

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE: THE PROJECT OF THE VOID

THE ABSTRACTS

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Unit Brief

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WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

The Project of the 'Void'

This year Diploma 14 will focus on the project of the “void”. Far from being empty, the void is everything that is not occupied by buildings or other forms of built density, and it appears to us as a “natural” reservoir. This void can exist inside or outside the city, and it is often a contested territory where the tendency to enclose space for the sake of profit meets the resistance of the citizens desire to use it freely. The urban “void” is therefore a site of struggle, between processes of exploitation and reappropriation, and perhaps the most direct testimony to the enclosure of resources that marked the beginning of capitalism.

Our project looks to address this condition by defining strategies of de-commodification that can be made visible and tangible through specific architectural interventions. In order to advance this idea we use the concept of the park as our starting point. As one of urban modernism’s most problematic figures, the park has been used to naturalise the conflictual history of urban territories. And within the modern city it has, often controversially, played the role of the “jungle”: a piece of wilderness enclosed by the artificiality of the city.

Yet the jungle is an ambivalent allegory because the more it celebrates a primordial return to nature, the more it casts a shadow on the city as an (un)governable place in which order and disorder are no longer opposing forces but, rather, two faces of the same coin. Indeed, the image of the park as pastoral retreat is often used to hide the violence of dispossession that has produced the contemporary city. The question of the studio will therefore be how to use the park not as an idealisation of nature and rurality, but as a territorial system that allows the reappropriation of resources and makes legible the forces and conflicts that produce our own urban condition.

Ana Maria Nicolaescu

A DOUBLE EXPOSURE

Resistance and Submission in the Forests of Wallachia



Recent deforestation, 1918. Courtesy of The Peasant Museum Image Archive, Bucharest, Collection 0-1213.

The thesis investigates the network of forests surrounding the city of Bucharest, which together appear as a fragmented form scattered across the empty, flat plains that surround the dense agglomeration of Romania's capital city. These forests are in fact the last remains of what used to be named "The Forests of Wallachia" or "Codrii Vlasiei", which up to two centuries ago used to spread from the top of the high mountain peaks of the Carpathian Mountains, all the way to the riverbeds of the Danube, covering nine tenths of Romania's Southern strip in towering fir, hornbeam and oak trees.

This territory will be used as a case study that unpacks, on one hand, the *urban forces* that have historically been involved in the disruption of the forest landscape, and which have brought it at its point of arrival today: a sylvan margin or rather, a buffer zone in one of the most dynamic rural-urban systems in Europe, a landscape which has finally been tamed by the city. On the other hand, considering the significance of the forest as a place of primeval antiquity, of cosmic ties of man with nature, and the inevitable denial of its own matrix against the process of urbanization, modernization and nation state building, the thesis attempts at exposing certain *anti-urban forces* that have worked against these very processes.

Thus, the investigation unpacks a double exposure of the urban and anti-urban processes that have shaped the forest landscape until today, as an attempt to retrace, regain, or adjust in a contemporary way, certain narratives or ways to intervene, that have been lost or tamed, in the face of further processes of appropriation, and also to revisit once again, the question of forest against civilization.

The thesis is interested in the forest as a project.

Anya Martsenko

ENCLOSING SIBERIA

Ongoing Colonisation of the Russian East



Anonymous, *Map of All Siberia to the Chinese Tsardom and Japan*, 1673.
From Valerie A. Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-century Russia*.
Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006. Plate 19.

The thesis considers Siberia as an ongoing colonial project. It focuses on a territory historically known as the Iugra, a region just east of the Urals, which in the 16th century was seen as the gateway to Siberia's rich forest resources in the context of the global fur trade; and in the late 1960s emerged as the site of one of the world's most extensive petroleum developments.

The thesis regards this contested territory as a landscape characterised by two distinct perceptions: that of the Russian state, which has occupied the Iugra from 1581 onwards and seen the taiga as a resource and means of revenue; and that of native groups, who have inhabited the territory since roughly 2000 BC and have seen the taiga largely as a source of subsistence. The research examines means of colonial appropriation, considering the significance of establishment of outposts and restructuring of annexed Siberian territories through imposition of boundaries in the shaping of these territories into a machine for extraction of resources. Within this framework, it considers the issue of layered land ownership, resulting from the dependency of the state on its 'subjects,' the ambiguity of which remains in place to date.

Finally, the thesis questions the sustainability of the ongoing colonisation of the Iugra. Extraction of natural resources has unsurprisingly led to dramatic degradation of the region's natural environment. The Yugansky Zapovednik, a strict nature reserve established by the Soviet government in recognition of destruction, protects some of the taiga from poaching and petroleum development. It also, however, acts as another mechanism of appropriation. By putting the forest out of use, the zapovednik opens it up for tourism.

While not reversible, could the colonial past of the Iugra be utilised to address the region's precarious present?

Avery Jiehui Chen

EMPIRE(CAL) TREES

The Post-Colonial Continuity of Tree Planting in Singapore



Planting a Rain Tree at Singapore City Hall.

Singapore's 'Garden City' repute is a semantic abstraction that simplified the city into an ideal notion of one. The thesis postulates that primitive accumulation is bolstered by the state apparatus of tree planting that this notion engenders; a political mechanism that subsumes indigenous practices into its national, hegemonic identity. The centrepiece of this conception is the Botanic gardens, which functioned as a symbol of European imperial colonisation and domestication of nature, before its transition to an apparatus employed by the nation state; a post-colonial continuity of commodifying nature inherent in its adapted role.

The paradigm of tree planting as a device to discipline and order society preceded Singapore in 19th Century European colonial capitals, used as 'surveillance' methods to instil a sense of nationality and patriotism. This legacy was passed down to Singapore through its British colonial history; evident in the British Empire's physical and symbolic appropriation of Singapore's natural jungle. The British's Botanic Gardens experimented with growing foreign plants in Singapore for economic interests, and this played a key role in shaping Singapore's colonial landscape; composed of mainly cultivated land. An example of this would be the import of rubber seeds from Brazil via London's Kew Gardens, which resulted in wide-spread proliferation of rubber plantations in Singapore's landscape circa the 1900s.

The Botanic Gardens became essential in achieving Singapore's Garden City ambition beginning after its independence in 1965; its principle role shifted to adopting and naturalising foreign 'desirable' trees as common street trees. The thesis argues that nature was employed as a continual narrative that concealed and sublimated the alienation of the environment, that stemmed from rapid modernisation and redevelopment of the city post-independence, and concomitantly the obviation of cultural and ethnic areas, and quotidian rituals and identities previously associated with the land. 'Sustainable' tree planting on expropriated areas justifies theft of appropriation by tree replacement, and act as a 'buffer' in certain time periods; ameliorating the state's constant and still ongoing formalisation of previously communal practices, by culturally constructing change as rational and ineluctable.

Bodo Neuss

THE £8M VIEW *Inventing the London Square*



View from 36 Bedford Square, 2017.

£8M is the current average price for a house on Bedford Square - London's most complete Georgian Square - and the view from its windows goes out to a lushly planted enclosure to which only the square residents hold a key. Within the scope of this study, the origins of this view and its change over time will be identified as an instrument to transform the open landscape into speculative building land.

It is first and foremost this central green space which renders the peculiar characteristics of the London Square in general and thus, apart from the - continental - idea of the square, three understandings of green space will be taken into account in its consideration; Namely the garden, the park and also the common land. The latter was part of a working landscape in the manorial system and until the seventeenth century formed the most accessible open space in London; A pasture ground as much as a site for celebrations and informal recreation. With a shift towards capitalism the commons around London became largely attractive for speculative building enterprises. They were eventually appropriated through the Inclosure Acts and developed into 'private' squares for new residential suburbs. The adornment of the new enclosures, especially with trees and bushes, depicts the essential symbolic legitimation of their appropriation. And, developed further into exclusive miniature parks, their design became key to propel the colonisation of London's West.

Three Squares of Bloomsbury and St Pancras, namely Bedford Square, Fitzroy Square and Russell Square are vivid examples of this invention of the London Square. They illustrate how alterations to their layout over time - and until today - have long become a device of territorial control over the use and perception of London's open spaces.

Emily Priest

TAMING THE THAMES

The Exploitation of the River to Colonise Land



J. M. W. Turner. *The Thames above Waterloo Bridge*, c.1830-5.
Oil paint on canvas. Dimensions: 905 x 1210 mm, frame: 1138 x 1457 x 82 mm. Collection: Tate.

Since the formation of London, the city has exploited its ancient river. Up to the twentieth century England heavily relied on this river throughout the British Empire and London used the Thames accordingly, as a machine to colonise land overseas at the expense of its landscape at home. Yet as tidal water, even today the Thames cannot be owned or controlled by anyone. It seems such exploitation has left the river redundant in the contemporary city. Therefore, the thesis intends to analyse the events that abused the Thames and prove their resonance towards what is currently termed as a highly contentious yet deteriorating landscape.

This study charts three exploitative ‘landscapes’ that were forced upon the tidal portion of the Thames. First the *riverbank*, where unregulated mercantilism in Elizabethan London grew from a port-city to a port for the world and symptomatically became strangulated with vessels and imbued with crime. Severe delays on water led to chaos, urging the engineering of the commercial *docklands* to domesticate the trading landscape. At the same time, in 1865 the river was so polluted that land was claimed from the river to build *embankments* in west London. These provided wider access into the city above, sewage pipes below and ultimately caged and recaptured the river for its city.

The residual landscape has become a *waste land*. Attempts to turn the Thames Estuary into the ‘Thames Gateway’ (2004-2011) suggest that now the Thames is no longer a mouth to the world, it has been exploited inwardly for local development. This has caused isolation and separation within the immediate landscape and more recent proposals to once again recapture the river, include the Garden Bridge project which even in its failure, reduced the Thames to an ornament for private investment. So that in a desire to connect itself with the world and adhere to modernity, England has severely damaged its local riverine landscape. Until now there has never been an appropriate and sustainable management of the River Thames; an ancient and wild body that has been tamed towards dispensability.

REMAINS OF THE BLED SIBA

Conditions of Self-sustenance in the Transhumance Pastoral System of the Middle-Atlas



Georges Louis Arlaud, *Rentrée des moutons, Azrou, 1925.*

Communities that are self-sustained have indubitably reduced over time and that has enforced the misconception that long-enduring modes of production which exist outside of a capitalist system are no longer viable or even conceivable. Yet, they have not all been dissolved following ancient primitive communism epochs -or necessarily originated more than a few centuries ago. However, in most cases, their presence has come in conflict with the state process which enforced its control endeavours by propagating the idea that autonomous communities, who often engaged in a certain degree of nomadism, were essentially unstable and lacked the notion of permanence.

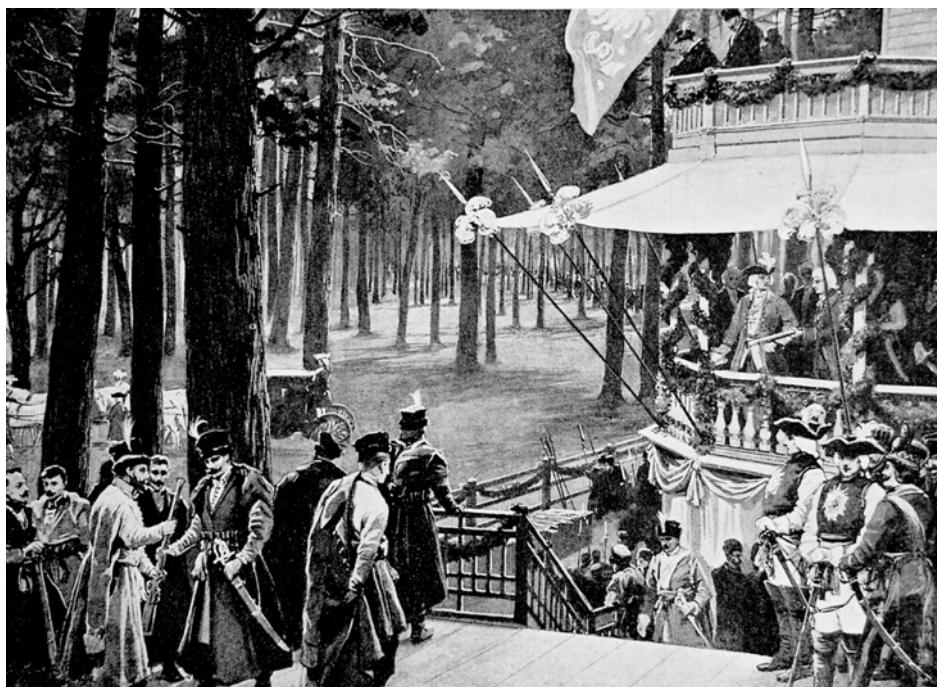
The thesis addresses this misconception, along with the dichotomy between permanence and mobility, considering the case of the semi-nomadic pastoral systems of the Moroccan Middle-Atlas mountains. They constitute a part of the remains of the *Bled Siba*, which here refers to the region out of state arbitration, that confederations have asserted their autonomy from. The thesis posits that, in this case, the semi-nomadic pastoral patterns do not only result from the nature of the complex physical milieu they have found refuge in, but also from an effort to not enter in a state of dependency and to maintain their means of production in a communal frame. Through a pragmatic logic of use and, essentially, a capacity to ritualise their life, the appropriators of this mountainous area have durably managed the common resources contained within the tribal territories they have formulated. By combining knowledge and commitment, which they have applied on a elaborate seasonal performance, they demonstrate that there can be permanence and stability in forms of governance that do not involve the state.

In the course of the twentieth century - through the establishment of the French protectorate and the evolution of post-colonial Morocco - the insertion of private property has contributed in dismantling the conditions necessary to the self-sustenance of the *Bled Siba*, effectively instituting sedentarism and commodifying the territory. By unveiling the circumstances and rules of the new appropriations, the thesis admits that, while the movement of transhumants across the Middle-Atlas has become extremely restrained, it has not ceased as many individuals rely on pastoral nomadism to maintain their livelihood.

Jacek Rewiński

BIAŁOWIEŻA PRIMEVAL FOREST

The Paradise of Illusion



Vasily Ivanovich Navozov, *The Hunting Pavillion of King Stanislaw August Poniatowski*.
From G. Karcov, *Belovezhskaya Pushcha*, St. Petersburg, 1903.

In May 2016, Poland's conservative government began logging in the relic of ancient woodlands, the last primeval forest in Europe, located at the contemporary border between Poland and Belarus. The decision sparked anew the debate around the enlargement of the existing national park over the entire forest, a United Nations World Heritage site, giving a protection status to the entire area constituting 20 nature reserves and a commercial forest. The advocates of the strict protection of the last vestiges of the immense forest that once stretched across Europe draw on its noble history, on its past as a royal hunting ground and project its function as a laboratory where scientific experiments can be conducted, omitting, however, the fact that the forest has always been a working landscape – one dominated by its feudal past and neo-feudal present.

The focus of the work is to uncover the conflictual history of the forest and understand how the machinations of power have enabled or disabled the expression of the inhabitants and workers that make up the forest's working landscape. It is assumed that royal hunting and the subsequent legal protection of the forest is the main cause of its survival as the best preserved forest of the European lowlands. Hunting, however, is also a paradigm, a ritual that provides a symbol of appropriation, at the parallel exclusion of other actors from the common use of the forest. The resurfacing myth of the Białowieża Forest as the quintessential back-cloth of Catholic Poland primordial nationalism is founded upon the paradise of illusion that serves only the sovereign hunter.

The Białowieża Forest shrouded in its myth and the past of royal hunting preserves, is a sacred ground. But, enclosed by the strict nature reserve, it is also a Museum, drawing tourists from around the world to celebrate upon themselves a sacrificial act that consists in the destruction of all other possible use. The advocates of the enlargement of the Białowieża National Park seduce the local population with incomparably greater incomes in the partaking of the project to render impossible the use of the forest as a resource, the profanation of the forest. The project seeks to reverse this impossibility of use in the reconsideration of the double-edged boundaries that simultaneously secure its vulnerable ecology and exert control over its profitable myth. In returning the paradise to the working landscape that intimately shapes and sustains the forest, the relationship between the forest and its backstage is redrawn, opening to a new understanding of the territory as a wider ecology of interpenetrations between conservation and use.

Joshua Harskamp
BETTER OUTLAWS
Decentralizing the Fertile Crescent



Erin Trieb, *Members of the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) of the Syrian Democratic Forces, 2015.*

At the site of failed states, contested energy extraction, ethno-religious war and climatic trauma a new experiment in self-governance has emerged: the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. The DFNS (previously referred to as Rojava) is a bottom-up commune based system that, since 2011, has sought to replace the Ba'athist Syrian Arab Republic and govern the northern Fertile Crescent through a series of representative, gender balanced councils across three main cantons: Afrin, Kobani and Cizire.

Since the beginning of the holocene over twelve millennia ago, the Fertile Crescent has acted as a testbed of urbanisation that has produced myriad forms of communal life and their associated narratives in western thought. Through each of these forms a material response to conditions of communal relations, agricultural surplus, security and topography has arisen but never *crystallised*. The primary focus of this study will be to argue that the contemporary quest for self-governance should be read as a project to embrace the patent fluctuations of the Fertile Crescent as a park and not as a state. Furthermore, it is the shifting boundary of fertile land that has forced the negotiation between sedentary and pastoral populations and produced *hybridised* forms of life. These are the forms that prefigure the DFNS and will be the subject of investigation.

To govern through communes the DFNS forwards its representatives successively to councils with increasing oversight until entities capable of functioning a state level emerge. At the root of the communes one can recognise the kinship group that self-organises around rituals and lived experience similar to the hunter gatherers at neolithic Göbekli Tepe, and at its most complex the DFNS appears as multi-ethnic assembly that passes legislation in a manner not dissimilar to the demos formed at Palmyra. These historical counterpoints, and others, will illustrate the link between the emergence of decentralised self-governance and the Fertile Crescent.

It is the climatic gradient between the steppes of the Ammannus, Taurus and Zagros mountains and the Syrian desert that has intensified the conditions of settlement within the alluvial plains of the Euphrates and Tigres river by creating conditions where material abundance through agriculture and catastrophe from flooding and draught co-exist. These two rivers, as a result of their presence in a semi arid plateau, have acted as a set of arteries, bringing the flow of goods and peoples from North to South and from East to West and have created a crossroads of trade and culture and governance that exists to the present day. This study attempts to lay out a conceptual path for the Fertile Crescent as it moves towards a fluid and bottom-up governance.

Love Di Marco
POWER TO THE PEOPLE
Energy Commons and Power Parks



Hans Blomberg, *Lillgrund Wind Power Park between Malmö and Copenhagen.*

The transition in energy production from a centralized model based on finite fossil fuels to a distributed one based on renewable sources is an imperative social and political target that will have a noticeable impact on space and territory. It is accompanied by the proliferation of new types of infrastructure: fields of production without distinct spatial intelligence beyond that of maximum efficiency – Power Parks.

The thesis looks at the physical manifestations of energy systems over the last 120 years in Denmark and Sweden, both leading countries in the transition to renewable energy, examining the connection between energy infrastructure and the prevalent contemporary ideologies that shaped it, acknowledging that the technology is not and has never been socially neutral.

Industrialisation gradually separated the user from the means of energy production, leading to centralized systems of production and the appropriation of common resources for the sake of capital accumulation. Despite promises of decentralization, the development of electricity networks in Scandinavia in the early 20th century, facilitated by a unique collaboration of state and industry, sponsored a series of restrictive monopolies both centralized and scattered turning energy into a highly monetized and centrally administered system.

More than any other industrial sector, the energy industry of the last 120 years has been caught in a conflict between state and market, however, the fact that we will extract energy from common and abundantly available resources could allow us to fundamentally question the current energy system and its reliance on a scarcity-driven economic model. Could the commons perspective, based on the fundamental design principles suggested by Elinor Ostrom enable reorganization, *democratization*, of the energy industry?

Using the form of the (power) park, a supranational juridical area, as the premise for an architectural project on energy, could a revised model be devised that sets a spatial and territorial precedent for the new paradigm? As a project of infrastructure, expanding its role as not merely a technical, but also a political, economic, social and spatial matter of concern, it leads us to question what role the architect can play in order identify and co-opt the systems that govern our everyday life.

Moad Musbahi

PIRACY AS METHOD
West of the Nile and the Fiction of 'Empty Space'



Lorenzo Meloni, *A Tebu tribesman walks along the Libyan Niger Border*, 2015.

The thesis will show how seemingly objective labelling strategies, as they are applied to the area known as the Sahara, are in fact tactics of homogenising space and (re)producing it as a form of 'empty space'. The formulation of this area through the scientific, semantic and juridical has paved the way for this 'empty space' and for the inhabitant which is produced by it, namely the piratic subject, to be constructed. This (fictional) double construct provides the legitimising force for it to be then enclosed, colonised and 'pacified'.

Piracy as method is put forward not only as a process of research that renegotiates what constitutes the possibility of this subject-position and associated set of social relationships, but also an epistemic viewpoint from which a strategy of alternate concepts can be put forward that provide potentially viable modes of living and societal exchange.

The thesis will show how during the first half of the 20th century, cartography and agricultural cultivation of the land proceed in tandem with the military occupation of the Sahara. A process in which the making actual of a fictional territory is realised. It will show agricultural techniques and forms of irrigation embed within them a conception of the land as measure, a strategy that not only provides proof for claims of occupation on an international stage, but also lays the ground for its regime of representation to be completely transformed. In its being made to 'bloom', to no longer remain a 'desert', to ultimately fulfil the aim of ongoing accumulation. It will thus show how 'empty space' is a key spatial imaginary of modernity.

An earlier event will shed light on alternative forms of administration, specifically the Ottoman claim to a portion of the Sahara that extends from the Barca coast to the shores of Lake Chad. A technique of governance by proxy was employed, in which the local Sanussi order, given a standing, and the particular means in which they were sustained, allowed other unforeseeable modes of living and exchange to prosper. Seeing this example within the logic of the piratic method, it places a harsh light upon the future of a contemporary Libya's nation status.

Quentin Dauvergne

LOSING THE GAME

Powers at Play for the Control of the Land, from Hunting to Speculative Processes



Regent's Park Crescent, 2017.

Seeing the Park as quite possibly the last urban project left to architects, such a typology of relative emptiness silently displays many violent processes of appropriation. This research will look at the park in the same way it would look at a scar, trying to understand the gestures, momentums and effects leading to its present state.

Through the story of Regent's Park, the essay will decompose, disassemble and analyse the phases, actors, processes and structures, leading to the present relationship between governing bodies and London's real estate market.

Indeed, Regent's Park is a detail in this broader topic, and as such, it cannot be understood without relation to the history of the whole kingdom. This makes it particularly useful to this research, as details can be grasped when the entire account is too vast to be comprehended.

As stated by Michael Perelman in *The Invention of Capitalism*, “Primitive (...) suggests a brutality lacking in the subtleties of more modern forms of exploitation. It also implies that primitive accumulation was prior to the form of accumulation that people generally associate with capitalism.” As well, “Accumulation, reminds us that the primary focus of the process was the accumulation of capital and wealth by a small sector of society, or as Marx described it, ‘the conquest of the world of social wealth’”

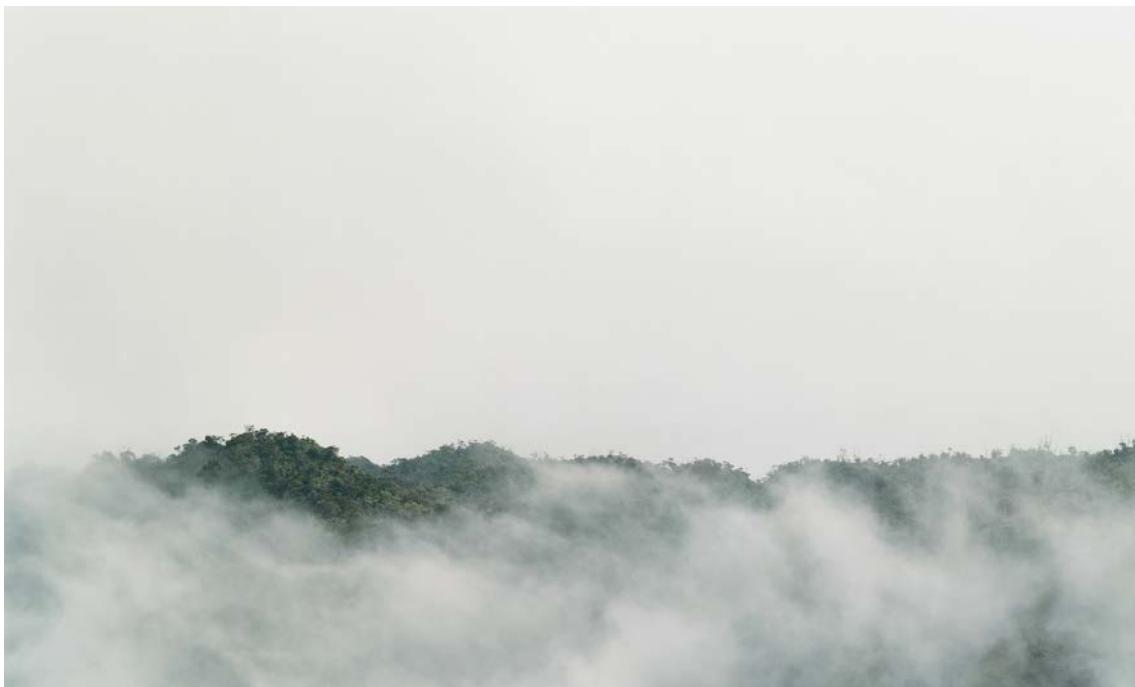
From the very first gesture of enclosure of Marylebone Park made by Henry VIIIth on a map, and through the implications of the Game Laws, to the evolution of the Office of Woods, Forests and Land Revenues, the essay will determine how the different social hierarchy structures evolved, and the apparatus used by each of them to establish control, whether it is by Law, fear, or more silent and continuous methods.

The territory bears the traces of each of these conflicts, buried in layers under the apparent perfection of its today's incarnation of a *Rus in Urbe*. Disarticulating these layers counteracts the illusion of a peaceful and continuous project of the city, enabling us critical tools towards alternative propositions.

Roberto Boettger

SAVE AND SEPARATE

The Conservation of Rio de Janeiro's Mountains



Axel Hütte, *Secret Garden, Misty Mountain, 2001*.

The project is a critique of Conservation, seen here as the impossibility of ‘use.’ The potentialities that once defined a stretch of land are tamed and withdrawn into the glass box of the nature reserve. That which could acquire a different meaning through use is now crystallized into an arbitrary meaning that cannot be used and, thus, cannot acquire new meaning. Conservation is a strategy that applies not only to the physical space or place but to the *separation* of dwelling, of experience.

The mountain range within the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is a crucial paradigm for such hypothesis. Within the metropolitan region, 36% of the land is conservation area, almost all of which rises beyond 100m above sea level. The massif known as Tijuca, moreover, was awarded, in 2012, the *first* Unesco “urban natural landscape” world heritage site. This is also around where the bulk of the city has expanded.

What is being conserved, however, is anything but natural. Before the Portuguese arrived in the 16th century, the mountain was used as a commons. A grid was then laid over the mountain by the ‘*sesmarias*’ system of land distribution for the colonization of the territory. Cultivation reached its climax when plantation owners found in the hillsides the perfect condition for the coffee tree. The current form of the mountain, that which justifies conservation, is a construct. In post-independence mid-19th century, the plantations were disappropriated and the hillsides were reforested. Some of the land was further designed into public parks. The mountain conceals a measurability in terms of species, specimens and topography: a calculated totality.

Despite its apparent docile form, no other force shapes the city socially as much as the mountain. Throughout the 20th century, it was gradually enclosed into a mosaic of Unesco, National, State, and Municipal conservation areas. These are hegemonic because they appear as the natural way of managing unbuilt land so that all citizens – including the lower class – appear to benefit from their implementation. Their symbolic and political agency, however, becomes apparent when a narrative is constructed to dictate what is to be included or excluded. Conservation, by rendering the mountain *untouchable*, sublimates processes of separation. In this way, ‘use’ reveals the paradoxical nature of Conservation: a device that *separates* the free use of men into the sphere of consumption, doing so in the name of *saving* the environment.

Sam Little

DRY STONE WALL

Monumentalization and Theft in the English National Parks



Lawrence Garner/ DSWA, *Derbyshire Landscape*.

The dry stone wall harnesses an inextricable connection to the ground on which it sits. A displacement of local material made up of: one type of stone, one consistent building method, overall expressing one tectonic condition. The builders of a dry stone wall perform a role that is central to the discipline of architecture: the cultured arrangement of form. Its strength comes not from a binding mortar placed between constituent parts, but from a thoroughly developed knowledge and understanding of the fundamental questions of building with stone.

Appearing as a net cast across the uplands of England, the dry stone wall formalizes compositional tracts of field patterns that have evolved over many centuries. They are considered by some to be emblematic features of the recent phenomenon of the English ‘National Park’ especially in the north of England. However, far from being passive, the dry stone walls in this region carry a symbolic weight that surpasses what appears to some as cute or archaic examples of a ‘primitive building technology’, chronicling a rich historical juncture with a considerably darker underbelly. These dry stone walls physically document one of the most controversial and contemporarily divisive issues in urban history; the parliamentary enclosure acts of 18th and 19th century England. At this specific historic moment, the dignified and communal practice of building a dry stone wall became appropriated in the name of an ideological and state-driven quest for economic production. They are the forms of an important shift in feeling towards the English landscape, one with profound reverberations in today’s world.

Set out in a loose chronological order, I shall tease out four different versions of the walls as examples of important and specific constructional ideas unique to the evolution of the dry stone wall in England. Whilst being aware of issues that arise when tying ubiquitous and informal practices of building to certain historical time periods, I will investigate the evolution of this enigmatic building culture by questioning what the walls were, why they were appropriated and what signs remain of this appropriation. Most importantly I will question what they stand for now, attempting to understand how a building culture of such unambiguous and straight-forward tectonic ambition, can be reclaimed on the terms of unity, communal and the collective advancement of settled forms of life.

Shaan Patel

COMMON, ELSEWHERE *Examining the Precariousness of Open Access*



The Fringe, Kharaghoda, Little Rann of Kutch. Photograph by author.

In recent times, social activists around the state of Gujarat in India have been obsessed with the news of an unusual land rights issue that emerged in the Little Rann of Kutch in 2007. The region is an otherwise seemingly bleak landscape that sits somewhere between saline desert and wetland. It is often subconsciously perceived as a massive uninhabitable void. In reality however it is a factory, responsible for the production of 20% of India's Salt. T

his previously uncontested landscape that was historically used as a Commons is now under threat of being enclosed and brought under state control through declaring it a 'Protected Area.' This move of taking it out of the realm of 'free use' represents a deep misunderstanding of this manufactured landscape and the factory at work there. The Protected Area has been used historically as a way to enclose and privatise land. But today, its intension to create Public Property with no direct gains to any individual represents the larger conflict at play.

The Institution of Private Property today, through the abstraction of the landscapes and resources around us, has become the primary form of power that confronts us. Commons, that essentially entail the use of a resource through negotiation rather than a codified right to own, pose a contradiction to this present form of Property. This is the conflict.

This study is an attempt to examine the use of the Little Rann of Kutch as a Commons and the practices of use that have evolved through its position as an informal factory. These practices manifest themselves at the scale of the independent salt pan, the border and the territory. These scales reveal the unique conditions and benefits of a landscape that can only remain productive through a self managed negotiation of informal use. This study aims to define the Tragedy of the Contemporary Commons as a condition where resources, that have resisted enclosure from the inside, today demand a legal and spacial architecture to protect themselves from the increasingly codified abstraction of landscapes around them.