, and environmental factors.
saw major revisions that included a reversal on the original plan’s reliance on new construction, with the new plan focused on an adaptive reuse scheme (Chodikoff 2007). Construction took two years with the official opening of EBW in Autumn 2010.

**Design Solution**

*What problem was the project solving? What are the challenges of the site?*

The city and TRCA stipulated that proposals for the redevelopment of the brick works site needed to demonstrate the following four conditions (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.):

1. Respect the site’s geological, ecological, and industrial heritage;
2. Provide public programming related to the site’s multi-faceted heritage;
3. Utilize all sixteen heritage buildings; and

The client and designers saw all four conditions as interrelated and the challenge was to create a holistic design solution. Early in the design process, Claude Cormier noted that the valley’s characteristics — the traffic, water, trains, people, and animals are all in constant flux. Cormier urged the design team to view the site through a landscape lens, which resulted in a concept that allowed the intervention to become part of the valley’s “flow” (Chodikoff 2007). This perspective matched Evergreen’s own holistic challenge to make EBW a “triple-bottom-line” enterprise that provided returns not only financially, but also socially, and environmentally.

**Environmental Challenges**

Feedback from public consultations pointed to the need for protecting the natural environment in light of the hundreds of thousands of people expected to visit EBW. The impact of the visitors could disrupt the urban nature established in the Quarry Garden, cause excessive noise and light pollution, and excessive reliance on private cars due to infrequent transit service (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.). Furthermore, the site’s location in the floodplain and ravine makes water management a significant environmental factor for the buildings and landscape (Kryhul, 2010).
Social Challenges
In addition to the scientific and cultural heritage designations which gave protection status to the north quarry face and industrial buildings indefinitely, the designers sought to protect the traces of counterculture as well. In response to heritage conservation, Evergreen’s view is that its heritage encompasses the 20-year period where the site housed a different culture than simply brick making. Geoff Cape, executive director of Evergreen defends the graffiti as legitimate art form that adds beauty and excitement to the site, especially in contrast with the derelict industrial textures (Wilson 2010).

Another challenge for the designer is the site’s location. Despite being within 4 km of the busiest parts of downtown Toronto, the brick works site is bounded by steep slopes and a high speed arterial, with minimal public transit penetration. Nearby residents are concerned with the abundance of cars that EBW could draw into their residential neighbourhood (Irvine & Elliott, n.d.).

Financial Challenges
The EBW complex needs to be financially self-sustaining meaning that the site needs to have several income generating businesses that match the vision of this environmental community hub.

Key Concepts, Goals, and Design Solution
The goal of the project was to create a “national centre for sustainable cities” whose purpose includes a think tank, incubator, and demonstration of best practices for sustainable city building (Hume 2009). Since the Weston Family Quarry Garden had already been established, the EBW phase of development focused on integrating the sixteen heritage buildings and industrial pad to complete the complex. Only one new building, the Centre for Urban Sustainability, a 40 000-square-foot, five-storey building was constructed atop an existing heritage building (Building 12 Figure 18) (Kryhul 2010).
Figure 17: (Left) Site plan for the Evergreen Brick Works and Weston Family Quarry Garden. Source: Lost Rivers

1. Quarry ponds
2. North quarry face (bare)
3. Historic buildings (Evergreen Brickworks)
4. Lookout and trail
5. Chimney court
6. The Pavilions
7. Meadow
8. Carolinian forest
9. Mud creek
10. East quarry face (now vegetated)
11. Ravine Toronto Ravines

Figure 18: (Below) Evergreen Brick Works site map. Source: Evergreen
The design solution follows the philosophy of making connections between people, city, nature, and history explicit. Lobko and the design team call their approach to the site one of “light touch and loose fit.” In an interview with the Toronto Star (Harvey 2008), Lobko summarized his perception of the site:

“You can almost feel the stories pouring out of the walls and feel the heat and the rumble of the train carrying the bricks through those long tunnel kilns. It's a magic place in a unique location.”

The idea of “light touch and loose fit” firstly honours the heritage that contributes to the charm of the place by intervening only when necessary and allowing traces from the past to illustrate the progression of time (Lobko 2011). The contrast and surprise characteristic of the brick yard plays heavily in the interplay of new and historic elements. Michael Beckman of Diamond + Schmitt Architects stated that the design team discovered “the best thing [they] could do was to keep as much as possible and be happy with all the layers - the industrial archaeology, the decay, the graffiti” (Young 2012a). The Kiln Building was covered wall to wall with graffiti that Evergreen considered artefacts of the site’s abandoned years. The restoration of the Kiln Building saw more than 70% of the graffiti preserved (McIsaac 2010). Artefacts in their various conditions of decay dot the site in ways too numerous to document, creating a palimpsestic experience. As an example, as one walks toward the Centre for Green Cities building, the visitor is greeted by a dilapidated wall (that is undoubtedly structurally reinforced), a shallow pit of broken bricks, new artwork depicting Toronto’s extensive ravine system, and the patio of a contemporary eatery.
Secondly, the “light touch and loose fit” approach acknowledges the existing flows of the natural and man-made systems (Lobko 2011). The industrial buildings formed a formidable visual and physical barrier to the rejuvenated quarry gardens prior to the site opening in 2010. The industrial pad was made more porous to open the site to encourage physical and visual flow from the quarry face to Bayview Avenue. One of the most dramatic visual linkages is the gutted shell of The Pavilions. It is a covered multi-use event space that extends 100m from the front parking lot to an opening leading into the Weston Family Quarry Gardens. Additional vantage points were created at the top of the eastern slope where one can take in a panorama of the entire EBW amongst a backdrop of the Don Valley and the rest of the city. The programming creatively utilizes the adjacent Belt Line Trail as part of the site tour to
extend an appreciation of the relationship between city and nature. Similarly, the site is perforated hydrologically by greenways (bioswales and water channels) that manage the site’s water. Mud Creek, a waterway adjacent to the Quarry Gardens, is diverted through the quarry ponds and wetland that clean the water, before returning to the Don River via a culvert under Bayview Avenue. Socially, The hydrologic, vegetation, and social linkages perforate the former industrial pad, re-establishing the connectivity between the quarry and the ravine system.

Figure 20: (Top and Bottom) Panorama of EBW site from lookout point. Note the views connecting the traces with the site's context.

Thirdly, “light touch and loose fit” infers a sense of incompleteness and availability for new ideas to impact the EBW’s future. Lobko explains that EBW is a laboratory for sustainability (Hume 2007) where the programming will inevitably change as Evergreen’s objectives evolve and new ideas form (Lobko 2011). By not designing completely, the site encourages and expects participation and change as part of the modus operandi. “Light touch and loose fit” approach leaves room for experimentation and adjustment to aesthetics and function. The large flexible spaces in The Pavilions
(buildings 6,7,8) and the Kilns (building 16) accommodate an assortment of programming. New art projects post construction of EBW continue to liven up the complex with new interpretive pieces that link the present with the past to comment on the future (McIsaac, 2010; Zettel, 2012). A number of existing buildings were protected from further deterioration as they await new life so that future generations can leave their own mark amongst the palimpsestic EBW (Lobko, 2011).

Figure 21: Various views around the heritage buildings at EBW. The contrast between derelict and new is the most conspicuous feature.
## Chapter 4 – Case Study: St. Louis Ecological Production Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Name</strong></th>
<th>St. Louis Ecological Production Line (Winner, Pruitt Igoe Now design competition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Former Pruitt-Igoe housing project site, St. Louis, Missouri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Designed / Planned</strong></td>
<td>Pruitt-Igoe housing project undergoes demolition 1972-77; Gateway schools complex built on part of the site 1989; Pruitt Igoe Now competition closed March 2012;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Completion / Site Opened</strong></td>
<td>June, 2012, the Pruitt Igoe Now competition releases three prize winners selected in the second round of jury review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>30 ha in total / 10 ha public school c.1995; 13 ha undeveloped urban forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Architect(s) / Designer</strong></td>
<td>Heather Dunbar &amp; Xiaowei R. Wang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client(s)</strong></td>
<td>Pruitt Igoe Now! competition jury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>Pruitt Igoe Now! advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managed by</strong></td>
<td>Pruitt Igoe Now!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Type</strong></td>
<td>Community open space, historic landscape, recreational area, memorial landscape, educational facility, productive landscape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Approach to terrain vague** | Primary: Symbolic narrative  
Secondary: Process as framework |
Project Overview:
The Pruitt-Igoe site is a 30-hectare parcel in St. Louis, Missouri, of which 13 hectares are currently a fenced-in forest atop the demolished site of the former public housing project. Located in the DeSoto-Carr neighbourhood 2.5 kilometers north west of downtown St. Louis, the site’s despondent history of multiple declines parallels the hardship faced by many cities in the Rust Belt of the United States. The other 17 hectares are a collection of schools and churches, a park, a couple of abandoned buildings and unkempt turf. To the north of the Pruitt-Igoe site is the equally desolate North St. Louis neighbourhood, which consists of vacant buildings, grassy empty lots, and a smattering of detached homes that have weathered the inner city’s decline. *Terrain vague* is very much present in this northern St. Louis neighbourhood.

In 2011, the Pruitt Igoe Now! design competition invited architects, landscape architects, students, designers, and artists to reimagine the Pruitt-Igoe site. The competition asked for proposals to situate the site as a threshold between the rejuvenating St. Louis downtown core and the stabilizing North St. Louis. The competition attracted 348 submissions, of which three were chosen as winners (Pruitt Igoe Now 2012b). This case study uses the winning proposal, “St. Louis Ecological Production Line,” as the basis for its investigation. This is a proposal that imagines the forested site and neighbouring vacant lots as productive land for producing plant material for St. Louis’s parks and near-extirpated riverine species to replenish the biodiversity of the area (Dunbar & Wang, 2012). The submission illustrates a future of ecological productivity through symbolically linking St. Louis’s industrial past with the current state of urban wilderness.
Figure 22: While only 2.5 km to downtown, the Pruitt-Igoe site (green) and surrounding area is severely underutilized surrounded by vacant lots (red). The decline is widespread due to suburbanization.

Site Context

Location and adjacency

Immediately to the west and north is a mixture of single and multi-family dwelling from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Due to the persistent economic stagnation of North St. Louis, population has declined since 1950, leaving many vacant lots and vacant buildings in the area. These lots usually consist of overgrown lawns in various stages of care. This neighbourhood looks into a fenced-in forested rectangular parcel in the northwest quadrant. The southern edge of the site is bounded by large warehouses that disrupt the street grid and therefore access to the West Downtown neighbourhood. To the east is the neighbourhood of Carr Square, a residential area of multi-unit housing (row-houses and three-storey condominiums).
Figure 23: Pruitt Igoe site. Note the forested portion inside the red border. Source: Pruitt Igoe Now 2012.
Modernism is said to have died with the first demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project in 1972 according to critics of the project (Bristol 1991). The project is widely mythologized as an architectural failure of the modernist approach to creating successful lived space for the poor. With its Corbusian buildings and minimalist landscaping, the 33 eleven-storey towers were eventually torn down by 1976 due to deteriorating living conditions and declining occupancy rates. The site was originally purchased by the St. Louis Land Clearance and Redevelopment Authority to clear large tracts of black slums as part of a post war inner-city redevelopment scheme (Bristol, 1991). Bristol (1991) and Comerio (1981) suggest that the failure of the project cannot be borne solely by Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth, the architects responsible for the design of the project. They argue that the failure is instead a culmination of systemic racial oppression, regional economic recession, and post-war suburban-focused economic policies. Originally designed as a mixed-form
housing project with a combination of high-rises and townhouses, the Pruitt-Igoe housing project’s funding was reduced, forcing a complete redesign based on cost rather than liveability. These reductions forced compromises in both the quality of materials and amenities. A series of unfavourable events followed the completion of the compromised projects that forced the community into a downward spiral. Shortly after the project was finished, Missouri ratified desegregation the state legislature. This affected the desirability of the project, as whites did not want to mix with blacks. Furthermore, lending practices favouring whites and suburban developments exacerbated the “white flight” phenomenon, further decreasing demand for the housing projects. Between the falling demand and poor build quality, these forces hampered the viability of the housing project and lead to its eventual demolition 20 years after construction ended (Comerio, 1981, Bristol, 1991).

Unlike the test demolitions in 1972, where three of the towers were dynamited, the thirty remaining towers were torn down slowly by the means of wrecking balls and excavators (Bristol, 1991). The buildings’ topsides were removed and landfilled offsite, foundations broken up and partially removed, and ultimately fill covered the site of the towers. Few remnants of the towers remained post demolition. Their towering presence was replaced with patches of grass and weeds, not unlike neighbouring areas faced with their own dereliction. The first post-Pruitt-Igoe purpose for the site was to become a dumping ground for hundreds of tons of excavated fill at the north end of the site. Rubble and fill from urban renewal and construction projects in St. Louis continued to accumulate until 1995. In the same year, a 10-hectare public school complex was built on the southwest end of the site (Allen, 2012).

Physical Significance

Natural Significance

The Pruitt-Igoe site’s uniqueness stems from it having the only reforested parcel of land in North St. Louis despite the many vacant lots in the nearby surrounds. The undeveloped 13-hectare site was “bestowed” its biological windfall from stowaway seeds in the fill material dumped on to the site in the early 1990s. This fill material
comprised topsoil, gravel, brick and limestone fragments, and broken concrete. The fill was dumped randomly into the site, which created an uneven landscape of mounds from which seeds transported in the debris blossomed to form the urban forest (Allen 2012). Tree density is at its greatest in the eastern and northern quadrants while the southern and western edges of the fenced in site exhibit earlier stages of succession of tall grasses and small shrubs.

**Cultural/Industrial Traces**

Other than the 10-hectare public school and the 13-hectare urban forest, five remaining buildings and DeSoto Park make up the last 7 hectares of the 30-hectare site. The collection include two Catholic churches from mid to late 1800s that are still in use today; a single-storey library building converted to a church; a two-storey former school building that serves as a Junior Naval Academy; and a still in use one-storey electric substation. The electric substation is the only building within the
forested parcel, while the churches and DeSoto Park face outward on the north, west, and east edges. The Junior Naval Academy lies between DeSoto Park and the forest in the southeast quadrant. Most of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing remnants are either buried or landfilled elsewhere. However, historic infrastructure, like pavement, curbs, and manholes can still be found amongst the vegetation and rubble. The sidewalks surrounding the site are also from that era.

**Project Background and History**
The Pruitt Igoe Now! competition sought ideas from the creative community worldwide and invited academics, students, architects and landscape architects, designers, writers and artists to re-imagine the remaining 23 hectares of the historic Pruitt-Igoe housing project. In commemorating the 40th anniversary of the public housing project’s demolition, the competition asked “What is Pruitt-Igoe now?” The competition opened on July 1, 2011 and closed on March 16, 2012, the anniversary of the first demolition blast. Spanning a little more than eight months, the competition positioned the site as a geographical and temporal threshold for St. Louis. Pruitt Igoe Now! attracted 348 submissions, from which it took the seven-member jury three-and-half months to select three prize winners. The entrants were given background information to devise their own programs and concept as well as encouraged to attend a guided tour of the site. Judging the competition was a jury composed of academics in arts, urbanism, architecture, and urban issues. Michael R. Allen and Nora Wendl, a director in an architectural preservation firm and assistant professor of architecture, respectively, managed the competition. An advisory committee was comprised of historians, filmmakers, local magazine editors, former civil servants, an entrepreneur and one former resident.
Design Solution

What problem was the project solving? What are the challenges of the site?

The competition brief asked entrants to imagine a way forward for this *terrain vague* while being conscious of the consequences in altering the current state. In very clear terms, Pruitt Igoe Now! urged entrants to consider the site four-dimensionally and to focus on a solution that envisioned a “process” of reclamation rather than a full fledge “product” (Pruitt Igoe Now 2012a). Considering the site’s longest narrative since the razing of the slums is its present life of abandonment and ecological succession of 43 year rather than the 21 years of a failed public housing policy, the sentiment that ‘nothing lasts forever’ is poignant. To that end, Pruitt Igoe Now! challenged entrants to consider issues much broader than the aesthetics of their proposals.
Challenge of race and agency

The site’s location and history lay atop a set of sensitive social issues that have strained St. Louis and the rest of United States. While some critics have placed the blame of Pruitt-Igoe’s demise on the mechanistic architecture, the thirty-three towers lay within a larger system of societal processes. Pruitt-Igoe’s history of being a segregated and eventually all black public housing project leads one to consider power relations and how they are manifested in the built environment. The competition asked of the entrants to consider these five questions:

1. How do we proceed from here?
2. Who should have say?
3. Who is most affected?
4. Who has the most claim to this space? and,
5. Who stands to profit.

Related to the social issues is the persistent economic stagnation in the surrounding area. While the urban renewal schemes starting from the 1950s successfully attracted new jobs to downtown St. Louis, the shift from blue-collar manufacturing jobs to white-collar jobs did not revitalize the already impoverished North St. Louis neighbourhood (Comerio 1981). This, and “white flight” from the urban core created the landscape of vacant lots and buildings that continued to this day. Even though architecture and landscape architecture are not the cause, nor can it be the sole solution, of deep social problems (Bristol 1991), the process of placemaking should consider the consequences of how landscapes can effect positive outcomes for the site and its surrounding context.

Key Concepts, Goals, and Design Solution

The first prize winner of the Pruitt Igoe Now! Competition, ‘St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line’ (Dunbar & Wang, 2012), whose title was changed to St. Louis Ecological Production Line, proposes an agricultural landscape for the derelict site,
Figure 27: The St. Louis Ecological Production Line. The name was changed from Assembly Line to Production Line after submission. Note that the concept incorporates a gradual appropriation of the surrounding neighbourhoods. Due to the stage of the project, key details are lacking. Source: Dunbar and Wang, 2012.

much like the bulk of the entrants (Allen & Wendl, 2014). The concept draws upon St. Louis’s bygone identity as the centre of manufacturing industry on the Mississippi and reimagines the site and neighbouring areas as an assembly line for St. Louis’s ecological health. Instead of growing food, the designers envision the underused landscape to produce trees and native plants for over 5000 hectares of St. Louis’s parks, and native fish and mussel species to replenish the dwindling stock in the Mississippi River. This urban forest centre scheme expands northwards over the course of four years appropriating vacant lots as plant and tree nurseries and for aquaculture while vacant houses accommodate educational and recreational functions. This “productive green corridor” is envisioned as a catalyst for a productive St. Louis by utilizing opportunities beyond the Pruitt-Igoe site in a phased and scalable scheme, while drawing on multiple forms of agro-husbandry (Pruitt Igoe Now 2012b).
Chapter 5 - Discussion

No longer absent of purpose, the Evergreen Brick Works, Südgelände Nature Park, and St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line, all attempt to redefine urban experiences through incorporating their respective terrain vague conditions into new purposes. Even though the designers’ intentions for their respective sites vary somewhat, the interventions revolve around a theme that emphasizes temporality and flux, i.e. the passing of time and change. Secondly, the resulting designs invite users to create their own meaning for the space. Lastly, even though these interventions draw inspiration from their abandoned pasts, these spaces are no longer terrain vague.

Each of these sites incorporates a mixture of the tripartite notion of terrain vague: the notion of uncertain and defy classification (vagus), the notion of flux and passing of time (woge), and the notion of being unoccupied and available (vacuus). Since these three definitions of vague often overlap in a complex way, Sheridan’s (2012) eight qualities of terrain vague are called upon to examine if and how designers have incorporated the terrain vague condition as part of their sites’ identities (see Table 1 on page 11 for more details). Each of the eight qualities are ascribed the relevant tripartite definitions by order of significance to aid in their interpretation.

1. Registration of change
   vagus, woge

While it is easy for the casual observer to catalogue daily and seasonal changes in most landscapes, conventional built environments often lack evidence of long term change. One of the first noticeable aspects of terrain vague is its sense of fluidity and flux over multiple time scales (e.g. process of weathering or growth over the span of years or decades). At Südgelände, change is emphasized by physically placing the current user experience amidst the process of natural succession in rail yard. By having visitors traverse the park along paths where original rails lay, the remnant rails remind the
users of the trains that once were shunted on the very same spot sixty years prior. Yet that rail is juxtaposed by a maturing forest, which emphasizes an ongoing departure from industry and a takeover by nature. Similarly, the juxtaposition of decaying industrial traces, graffiti and contemporary architecture and educational programming for children complicates the identity of the EWB, forcing visitors to discover and compose a coherent narrative to make sense of the environment. Physical evidence of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project exists only in the remaining infrastructure of broken pavement, electric substation, and institutional buildings. The designers of St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line propose to keep the current forested state as a symbol of modernism and the beginning stages of a change to a future of ecological productivity that will transform St. Louis.

2. Indeterminacy and ambiguity (giving agency of interpretation and imagination back to the visitor)

_vagus, vacuus_

Spaces in contemporary urbanscapes are often orderly and organized rationally to demarcate function and purpose. Take the modern roadway in European and North American context as an example: each lane is reserved for a distinct function (e.g. through way, overtaking, bicycle lane) leaving little room for disparate interpretations. However, _terrain vague_ is characterized by the lack of imposed order. The consequence of this is it gives users the room to interpret and create their own meaning and order. Whether deliberate or a matter of convenience, the St. Louis Ecological Production Line leaves many details out of their proposal. Regardless, at the conceptual stage of the project, this level of ambiguity allows the community to mould the project according to their own interpretation of needs and desires. One can argue that the lack of details at this juncture reflects the competition’s emphasis on ‘process’ rather than ‘product.’ Südgelände has few wayfinding or interpretive plaques, leaving the story of the forest-in-the-rail-yard up for interpretation. This level of ambiguity also bleeds into the treatment of the pathways edges. Other than the protected grassland of the nature conservation area, pathway edges are loosely defined in the forest and groves, suggesting to users that the park experience is not restricted to the paths,
inviting visitors to chart their own course in the dense forest. Despite it being only 165 metres wide, Südgelände’s visually dense forest gives the impression that it is much wider than its actual dimensions. EBW’s approach to indeterminacy and ambiguity is not as developed due to its education-focused programming. Many of the site’s peculiar features are explained through interpretative plaques to illustrate history and process. However, the designers sought to retain ambiguity in nuanced ways. Nestled through out the EBW are decaying industrial artefacts that have been left to decay. Rusting chutes attached to derelict window openings on the second floor, concrete footings for massive brick pressing machinery, and beds of broken bricks add texture to the revitalized site. In effect, the designers for EBW have created a series of ‘easter eggs’ for visitors to find.

3. Temporal and temporary interventions

*Woge, vagus*

Incremental interventions that develop over time mirror the organic process of succession, which is often found in abandoned spaces. To use this as a strategy designers must eschew the conventional means of designing a finished product to designing a process that can adapt to evolving conditions and exhibit incremental change. The strategy might use temporary structures to satisfy a specific need or to develop spaces that can adapt to changing conditions. The design philosophy behind the EBW described as ‘light touch and loose fit’ expects the EBW and its programming to evolve over time and that any structures or landscapes leave room for experimentation and adjustments. This resulted in a design that favours large flexible spaces like the Pavilion over spaces with highly specialized functions. Further, the EBW continuously updates its artistic installations experimenting with different aesthetics. Similar approaches are seen at Südgelände where the graffiti walls of the underpass exhibit a revolving door of new art and artists and new uses are being found for the Locomotive Hall and adjacent buildings. The main notion of temporality in the design of Südgelände is however allowing the forest to slowly develop around the decaying rail yard artefacts. By emphasizing the process of succession, the designers are crafting a narrative of evolution and adaptation. Notably,
the St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line takes the temporal approach to heart by structuring the submission as a conceptual process free of definitive design solutions save for a phased take over of nearby abandoned lots and structures for plant production and social services.

4. Mobility - roving subjectivity

As conditions and needs change, so too do the location of events. In an extreme case, in an ocean-side site facing inundation due to climate change and sea level rising, it may be necessary to relocate shore-side activities inland, for example. Similarly a design invoking terrain vague as context must be flexible to allow spatial migration of functions and programming. The change could be necessitated by an element as simple as weather. EBW can account for such a variable due to its many large multifunction halls and open spaces. Simple reconfiguration of movable furniture can accommodate the children’s education programming either outside in the Chimney Court or inside in the Kiln Building. Even though the sites are flexible, their programming and organization nevertheless resist the level of chaos that a terrain vague allows. Südgelände is considerably less flexible due in fact to their adherence to fostering the unhindered growth of the forest and protecting the grassland. As the underbrush fills in the forest floor, any unofficial paths that fall out of use will be grown over. Although the locomotive hall and surrounding outdoor communal spaces are multi-use, the organization of activities is rigid enough to prohibit large-scale and rapid changes. There is not enough detail to discuss the mobility of the St. Louis Ecological Production Line.

5. Incompleteness

Terrain vague has been described as a space of becoming, where its incompleteness, and therefore its ability to become a space for any need, is its greatest asset (Radovic 2014). In interventions using terrain vague as material, this sense of incompleteness can be interpreted as not having reached its final state and therefore allowing room for
future adaptations to fulfill changing conditions. This is another way of placing significance of process over that of product. All three projects place significance on a continually developing site and that the designers’ purpose is to intervene and catalyze possible future outcomes. Both Südgelände and EBW exhibit an intervention style that only intervenes in the landscape when deemed necessary. For example, both EBW and Südgelände’s designers opted to not assign functions for all remnant structures allowing the possibility for them to be used at a later stage for functions yet unknown. Similarly, the St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line proposes to appropriate vacant lots incrementally and reserve vacant structures for functions later. The assumption for all three is that eventually the entire site will have purpose. However, this assumption does not preclude the possibility of the purpose changing. In fact, EBW is explicit that the site’s purpose will change. In that sense, EBW is incomplete due to it transforming to suit evolving needs.

6. Performative properties

*vagus, vacus*

*Terrain vague*’s lack of regulations draw performative activities, especially those that are deemed to be outside of mainstream acceptable behaviour, like graffiti. Despite their fondness for spontaneous art, EBW and Südgelände heavily regulate how the performative properties play out on site. Südgelände’s graffiti walls are part of a larger system of legal walls in Berlin that allow artists to express their art. However, punishment for spraying on walls not designated for graffiti carries significant penalties. Spraying is confined to the walls of the underpass on the western side of the park and only allowed Monday to Saturday before 3pm excluding statutory holidays. While both EBW and Südgelände welcome art as part of the sites’ aesthetics, the process of acquiring and showcasing art is now highly regulated and bureaucratized. Even though Evergreen preserved a significant amount of graffiti found in the Kiln Building, spraying graffiti on the grounds is prohibited unless sanctioned by the complex’s management. These practices of regulating artistic appropriations is

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14 Berlin is widely known for its proliferation of street art-friendly policies. Many parks and alleyways have dedicated “legal walls,” where artists can freely express their artistic talents. Graffiti outside of legal walls, however, are met with high financial penalties.
perhaps the most significant signal that these spaces are by no means *terrains vague*,
despite that these spaces use *terrain vague* conditions as material for their new interventions. Nothing regarding art is mentioned in the St. Louis Ecological Production Line.

7. Participatory process (wide spectrum is important)

vacuus, vagus

The *terrain vague* condition is predicated on the appropriation of space by individuals and groups without regulations. All appropriations are, to a certain degree, negotiated. All three projects involve community participation and a multi-stakeholder process. Since the St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line is a conceptual submission from two designers, their design does not constitute a form of participatory process. However, the Pruitt Igoe Now! competition advisory panel comprises former residents of the public housing project, a former alderwoman of St. Louis, a current resident of adjacent neighbourhood, and local historians. The grassroots involvement in the creation of Südgelände was a large component in shaping and fostering the project. In fact without the interventions of local ecologists, community groups, and allied politicians, the defunct rail yard would have been reopened (Lachmund 2013). A multi-stakeholder participatory process was also adopted at the creation of the EBW. Friends of the Valley and other citizens’ initiatives had been pushing for Toronto and TRCA to wrestle the Don Valley Brick Works site from the developer. Their involvement and political pressure oversaw one of Ontario’s most expensive expropriations to date. These same actors had a role in the creation of the Weston Family Quarry Gardens that preceded the EBW and soon played a role in the development of the EBW.

8. Diversity

vagus, vacuus

Interventions invoking *terrain vague* must exhibit a flexibility that fosters a diverse range of uses. *Terrain vague*’s ability to hold a clandestine party venue, function as a nature retreat, artistic canvas, or dumping ground is a function of being purposeless
and therefore adaptable. One may argue that the diversity of uses in *terrain vague* is unrivalled. However, in reality the lack of purpose also engenders danger, leaving many opportunities untapped for risk of injury and/or legal ramifications. The Pruitt-Igoe site is able to develop into an urban wilderness because of its negative connotations (e.g. urban legends of packs of wild dogs, bad side of town, symbol of failed public housing policy and perhaps enduring racism in the United States). Instead, evidence shows that a post-*terrain vague* may in actuality be more diverse. The St. Louis Ecological Production Line envisions a future of employment and pride in the community, in which the community develops the site for a wider range of uses than its current state. Despite EBW having a rich history of counter-culture appropriation, the site now attracts upwards of 2000 visitors for the farmers market alone. By including conference activities, children’s nature camp activities and users of the Quarry Gardens, the EBW is magnitudes more diverse than its previous *terrain vague* state. Similar arguments can be made for Südgelände. Despite original users of that *terrain vague* stating displeasures with how much it has changed (Lachmund, 2013), Südgelände’s image as a wild but managed nature park draws in more diverse support than its previous life as well. What this inconsistency shows is the difference between the romanticized view of *terrain vague* and its actual state. Lévesque (2002) critiqued that the original romanticized view of *terrain vague* too easily disregards its negative aspects. No quality illustrates this critique clearer than claiming diversity in *terrain vague*.

**Summary**

In summary, Sheridan’s (2012) eight qualities of *terrain vague* have been addressed in one capacity or another in each of these three cases in the utility of providing context to their recent history and to provide direction in their continuing development. The *terrain vague* condition in all three cases is treated as a legitimate phase of the site’s identity and regarded as important milestones in the ongoing narrative. In Südgelände, the successional landscape intermittently masking the derelict rail yard is modestly clarified to provide visitors an insight to the web of human and natural processes in the nature park. At EBW, the designers expose oft-hidden industrial relics and graffiti
as a device to make comment on the interconnectedness of nature, society, and industry. Lastly, the Ecological Assembly Line treats its *terrain vague* as a symbolic beginning of a revitalizing St. Louis, from which the vacant lots transform northwards into a productive landscape. By unfolding visual and experiential clues, these designers are giving credence to *terrain vague*’s quality of *vagus*, a first impression of contradictions and imperfections that tap into the innate curiosity of the observer who is accustomed to orderly and predictable landscapes.

In addition to conserving the physical traces, the designers capture the processes found on the landscape. In all three sites, the designers have attempted to capture and expose the processes and transformations acting on these sites, whether ecological, hydrological, or sociological. Through responding to both physical and process traces of *terrain vague*, design takes on an explicit temporal dimension that shifts the design process from the creation of forms and objects to one curating traces in the landscape and guiding a transformation. In their adaptation of the site’s identity, the designers have made two operations clear in representing *terrain vague* in their interventions:

1. Make flux explicit, and
2. Create mysteries for visitors to unfold.

The inclusion of these operations, which are responses to the qualities *woge* and *vacuns*, respectively, designers are differentiating this type of intervention from those that act strictly in a realm of site preservation. Take for example the Palatine Hill in present-day Rome. The Roman ruins are preserved in *stasis* and users are expected to restrict their interaction to only visual consumption. In contrast, the postmodernist paradigm expects the users to uncover mysteries, and in that process, create personalized meaning.

Despite the strangeness that distinguishes these sites from conventional landscapes, these places are no longer *terrain vague* as they now have purpose. The clearest change from *terrain vague* is the regulated performative properties of the landscape. No longer are artists freely using the walls and the days of clandestine merrymaking are over. The interventions have given structure to the traces; a gesture that has curbed the risk and
adventure associated with *terrain vague*, but have also made these places more accessible.

Heatherington (2012) describes three intervention strategies in *terrain vague* that utilize traces in the landscape to express temporal and object linkages in the landscape. These strategies help the designer in composing signals in the landscape so that observers can construct meaning for themselves. As described previously, these strategies are analogous to literary devices in that they compose a narrative structure for which an individual can determine plot and setting. The three cases explored in this research show that Heatherington’s (2012) three strategies:

1. Symbolic: Narrative;
2. Process-as-framework; and
3. Extended relationships: intertextuality,

are not mutually exclusive and often used concurrently.

When used in conjunction, these strategies fulfill three different functions in the process of creating the *terrain vague* narrative. The use of symbols to establish instances in time is present in all three cases. From Südgelände’s protected grassland and EBW’s graffiti to the preservation of the forested Pruitt-Igoe site, these symbols point to each site’s temporal strata. Each symbol is a milestone in the ongoing narrative of the sites’ histories.

The second strategy, Process-as-framework, animates the processes at work and establishes a link between the temporal strata. At Südgelände, the image of the train yard being consumed by nature is evident in the management strategy of the forest. With underbrush and trees growing unfettered in the park, the process of succession can be seen through juxtaposing the grassland and the forest. EBW animates this process through their architecture in the same way. The EBW illustrates change also at a smaller timescale via the constant updating and adaptation of the site’s aesthetics and programming. In connecting the present to the future, the transformation process is left open ended to accommodate unintended uses.
Lastly, composing elements in the landscape so that their relationships deepen the meaning of the overall story can be found in the three cases, but none as much as at EBW. By exposing and clarifying relationships between traces through juxtaposing the hydrologic and successional process with the city, the designers at EBW help the visitor construct connections between nature, industry, and city. It is precisely this connection that Evergreen feels is important to fostering antecedent ideas and behaviours to building a sustainable city. The same deepening of meaning is felt at Südgelände as visitors invariably read into the evolving meaning of productivity on that landscape over time, and on a grander scale, the evolution of Berlin as a space of conflict to one of harmony, whether between human and nature or between human and human. This strategy engages the visitor to assess the landscape beyond objective realm of space to consider the subjective whole. The previous two strategies focus on establishing signals of past phases and the continuing changes, both of which can be seen as objective knowledge. Intertextuality asks the observer to fill in the relationships between these objects and processes with both objective observations and subjective experiences to construct meaning. It is this last strategy that allows the observer to perceive and conceive of place in its dualistic nature: that place is constructed of objective terms, such as location and climate, and subjective experiences (Tuan 1979).
Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Designers are using *terrain vague* to narrate the flow of time. Sifting through the chaotic *terrain vague* landscapes, designers find that an effective strategy to show time is through highlighting its transformative power in decay and chaos, of which there is an abundance in *terrain vague*. However, clarifying time with traces in the landscape, the designer invariably makes choices that give clarity and purpose. Thus a designer’s only response to *terrain vague* is its destruction. Secondly, by invoking *terrain vague* a designer must engage in the postmodernist perspective. There is one aspect of engaging in *terrain vague* that is unclear, however, which is whether or not the modernist paradigm can coexist with the postmodernist paradigm.

It should be noted here that “modernist” discussed here is not the use of the high-modernist style by Le Corbusier and his peers, but rather is taken to mean a philosophy that presupposes an objective-subjective divide and makes claims of universality based on empirical phenomena (Sarup 1989). Arguably, from a design perspective, the modernist approach will claim a right and wrong way of intervening and the discussion of context remains on a comparatively superficial level, referencing style and arrangement of forms. Alternatively, references to postmodernism and postmodernist are not general descriptions of freeform-style, but rather are umbrella terms for a philosophy that challenges the modernist objective-subjective false dichotomy and supposes that knowledge is coloured by inherent biases in the knowledge generator (Foucault, 1984; Sarup, 1989). To that end, the postmodernist paradigm favours an iterative and inclusive process, which gathers a deep reading of the context, including and not exclusive to multiple perspectives of its recent history, cultural and political sentiments, *et cetera*. It is through this distinction that Trancik’s (1986) concept of *lost space* and its associated design principles are placed in the
modernist camp, while the concept of *terrain vague* (Solà-Morales 1995) and its associating design principles are placed in the postmodernist camp.

Lévesque (2002) asserts that the modernist conception of a problematic *terrain vague* and its hopeful postmodern conception are unproductive to the designer, for the prior too quickly judges the illegibility of *terrain vague* as valueless and the latter glorifies decrepitude to the point of excluding real world concerns and feelings. As an alternative, *terrain vague* is proposed to be “treated as a material” (Lévesque 2002), which is described as, firstly, capturing the experiential and physical dimensions of *terrain vague*, and secondly, using these qualities in the intervention to illustrate its phase of vagueness continuing the site’s identity. These traces are categorized and summarized in eight qualities (Sheridan 2012) discussed previously. These *terrain vague* traces are evidence of processes beyond the purview of design committees and only achievable in the absence of a preconceived plan and by happenstance.

Designers and managers of the three projects in the case studies incorporate their *terrain vague* conditions into the projects, paying homage to the identities that developed over years of abandonment, resulting in the three case studies exhibiting modernist and postmodernist approaches in their post-*terrain vague* phase. The hybridized results suggest a middle ground in which both paradigms can operate, therefore clarifying the overall approach to responding to *terrain vague*. Both Südgelände and EBW exhibit qualities defined in Trancik’s (1986) five spatial configuration principles. Principle one and two stipulate that interventions focus on creating human-scaled spaces that are conducive to pedestrian access and connections with the rest of the city. Both Südgelände (flanked by active railways) and EBW (located in ravine and pedestrian hostile Bayview Avenue) emphasize pedestrian access and pedestrian connections between adjacent neighbourhoods, despite their isolated locations. Even the Pruitt-Igoe Now! competition emphasizes that the site should serve as a gateway to the impoverished North St. Louis district. Principle three advocates for multi-use social spaces that integrate social and commercial functions, effectively blurring the stark lines of functional division so encouraged by the high-
modernist designers. The blurring of the dividing line crosses into architecture itself, as principle five advocates that the public realm should extend indoors, as expressed in EBW’s multi-use kiln building and covered pavilion space. Lastly, principle four makes inferences to Lynch’s (1960) elements to imageability, advocating a simple pattern of access paths connecting landmarks to establish visual order. The St. Louis Ecological Assembly Line at the Pruitt-Igoe site, arguably the vaguest of the cases, choose to maintain the street grid established by planners a century prior to inform the greater circulation pattern. These three cases have created definable elements amongst a landscape of vagueness and have acquired purpose where they can no longer harbour unsavoury activities freely, and thus are no longer terrain vague.

Lynch (1981) claims that making change and plurality comprehensible may be the most challenging application. Even though elements and purpose have been clarified for these cases, clarity is not developed to the extent as to take away the pleasures inherent in puzzles, ambiguities, and mysteries. Each of these three sites enables the visitor to perceive a first order of structure through their defined paths, edges, landmarks, nodes, and districts, while maintaining enough ambiguity to allow the visitor to unfold mysteries to create personal meaning. Lynch (1981) describes that creating order from disorder (e.g. finding patterns in nature) is the essence of cognitive development and through unfolding and ordering of clues in the landscape, an observer gains greater and deeper meaning. It is equally important that the task of unfolding should remain in the domain of the observer rather than the designer save for the first order of structure (Lynch 1981). Similarly, in Trancik’s (1986) investigation of the relevance of figure ground theory, linkage theory, and place theory, of note are his remarks on the importance of social and cultural context in establishing a place’s identity, and the power of subjective perception and action in creating meaning for a place.

Despite the evidence of proto-postmodern design in their remarks, Lynch (1981) and Trancik (1986) hold on to the modernist framework that there might exist a set of universal urban design principles that can solve the problems of urbanity. In the
decades since their writing, the three cases exhibit sensitivity to the postmodern concern for plurality in the conception of landscapes, as well as its temporality. All three cases make concessions to involve a wide range of stakeholders to gather feedback and guidance for the project. The extensive stakeholder committees of both the Südgelände and EBW projects required the designers to take on roles of mediator and manager for the complex landscape system. This view is strong evidence for the profession’s departure from the modernist paradigm, where the role of the designer can be described as an expert craftsman. Lastly, the elements of time and flux, both major components in the postmodern conception of place (Fung 1999; Tuan 1979) and design (Descombes 1999; Høyer 1999; Wall 1999) are well documented in these cases. The transformative property of time is the thematic backbone in illustrating the ongoing changes at Südgelände, in narrating the creative possibility through adaptive reuse at EBW, and is embedded in the symbolic transformation of St Louis’s derelict land into productive farms.

The modernist association with object-based solutions and the postmodern fixation on process and plurality come together in these three cases to effectively produce novel hybridized sites. A first interpretation suggests that the modernist and postmodernist approach work in concert to fill each other’s inadequacies. As noted above, the modernist set of principles provide designers with best practices that purport to create good spaces, which neatly complements postmodernist principles that hesitate to make universal claims. Conversely, the modernist paradigm lacks the flexibility of the pluralistic perspective, which allows and encourages interpretation and adaption. The combined process can be viewed as the modernist side providing the basic building blocks to the project (e.g. paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks) while the postmodernist side provides frameworks for a systematically investigation of local conditions and contexts. Together, these two paradigms seemingly are mutually reinforcing.

On the surface, the complementary approaches make sense, provided you accept the modernist principles as correct. The irony, however, is that such an interpretation
highlights a self-fulfilling definition. In this interpretation, Trancik and Lynch’s western derived insights on appropriate forms are correct not because of their universality but because these sites’ contexts are western in origin. Should the sites’ contexts be sufficiently different from Trancik and Lynch’s source material and inspiration, their principles may not be as effective leaving the postmodern alterations on shaky foundation.

The second interpretation is that these sites in fact fully subscribe to the postmodern paradigm of design. Since the postmodern paradigm derives its forms from the site’s context, with these sites’ context being western and mostly modernist in origin, then surely these sites will exhibit modernist qualities. This interpretation, however, generates another alarming issue especially for the nascent designer. Postmodernism’s openness to plurality hampers its ability to provide concrete guidance. Without the best practices from experts such as Lynch or Trancik, the postmodernist paradigm is left with principles that speak vaguely of deriving innovation from imagination and its context, a position that hardly lend itself to be translated into good spaces easily.

This investigation cannot prove which is the accurate interpretation for these sites’ hybridity: that these are indeed projects exhibiting a transitional period between modernist and postmodernist paradigms or that these are fully in the postmodern realm, but exhibiting modernist tendencies only as a vestigial echo. Nonetheless, designers working with terrain vague express the postmodern penchant for pluralist investigation of context, providing a platform for open-ended discussion on the landscapes’ meaning and the legitimacy of disparate perspectives. Perhaps then the validity of terrain vague in landscape architecture is not due to its novelty, but rather its function as a reflexive space (Barron, 2014) from which its alienness provides distance from convention so one can critically evaluate alternatives to conventional space.

Naturally, the act of design is predicated upon the sensitivities and preferences of the designer, where the results represent a series of subjective choices. It is easy to condense landscape architecture into a simple matter of personal or collective
preferences, especially in a paradigm as seemingly feeble as postmodernism. The crux is that landscape architecture requires more than codified best practices; landscape architecture requires an extended sense of empathy that fosters value-free interpretations and critical analysis of the context so as to capture the nuances available only through a pluralistic world-view. Following that, landscape architecture is an honest transformation of a place’s identity that does not belie the accumulated scars, but rather accepts their capacity as mementos of the passing of time. Conceiving of a post-terrain vague landscape, then, requires including the contradictions exhibited in its previous states, especially that of its scars, for a landscape without scars cannot fully tell its story.

One can argue that the limitation of this research is the premise of the primacy of subjective experience. The exploration into terrain vague is predicated on the denial of wasteland being problematic. One cannot deny that with an abundance of wastelands, the overall perception of that landscape deteriorates (Lynch, 1981; Trancik, 1986; Bowman & Pagano, 2004). However, terrain vague provides a reflexive point to which one can examine the universality of Lynch and Trancik’s position as evidenced in the positive self-organizing efforts of the communities around the three cases. The major limitation of this research is the inability to resolve in absolute terms the threshold and mechanisms that dictate a landscape’s fall into terrain vague, and conversely its transformation into post-terrain vague. It is clear however, that the state of terrain vague may be cyclical in the modernist paradigm as evidenced by the efforts in converting the slums of North St. Louis into Pruitt-Igoe and its subsequent fall back into terrain vague. The second unanswered question borne out of this work is: would a responsive and flexible paradigm result in the same cycle? Or would its inherent responsiveness allow it to transform to suit emergent needs and escape the cycle? Perhaps, the concept of terrain vague can be an indicator of intervention success? These are questions best answered at another time.
Bibliography


Appendix: How to design with our landscapes’ scars - a subjective interpretation of what to do with the junk you’ve got

The overwhelming quality of *terrain vague* that one senses is its strangeness in comparison to its context (Rahmann & Jonas, 2014). Where one might expect order and care in the conventional urbanscape, *terrain vague* may exhibit a sense of chaos and flux muted by an unseen or unfamiliar equilibrium. *Terrain vague* often evokes a sense of wonderment and apprehension, qualities that are harder to find in the thrust for standardization and codification but are still present in the interstitial spaces (Careri 2014). While one cannot build *terrain vague*, by tapping into its qualities the landscape architect invokes flux and a pluralistic worldview into a traditionally static and deterministic domain. These paradoxes are carried through in earnest by designers who elect to invoke *terrain vague* as a significant contextual condition, as noted in the case studies, but the sense of risk and opportunity originally in *terrain vague* gives way to a new schema of organized chaos that uses design to structure an experience of exploration of the environment and what it might mean internally. Recognizing that landscapes are dynamic and personal (Descombes, 1999; Fung, 1999; Lynch, 1981; Tuan, 1979a), the landscape architect’s role then is to identify the dynamics of a landscape, become an interpreter of its accumulated stories, and design interventions that can accommodate emergent requirements (Fung, 1999; Høyer, 1999; Marot, 1999). This role necessitates an open and critical mind to assess the landscape dynamics in depth and without prejudice, and to represent landscapes in way that fosters the same curiosity and analysis in the user.

How might, then, a landscape architect go about intervening in a *terrain vague* earnestly? For the sake of consistency with the research, the process below uses Girot’s *trace concepts* (1999), a four-step process of identifying significant landscape
characteristics and integrating them for intervention. While the research in the body of the thesis only proceeds to step three of four, this discussion of how to design with *terrain vague* extends to the fourth step, *founding*, which is a synthesis of the knowledge gathering stages to produce a design solution. This process described here deliberately omits specific aesthetic or functional treatments since there is not enough space to enumerate all applicable variations of solutions and site contexts. However, the purpose of this process is to guide the landscape architect with interpreting *terrain vague*, deciphering transformations, and unfolding a narrative of flux and relationships in the landscape.

**Overview of process**

Following the trace concepts, the steps will achieve the following goals:

Step 1: *Landing* - Experiencing a site first hand
Step 2: *Grounding* - Detailed investigation into the site’s historical and physical contexts
Step 3: *Finding* - Determining the significant elements that give the site its identity
Step 4: *Founding* - A synthesis of steps 1 - 3 resulting in a transformation of the landscape

As noted in the main body, these trace concepts are presented as loose guidelines for a landscape architect to customize as appropriate for their project and workflow. Each one of these steps can be as rigorous as needed. The details within each trace concept below represent how one might approach a project in *terrain vague*.

**Step 1: Trace Concept - Landing**

Landing is the stage of first impressions. Rather like meeting a new person, it is important to experience the landscape with all its idiosyncrasies, contradictions, and aspects that cannot be captured by site photographs or other types of abstractions (e.g. maps, photos, soil analysis). The key here is to see the landscape with an open mind and curiosity so that any preconceptions or prejudices from prior investigations may be reset. Optimally, this is done via a site visit so as to exercise the entirety of one’s senses. Feeling the movement of the sun and wind on the landscape, smelling
the scents and hearing the sounds add crucial dimensions to one’s experience, allowing one to build a multi-layered impression of a landscape. Furthermore, a foundation of personal experience is an important basis from which the landscape architect can critically assess secondary information. Virtual reality experiences, like Google Street View, are becoming more accessible than ever and will only improve with time. While it offers a more immersive experience than video or photography, current technology is still restricted to only the visual and aural senses, leaving out the senses of touch and scent, both of which are critical to experiencing landscapes (Tuan 1979a).

![Figure 28](image)

**Figure 28**: Sensing the landscape's characteristics, with its idiosyncracies and paradoxes intact. This is the first step, *landing*.

As this is the most subjective step of the four trace concepts, how one determines to record the findings is a matter of preference, although the simple sketchbook and digital camera will suffice. Records of the experience should capture the nuances of the landscape and the feelings they bring forth. This may be in the form of photographs, essays, journal entries, and sketches. The key point of this stage of the investigation is to log the fundamental impression without attempting to rationalize the paradoxes.

**Key points:**

1. Reset preconceptions of *terrain vague* via experiencing it firsthand without prejudices.
2. Record first impressions of the layered and often paradoxical landscape in convenient and accessible formats.
3. At this stage, it is important to see the landscape as a whole.

**Step 2: Trace Concept – Grounding**

The second stage of the investigation dictates an in-depth query into the contexts from which the first impression is built. This step is the most research-intensive step as the landscape architect is expected to untangle the layers of social and natural processes that have shaped the landscape. It is important to conceive the landscape in four dimensions, paying close attention to the transformations in the temporal dimension. Grounding then can be thought of as an archaeological process in which the landscape architect excavates traces of a site’s past and documents its transformations.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 29:** A detailed investigation of a landscape's history is imperative to step 3, grounding. It is equally, if not more important to understand the history from multiple perspectives.

The breadth of information that one can acquire can be overwhelming. Like an archaeological dig, one can use traces on the surface to begin the direction of the investigation. Südgelände Nature Park and Evergreen Brick Works, for example, have very prominent remnant structures from their industrial days leading to an obvious first point of investigation. From that point on, the story of the site will be less clear as the loss in purpose often comes with less documentation. The investigation may
then take a turn into ethnography where the landscape architect uncovers local lore the *terrain vague*. This is the beginning of the multi-stakeholder engagement process in which stakeholders may hold knowledge or perspectives that enriches the design process. At this point, it should be obvious that larger societal movements have a role to play in the development of the site. Understanding the narrative at large (e.g. the postwar division and eventual reunification of Germany has a large role in the shaping of Südgelände site) provides textures and mentalities that are hard to capture with a site visit alone. While this process is often messy and slow, finding the key issues may reduce political friction in the future.

In addition to the historical elements that contributed to the site’s development, the natural processes are also important to study. *Terrain vague* often exhibits a degree of ruderal colonization due to the lack of care. The ecosystem that has developed gives clues to the natural processes unfolding on the landscape. Sometimes the developing wilderness is a result of peculiar circumstances and conditions making the place unique. The trains once travelling through Südgelände endow the park now with fauna and flora from faraway places. Their development in the park is not seen in other parts of Berlin, an anomaly that piqued the interest of ecologists and scientists. EBW’s restoration work reconnects that site with the larger Toronto ravine system and Don River, boosting the ecological health of that landscape.

The overall goal of this step is to come into possession as full a picture of the site as possible. The method of investigation often takes a heuristic format where one may find themselves examining archives and conducting interviews. However, a methodical process, in addition to a curious attitude, can improve research efficiency. This research utilizes a modified version of the Case Study Method for Landscape Architecture to highlight relevant knowledge types necessary for a detailed description of the site. Similarly, to operationalize grounding, a pared-down version can act as the basis to the investigation. An incomplete list of headings and data sources is provided in Table 5 below. In summary, grounding reveals a wide scope of narratives that may appear disjointed at first, but over multiple readings, the disparate parts may prove to
have crucial links. While the depth and breadth of the investigation are ultimately limited by the available resources and skill of the researcher, the researcher must be cognizant of the need to balance depth with relevance to the project.

Table 5. Knowledge types for investigating site context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context is separated into four components: historical context, geographical context, physical context and social context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Historical overview - documents major events and movements leading up to today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Location and adjacency - documents the site’s location and surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical significance - documents biological, geological, structural, or topographical significance of the site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social significance - documents the ongoing appropriations of the site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders and claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In addition to clients, stakeholders of the site may include nearby residents, users on the site, environmental groups, artists, et cetera. These stakeholders may sometimes be organized or exist clandestinely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stakeholders’ biographies and basic information - Document who they are, their size, and mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Claims to the site - Claims for the site can take the form of a specific use or represent a declaration of value (e.g. scientific value, artistic value, or societal value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Significant findings - significant findings or knowledge generated as a result of the stakeholder’s affiliation with the site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mapping interactions with the site - mapping the geography of the stakeholder’s interactions with the site can locate usage patterns and significant traces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stakeholder alliances and conflicts - stakeholders can be organized by conflicting and aligned positions. Knowing the political landscape can help the landscape architect pinpoint key issues and processes, and plan for future conflicts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Points:
1. Start investigation with the goal of uncovering the story of the site. This involves understanding not only the social and natural history of the terrain vague at hand, but also the larger picture of the society, which makes up the context of the site.
2. Document key events and transformations and begin linking seemingly disparate events.
3. It is important to investigate the transformations from multiple perspectives since terrain vague often contains the activities of more than one group of people.

Step 3: Trace Concept - Finding
Through untangling the layers, the story of the site begins to emerge and key characters, events, and processes are revealed. The intuition of the place gathered from landing and the detailed descriptions from grounding can point out the key traces that give the site its character. This process is highly subjective and results are dependent on the landscape architect’s ability to isolate relevant symbols, relationships, and processes in the landscape that contribute to developing the initial reading of the terrain vague. For example, Südgelände’s terrain vague condition is borne from a complex web of post-war economic and political circumstances mixed in with West Berliners’ make-do attitude in the face of isolation and cloak-and-dagger conflict. The unique ecological composition of the successional landscape adds to the already complex textures of the site.

Figure 30: Traces in the landscape emerges in step 3, finding.
Operationalizing *finding* requires part imagination and part logic. Firstly, the landscape architect identifies the key traces that encapsulate the story of the site. These traces take the form of objects and processes that symbolize important aspects in the landscape (e.g. the ruderal forest as a symbol of rejuvenation, the industrial artefacts as symbols of a bygone era).

Secondly, it is also important to see these traces in flux, in that they have and are experiencing change. These transformations can be and are not limited to:

- Emergence and Departure
- Complicate and simplify
- Grow and shrink
- Decay and Rejuvenate
- Relocation

![Diagram of trace transformations](image.png)

**Figure 31:** In addition to the physical traces, it is equally important to identifying the processes that have been acting on the landscape.

From this a landscape architect can map out the traces in the landscape over time. Using an analogy to creative writing, these traces are the site’s characters and development arcs to date. They also become the building blocks from which the landscape architect can draw for the intervention.

**Key Points:**

1. Draw from *landing* and *grounding* to identify the traces that contribute to the *je ne sais quoi* of the site (Figure 30).
2. Traces take the form of objects and processes that symbolize important aspects of the landscape (Figure 31).
3. Map the transformations to clarify the landscape’s flux (Figure 32).

4. Traces are the building blocks for the next trace concept, founding.

**Step 4: Trace Concept - Founding**

With the building blocks identified, founding is the transformative step in which the intuition from landing, supporting evidence from grounding, and analysis in finding are synthesized to produce a landscape that evokes the characteristic of terrain vague, but is no longer terrain vague. It is important to reiterate that the cases explored all show deliberateness in clarifying the landscape and exposing flux previously shrouded by the terrain vague condition. The paths cutting through Südgelände form a network of orderly vantage points from which to experience the successional landscape’s flux. Similarly, EBW clarifies its terrain vague condition into accessible symbols whose strangeness is amplified through juxtaposing with purposeful and orderly landscape. The St. Louis Ecological Production Line treats its urban wilderness developed in the Pruitt-Igoe terrain vague as a symbol of rejuvenation and purpose for the future of North St. Louis urban space.

The role of the landscape architect in this stage is a balancing act of preserving the integrity of the site’s past identities and
moving it forward under a new perspective. The role can be thought of as a tradition-bearer in an oral history culture. The tradition bearer is responsible for keeping a narrative that maintains the integrity of the culture’s history and provides contemporary interpretation, while affording the narrative with his or her own artistic license. Using the *terrain vague* materials at hand, the landscape architect can then construct this narrative of evolution in the post-*terrain vague* using symbols, making processes explicit, and creating relationships amongst the symbols and processes, all to challenge the visitor to observe and make sense of flux. The following three strategies are adapted from Heatherington’s (2012) strategies in composing traces.

![Symbols of Terrain Vague](image.png)

**Establishing a Foundation of Symbols**

High contrast traces are generally noticed first due to their strangeness in conventional landscapes. Almost immediately, their presence signals to a bygone era or cataclysmic event that primes the visitor’s curiosity. Landscape architects firstly must curate the suite of symbols to suit the needs of the intervention. Unfortunately, not all of the traces can be carried forward. To convey flux in *terrain vague*, the symbol should exhibit flux in themselves, which is generally a state of decay or weathering. A restored trace, typically used in historical preservation projects, has its patina erased thus eliminating the temporality in the piece.

Figure 33: Symbols in the intervention are drawn from *terrain vague* and should convey a sense of flux. Highly polished or restored traces lose their temporality.
Establishing Relationships in the Landscape

This strategy references intertextuality, the literary device that establishes meaning of one text via referencing another. This is often used in works of parody in which the understanding of one text is deepened through lampooning the same material from a different perspective. The technique is analogous in the landscape through juxtaposing one element to another. EBW makes use of this technique to connect the realms of industry, ecology, and city as a launch pad for discussion. A landscape architect can set up deliberate adjacencies between traces to force a comparison of two contrasting objects so that their pairing can foster curiosity and critical analysis of their relationship. Deliberate sight lines that connect contrasting traces also create the same effect.

Establishing a Sense of Perpetual Flux

Making process known is much tougher than using symbols due in part to the visitor needing to experience change over time. Moreover, the types of process in terrain vague exist over many time-scales. The periodicity can be as short as diurnal, extend towards seasonal, or even beyond. However, the casual observer is attuned to the diurnal and seasonal changes as those are also quite visible in the conventional urban landscape. Transformations that extend over a longer time-scale are harder to convey since slow, gradual changes are harder to grasp and requires a familiarity with the site only available through prolonged exposure. Südgelände accelerates this process by borrowing from the other two techniques: 1) halting the successional process in the
meadow landscape type to create a static symbol, and 2) juxtaposing the earlier state with the more mature state to create a gradient symbolizing growth. Other forms of transformations such as movement, emergence and departure are tougher to represent due to the succeeding stage supplanting the preceding stage. Once an element emerges, one cannot compare side by side with its absence. Representing these tougher transformations requires a creative mind.

**Summary**

How one reveals these elements is dependent on the craft of the landscape architect. As noted previously and in the main body, the experience of flux is a major aspect in the *terrain vague* condition. Even though one can argue that from flux one observes vagueness and opportunity, it is important to revisit the term *terrain vague* as a whole (see Figure 1) where flux, uncertainty, and opportunity are understood as a trinity. These three factors naturally exhibit an interplay that cannot be wholly described when broken into its tripartition. Sheridan’s (2012) eight *terrain vague* qualities as used in this research are a valuable checklist or target for a designer who wishes to convey the *terrain vague* condition.
In summary, the first three trace concepts of *landing*, *grounding*, and *finding* (Girot 1999) provide the overall framework from which one can begin the investigation of a site’s *terrain vague* condition for eventual intervention in the last step *founding*. The first step, *landing*, calls for the designer to begin the investigation with a personal visit to personally experience the site with all senses. *Landing* develops the landscape architect’s intuition of the site. The second step, *grounding*, asks the landscape architect to generate a detailed picture of the site’s physical, historical, social, and geographical context. *Grounding* develops supporting evidence for the design solution. The third step, *finding* resolves the divide between the intuition felt in the first trace concept and the evidence in the second trace concept to identify the traces that contribute to the site’s identity. Lastly, trace concept *founding* brings all the concepts together in a transformative process that repurposes the traces for the new purpose.