

EVENT AS A TURNING POINT

B r a a m b e r g e n
T r a n s c r i p t s

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Embracing Braambergen developed at Inside Master
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*Transcript -
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REFERENCE

The optimism of the 60s and 70s, which guided the big questions of the city and the belief of the utopian thinkers of changing the world with a stroke of a pen, seems to be just a feeling of reminiscence today where society needs a more substantial approach toward the complexity it reveals. Therefore it is asking for small scale spatial interventions which are deeply rooted in the local condition. This advocates for a greater willingness from the public to appreciate the ephemerality - lasting for a very short time - in spatial design and there is a growth each year in efforts to explore the application of this genre in public interventions.¹

The lifespan of an intervention in public space at a given context may vary enormously. It may last for a day, a whole season or just the endurance of an event. I believe that by interpreting the nature of our current circumstances designers have the potential of shaping conditions that will create new relationships between spaces and events.

As the architect Bernard Tschumi states in his book Architecture and Disjunction: "Architecture is not about the conditions of design, but about the design of conditions". He continues by explaining that : "Architecture has always been as much about the event that takes place in a space as about the space itself."²

1.Chappel., *Ephemeral Architecture*: Toward a Definition.
p62

2.Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 1996 pp

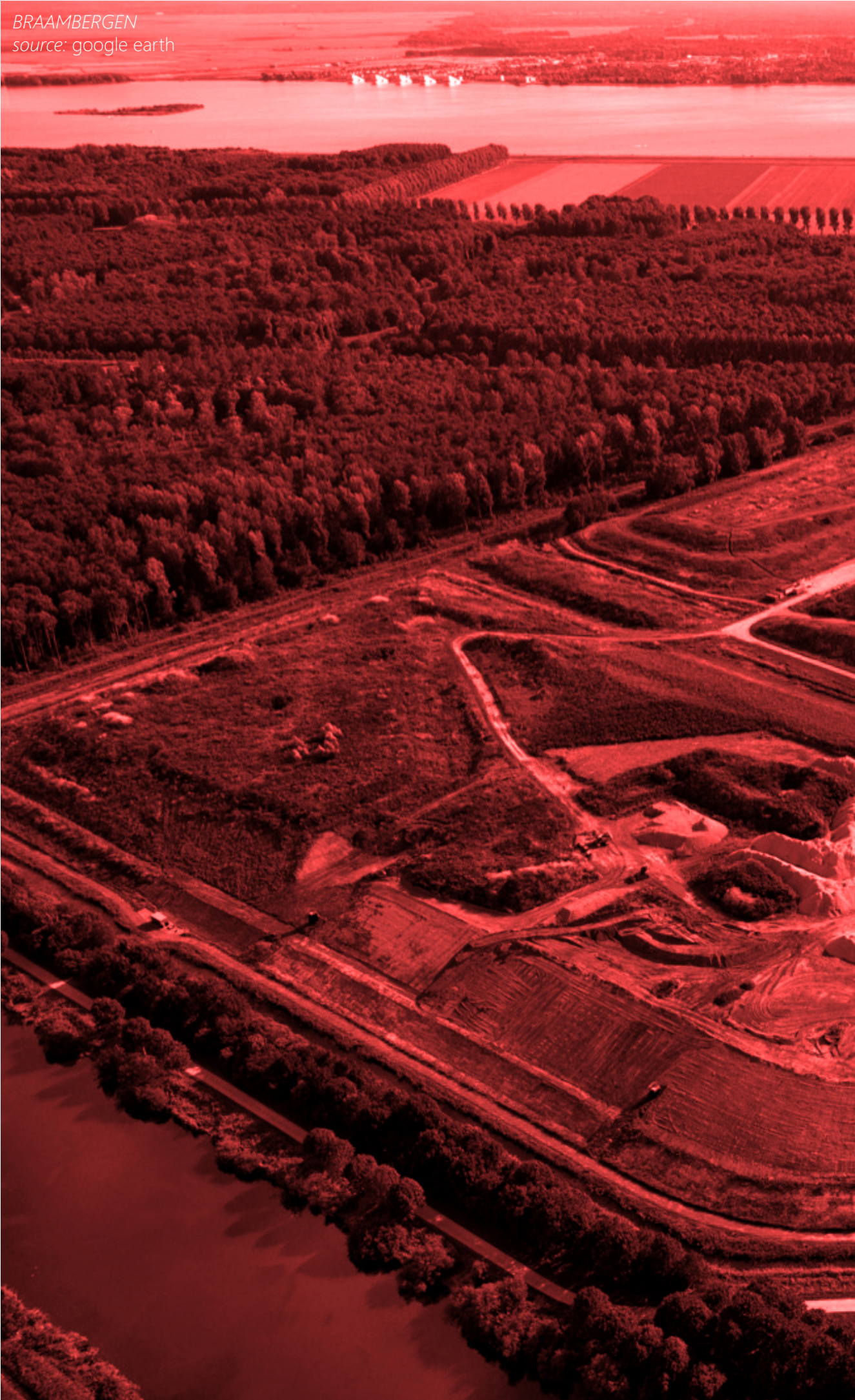
My fascination about the topic was triggered by the challenges presented in the brief of the design project on a landfill site in Almere where we are asked to research on possibilities for starting up its recreational use by creating a 'spatial intervention' based on an exploration of phenomena in the surrounding landscapes, functions and inhabitants. The re-use of it, is an invitation to create new synergy of functions and in doing so causing a new phase of the polder for acquiring history, shifting away from its waste connotation.

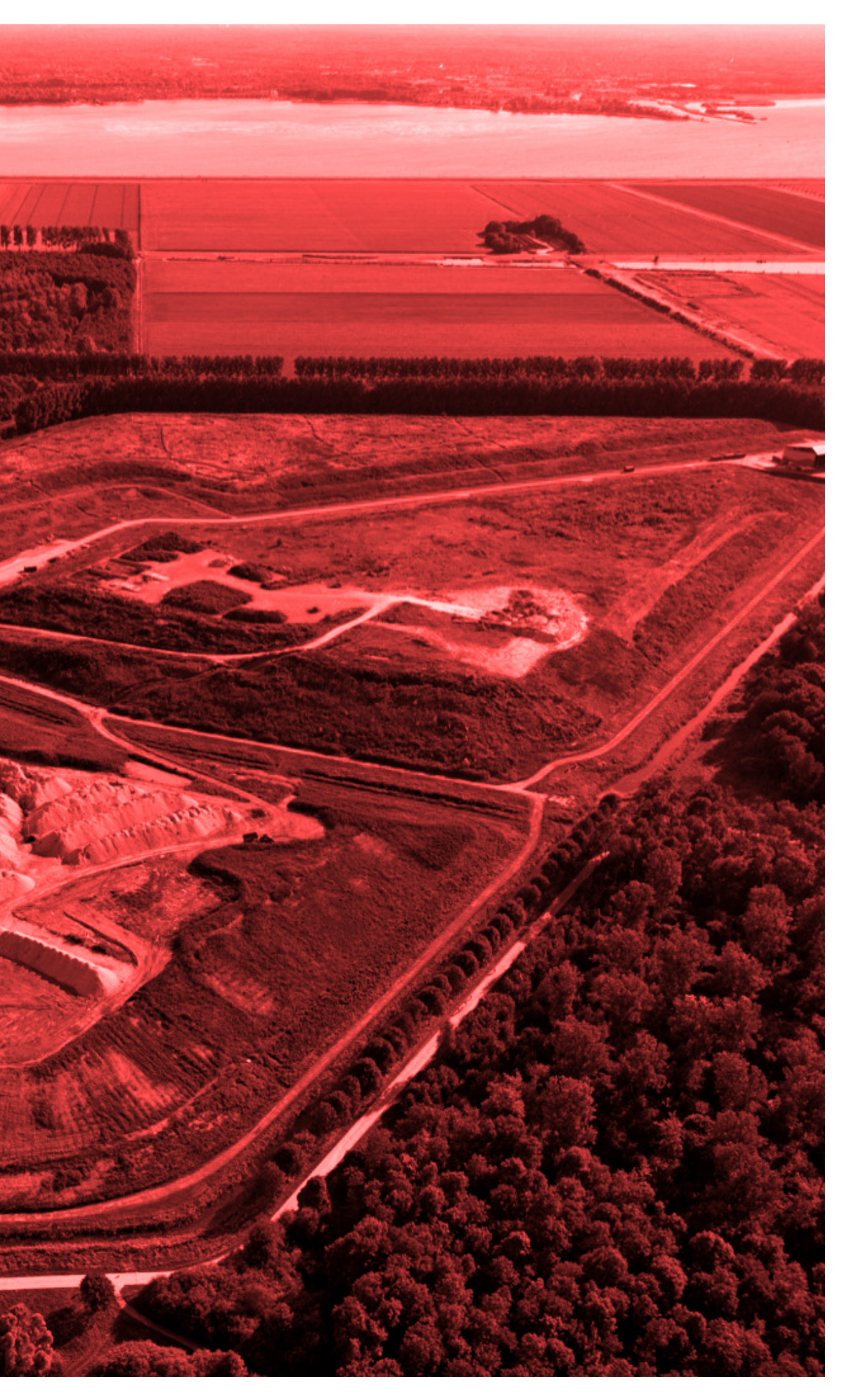
To have a starting point for the project, I started to deconstruct the brief by abstracting the information in order to look for an alliance/relationship that could mean something for the site.

“ Braambergen is a ‘Landfill site’ in Almere, owned by Afvalzorg Nederland, that is ready for being re-used in a recreational function. The project will end with a one-day initiative on the location where the one-to-one interventions are going to be build and create a program to invite inhabitants to join. These ‘spatial interventions’ will be part of an ‘open day’ where inhabitants of Almere will be invited to get to know the Braambergen site and experience its qualities and potentials. In this way the ‘*EMBRACE BRAAMBERGEN DAY*’ will build a stage for meeting and exchanging thoughts and experiences on the future of Braambergen.” ³

3. Venhuizen., Project Brief,
Embracing Braambergen, 2016

BRAAMBERGEN
source: google earth





For me the site at a first view is just another green empty space in Almere. It becomes very clear to me that the potential of this site, is not the mere fact that it is now an empty land, a capital to make use of. But its *genius loci lie in the waste as the main creator. For me the potential exists in the story it tells, in the fascinating symbiosis between people and waste.**

Stating the above, my question is:

Can we create a point of questioning
of the presumptions on the location?
Therefore is it possible to dismantle the
preconceived notion of it as no man
land or in other words dump place? If
yes, how to design a "*Mise-En-Scène*"**
for it to take place? At what extend can
we provoke it? What are a spatial
designer's tools for it?

**This research will focus on
the event not just as a mere
sequence of actions, but as a
potential to engage the public**

Methodology

Literature review (Theoretical Framework) - books, journals, websites, interviews and articles will be consulted during the research. They will serve to assist the theoretical background of the above raised questions.

Case Study(s) analysis – the design task of Embracing Braambergen under the framework of the studio organized at "Inside" master program will serve as a real time site exploration for the projection of my driving questions.

The Gates – temporary public intervention from Christo and Jeanne-Claude in Central Park, New York

* *genius loci*
the prevailing character or atmosphere of a place.

***mise en scène*
the arrangement of scenery and stage properties in a play.
the setting or surroundings of an event.

R E A D I N G B R A A M B E R G E N

While experiencing the site in its major parts, you find yourself in a totally 'landscaped' environment that doesn't have any traces that could relate to waste. It is important to make clear that contamination has ended, but on the other hand, tempted in the search of meaning, I think it is highly important for the site to confront its truth.

landscape



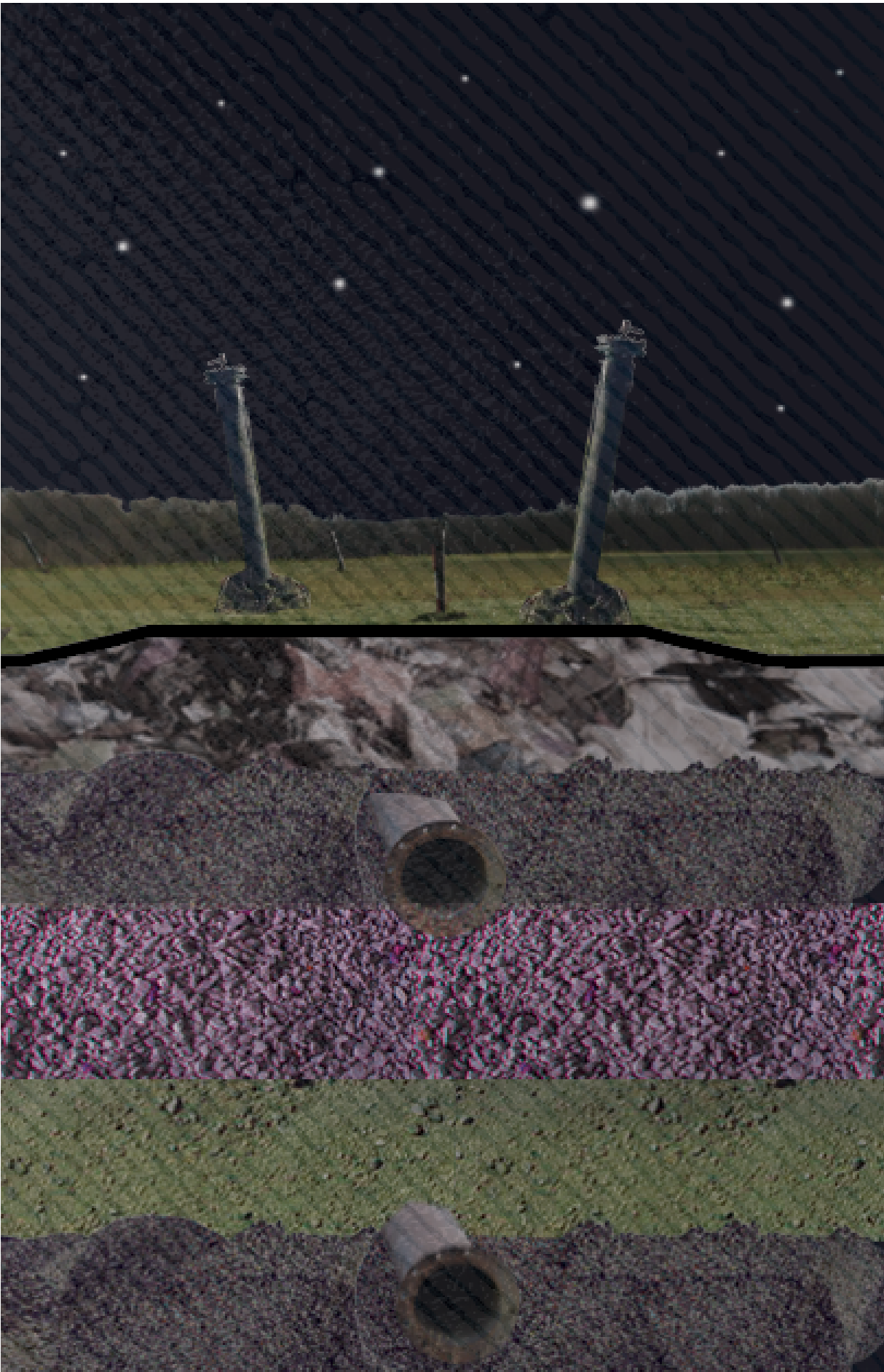
waste

This palimpsest of landscape and waste, where you go beneath the first, you find the second, could be understood if one quickly sketches a conceptual section through the site where above the line of ground lies this kind of landscape and under it, the hidden brutal trash.

Having said this, I find interesting the analogy with the above imaginary section with our blind attitude toward the journey that the waste goes through where at a certain point we have the illusion that trash disappears. Like in the daily reality, we are aware while we produce waste in a tangible way, and further more we barely think about it, finding comfort in the fact that it fades away (momentary), but in fact it doesn't. And it is good to remember that.



X-Ray through Braambergen
Conceptual Section
source: own creation



X-Ray through Braambergen
Conceptual Section
source: own creation

"The difficult thing is to find poetry, spirituality in these dimensions - to recreate if not beauty, than aesthetical dimensions in things like this- trash itself, that's the true love of the world.

*Love is not idealisation- is accepting it as it is"*⁴

4. Zizek on "Examined Life" a documentary from Astra Taylor, 2008

TRASH CRONICHECS

Certainly it doesn't come as a surprise that waste is the main topic of many works in a range of disciplines, like that of architecture illustrated by the increasing number of young studios using residuals as the primary material to build with, like the Spanish studio Basurama, Berlin based Raumlabor, Dutch – German architects of Refunc and many others. The Dutch firm MVRDV put forward an experimental 3 dimensional stimulation of the so-called MetaCity Downtown which reveals the drastic consequences of our lifestyle, where the most striking of these quantitative outputs around these speculations were the waste mountains on the edge of the hyper-dense urban fabric.

Moreover contemporary artists are using exploration of waste as a mean to criticize the extensive consumption profile that society is operating. Like the visual artist Jenny Michel with her impressive work *Trashing Utopia* exhibited recently in Berlin or the amazing reflections on this topic identified on the correspondence between the famous singer Bjork and the American philosopher Timothy Morton. In this regard, the archipelago of waste gets its contribution also from one of the most influential thinkers of our time, the philosopher Slavoj Žižek, where in an orange safety vest, he is talking about ecology at a London trash heap. "Waste bursting onto the scene of a kid's film marks its definitive entry into the collective consciousness as a plausible and menacingly imminent scenario."⁵

But let me take a journey through waste to find out what does it mean for our society, by presenting a multidisciplinary approach to the issue that might help to analyze thoroughly such a complex reality.

The opening of Marx's book one, *The Capital* starts with: "The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an immense ac-

cumulation of commodities”.⁶ We could translate this saying in today’s circumstances as the wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails presents itself as an immense accumulation of trash. Clearly Marx’s citation can be interpreted as a consequence of wealth, whereas Nietzsche went beyond and said that “the concept of decadence – waste, decay, elimination need not to be condemned: they are necessary consequences of life, of the growth of life”.⁷

Trash can be perceived as a broken mirror of society. Things as products are becoming shorter and shorter in their lifespan. They are produced, traded, consumed and discarded. As soon as they are thrown away, they are transformed into something else: trash. We deal with trash in our everyday, we produce it continuously. Despite its universality, it’s hard to define it. What is waste? As Kevin Lynch in *‘Wasting Away’* points out, “waste is what is worthless or unused for human purpose,” but it also could be defined as “things [that are] in the wrong place.”⁸ This idea of waste is a very broad and ambiguous concept (garbage, trash, litter, junk, dirt, residues, scrap). Generally humans think of it as dirty, therefore waste has disgusting connotations. But on the other hand, for instance an old chair out on the sidewalk is perceived as waste and the same it might be useful in a living room. Therefore, waste is in my opinion constructed in our minds, as a way of mentally labeling objects: “trash” or “not trash.” It is an opinion, not a state of the matter.⁹ It seems that it’s out of reach to determine the usefulness of a material or a thing without a spatial and temporal context.

This is exactly what I think is important as an approach of dealing with the site of Braambergen and the issue of presumptions around it and its waste implication.

5. Corbellini, Giovanni, *“Residuals”, The landscape of Waste*, 2006, p68

6. William Leon McBride, *The Philosophy of Marx*, 2015

7. Jose Luis Pardo, *Urban Distortions: Never was trash so beautiful*, 2006

8. Denise Scott Brown-*The Art in Waste, Urban Distortions*, 2006

9. Ben Castro Terán, *On Urban Distortions*, 2006

LEARNING FROM CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE

case study

This chapter goes through one of the public art interventions of Christo and Jeanne-Claude – known as the “*wrapping couple*”, with works such as “*Wrapped Reichstag*” in Berlin, “*The Gates*” in New York City, “*The Pont Neuf Wrapped*”, Paris etc. I see their projects as an attempt to develop in mind or physically an environment, an image and a memory. Consequently the durability of their work becomes redundant.

I consider the Gates as a great example of ephemeral intervention. The artists installed 7,503 vinyl “gates” along 37 km of pathways in Central Park in New York City. From each gate hangs a panel of deep saffron-colored nylon fabric. The installation lasted 16 days on February 2005. The project was triggered by the vast flow of people walking through the streets. The project aimed to relate to the human scale, sited in Central Park, whose 843 acres are the ultimate locale for walking at leisure. In my opinion The Gates is more an architectural gesture which engages the residents and visitors in a visual and physical experience. The created visual golden river which appeared and dis-

appeared through the naked branches of the trees on a February gloom highlighted the configuration of the footpaths. I appreciate it as an event, as spectacle, as a public gesture, a piece of elaborated social theater which creates in viewers an initial wow and invites them to take a look differently to the location that has been set. Their in-



intervention was an attempt to upend the familiar. After The Gates, people saw the park more clearly for a time, becoming more conscious of the serpentine design of the paths and more aware of the park’s design.¹⁰

When Christo and Jeanne-Claude were asked about their project “*The Gates*” why they choose to create temporary public art they answered that they do it in order

to endow the works of art with a feeling of urgency to be seen, and the love and tenderness brought by the fact that they will not last. "Those feelings are usually reserved for other temporary things such as childhood and our own life. These are valued because we know that they will not last. We want to offer this feeling of love and tenderness to our works, as an added value (dimension) and as an additional aesthetic quality."¹¹ I think this example highlights the qualities of the



ephemeral. The very intriguing switch of situation that an intervention is able to create in the same place and the discussion among the public that it raises, which can or cannot continue after its limited lifespan. This kind of "gentle disturbance" created in open air stage, refocuses the participant's impression of the site it is located, drawing their attention to what is there that is taken for granted and at the same time unveiling the hidden potential it has.

10. Mark Stevens, *Curtain Up*, 2005, New York Magazine. <http://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/art/reviews/11134/>

11. Christo and Jeanne-Claude in *Their Own Words*, nyc.gov, visited 25 april, 2016

The Gates
from Christo and Jeanne-Claude
source: christojeanneclaude.net



The Gates

from Christo and Jeanne-Claude

source: christojeanneclaude.net



THE EVENT AS A TURNING POINT

Getting back to Braambergen, I find it important to confront the waste and get over it, to face and say goodbye to it. In a sarcastic way, I can compare it with the example of falling dictatorships. There is (needed) always a moment which marks its end, a dramatic detachment to start a new area. In most of the cases people tear down or explode the dictator statue, a shared strong expression toward a symbol. And the day or the moment marks a new time. Like the case of the Berlin wall, where people came together to manifest its falling-it is the gesture of doing it that signifies the thing. So following this logic and taking in consideration the fact that this is one of the last landfills in the Netherlands¹², I see the event as an open invitation: to end together with the inhabitants the waste area, and eventually leave an open call for them to come and use it.

The insertion of the terms "event" and "movement" was influenced by Situationist discourse and by the '68 era.¹³ Les événements, as they were called, were not only "events" in action, but also in thought. Erecting a barricade (function) in a Paris street (form) is not quite equivalent to being a flaneur (function) in that same street (form).

Michel Foucault expanded the use of the term "event" in a manner that went beyond the single action or activity, and spoke of "events of thought." For Foucault, an event is not simply a logical sequence of words or actions, but rather "the moment of erosion, collapse, questioning, or problematization of the very assumptions of the setting within which a drama may take place -- occasioning the chance or possibility of another, different setting."

The event here is seen as a turning point -- not an origin or an end -- as opposed to such propositions as "form follows function." I would like to propose that the future of architecture lies in the construction of such events. ¹⁴

12. "Landfill: A Victim of Dutch Success?", waste-management-world.com/ visited April 7th 2016

13. Chin, Bernard Tschumi - *Six Concepts*: Excerpt from *Architecture and Disjunction*

14. Michel Foucault: *The Freedom of Philosophy*, John Rajchman 1986, Columbia University

The most important test for the site to undergo, is its dissociation from its “dark” past- that of waste- which is the reason of its non habitation so far. So I strongly believe that there is a possibility to dismantle the presumptions of the location by unfolding a strong statement that reveals the fact that this is no more *a no man land*, but a purified landscape. And it is important to happen on site, a carefully created “*Mise-En-Scène*” which can be deciphered in a gesture that takes the visitors along it, telling its story about the past and stretching out its potential for the future.

A SCRIPT RATHER THAN A BLUE PRINT

From the exploration of the importance of the event to mark a turning point in a space, I came to the conclusion that the opening of the site should escape itself from a rigid blue print which narrates what to do where in a defined time. So no pre-conceived permanent program, but a script of the event that is well written that causes an ongoing open invitation. I assume that, to prove my confident position in favor of the ephemeral character as a first step for the site, comes to help the case of The Gates I analyzed above. The intervention by Christo and Janne-Claude proves that just by a temporary intervention, by a reinterpretation of the existing elements, an invitation to see the site in a different way was provoked, thus a new perspective can be inducted.

From my own interpretation of the work of Tschumi, as highly metaphorical to cinema, I think that fragmentation could be a way of understanding the potentials of the site, whereas montage becomes its essential tool. Like in a film where a fragmented set of data are set with confidence, as the human mind has no choice but to construct a whole picture out of it. Hence the non coincidental title I gave to my research -*Braambergen Transcripts*- starts to make sense here. By isolating, framing, “taking” elements from the location, a new reality of it can take place.

To conclude the picture I sketch in my mind in response to the Braambergen brief attempts to incorporate spaces with uncertain use, which serve more as a question rather than an answer, with a focus on the unclaimed and unintended collective space.

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