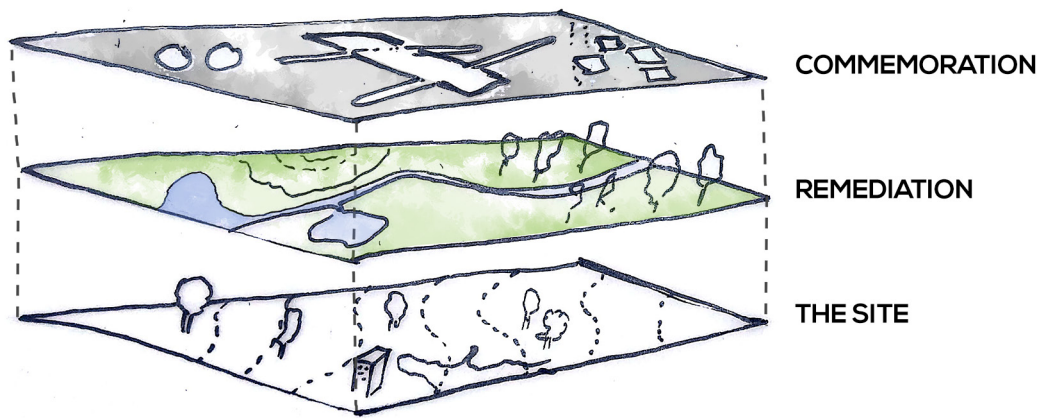


## Chapter 4

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## Precedents

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#### 4.1 Crissy field. San Francisco Bay

Approaching the commemoration of post-industrial sites on damaged ecologies by seeing the site as a palimpsest, entails challenging the notion of “restoration”. In his article in *Manufactured Sites*, Rieder accurately illustrates this challenge in his case study on Crissy Field in the San Francisco Bay. The United States Army created the Crissy Fields Air Force base by draining and filling tidal salt marshes along the coast up until 1915. After the base was decommissioned in 1994 the site was handed over to the National Parks Service (NPS). The Natural resource division of the NPS sought to restore the salt marshes whilst the cultural resource division of the NPS sought to restore the cultural heritage that was the World War 1 air field. Since both divisions had as reference a definition of restoration that entailed restoring a site or property to its condition prior to disturbance, the issue that these two conditions had never co-existed in the same period of time became apparent. Restoring the marsh would mean no airfield and restoring the airfield would mean no marsh.

The landscape architecture firm, Hargreaves Associates, addressed this issue by restoring the airfield to its exact position and scale but as a land form. Thus the functioning of the airfield is denied but the form commemorated. With regard to the restoration of the marsh, the opposite approach was taken where the functioning of the marsh was restored but the original form not. In order to ensure that the marsh was fully functioning, the scientists on the project team specified that 8 hectare was the minimum area required to ensure the functioning and health of the marsh. Although the size of the marsh was a quantifiable necessity, there was much

debate regarding the implementation of clearly man-made means to ensure the functional of the “natural” marsh. It was determined that a concrete culvert could assist the marsh in terms of its natural functioning whilst “natural” soil embankments could erode and later threaten the natural functioning of the marsh.

This raised an interesting question regarding conservation and the restoration of that which is “natural”. Are the superficial aesthetic aspects of the environment worth preserving or is it the invisible functioning and services? (Rieder 2001:206-207)

Left:

figure 43 Layers of intervention at Crissy Field (Author, 2017)

Below: **Figure 44** Crissy Field. Airport2Park. 2014. Crissy Field. <http://airport2park.org/portfolio-item/crissy-field/>





## 4.2 Landscape Park Duisburg-Nord, Duisburg, Germany

The park at Duisburg-Nord is one of many projects undertaken in the Ruhr district of Germany with the aim to ecologically renew this post-industrial district strewn with the facilities of various industries. Landscape architect Peter Latz undertook the challenge to systematically transform the post-industrial steel manufacturing plant into a park in a way that resonates with the theories mentioned above.

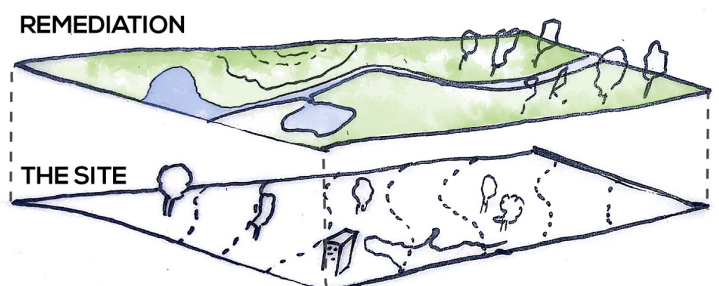
The site as palimpsest. Latz sought to connect the matrix of the buildings and landscapes on site by conceiving them as layers “that are recombined through the lens of park design” (Krinke 2001:136) Achieving the theme of layering also meant appreciating the current qualities of decay of the industrial buildings and landscapes and juxtaposing over that a new layer of landscape interventions. These connections between layers were made by linking elements “either symbolically by gardens or substantially by ramps, stairs and terraces” (Latz 2001:153) Maintaining the integrity of the “Wabi-Sabi” aesthetic as described by Okada is uncompromised at the Duisburg park.

The layering of experience and imagination manifests spatially as well in terms of differing circulation routes and experience at different heights on the site. At the highest level, the park consists of suspended walkways offering a completely different experience than the experience one has at the lowest level - the deep set water park. The layering of the interventions within the park is thus not only historic but also physical.

### Reflection and the reversal of meaning.

One of the means through which the juxtaposed layers of experience and history are bound together is that there are relationships between the new and old meanings associated with elements. For instance, heavily polluted soils are not removed from the site but are rather exhibited in their remediated states. Toxic materials and soils are buried deep within ore bunkers, sealed and planted over with roof gardens.

The old Emscher river was a large open waste-water ditch running through the site towards the Rhine river. Latz decided to remodel this river as a channel carrying purified water collected as rainwater off buildings and pavement. These are but two instances in which an intervention in formerly polluting entities were used as strategies that allowed the visitor to view both with new eyes. Thus, remedial action and the commemoration of heritage can be seen as one exercise.



Left:

**Figure 45** Park Duisburg Nord, Latz+Partner (Mellado [Sa])

Bottom left:

**Figure 46** Layers of intervention at Duisburg-Nord (Author, 2017)

Bottom:

**Figure 47** Turbine hotel in Knysna, South Africa (Baker, 2012)

Bottom right: **Figure 48** Cultuurpark Westergasfabriek (Gustafson, Porter + Bowman, 2017)

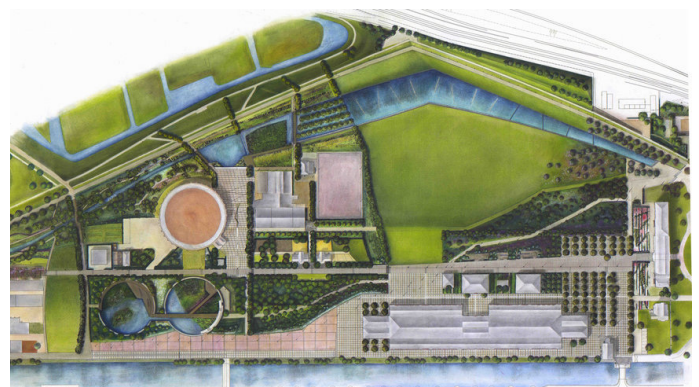
### 4.3 Turbine hotel, Knysna, South Africa

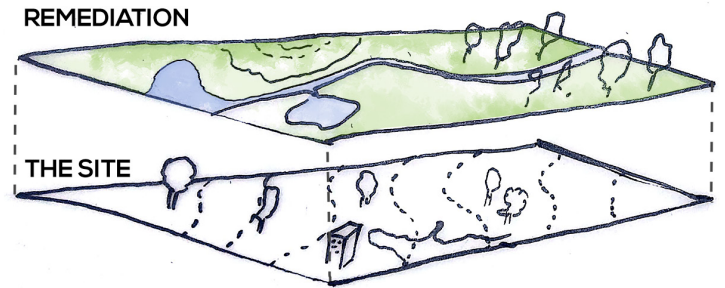
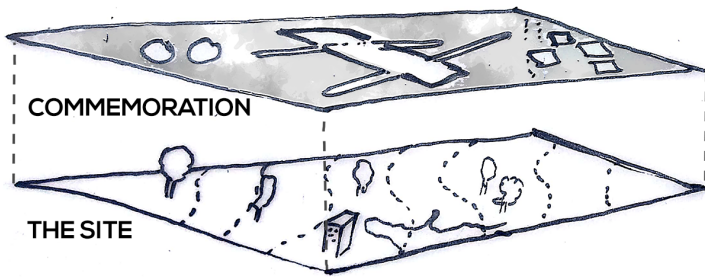
The Thesen Island was a timber mill production unit with a few industrial buildings on it nested in a large wetland area. The site was re-appropriated with the idea of conservation and preservation, it not only hosts a bird sanctuary but human-made canals that criss-cross the development and are home to some rare and endangered species such as the Knysna Seahorse. The Turbine Hotel is one of the conversions of the old mill power station and is especially unique in that much of the first power generation turbines, and fittings have integrated into the hotel design. The main restaurant is especially interesting as you have direct access to two levels to explore the turbines while you enjoy your meal. Some tables are situated just metres away from the old turbine units and create an enjoyable atmosphere. (Baker, 2012)



### 4.4 Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

In 1885, the Imperial Continental Gas Association commissioned the construction of the Western Gas Factory near the waterways, railways and roads of Amsterdam. The factory ceased production of gas in 1967 and the site was left in a heavily polluted state. In 1992, the buildings were used temporarily for creative and cultural activities and since then entrepreneurs and artists have flocked to the site. The site was so suitable for the hosting of cultural events that it was later designated as a cultural zone. The site also contains a park and the historic buildings are used by creative entrepreneurs as work space and also for hosting events, musical performances, markets and festivals (Westergasfabriek, 2016)





#### 4.5 Parc de la Cour du Maroc, Paris

This project entails the creation of an urban park from a 4 hectare site containing abandoned warehouses and railway tracks. The landscape architect Georges Descombes utilized the long parallel bands left as traces of the railroad to delineate activities. The new programs are communicated through changes in the ground plane, the planting palette and paths whilst the former function of the site is honoured in the rational and functional layout created by the tracks (MOMA 2008:138). This precedent indicates how the spatial ordering of an industrial process can inform the spatial ordering of a new intervention as a means of commemoration.

#### 4.6 Fresh kills park, New York

The City of New York established the Fresh Kills Landfill in 1948; by 1955 it was the largest landfill in the world. In 1996, a state law was passed requiring that the landfill cease accepting waste after 2001. New York City conducted an International Design Competition in 2001 to foster the development of a master plan; to generate ideas and innovative park designs and respond to the natural and constructed history of the site. Fresh Kills Park, when finished over the next 30 years, will be almost three times the size of Central Park; transforming the landfill into a productive, beautiful cultural destination, making the park a symbol of renewal and an expression of how society can restore balance to its landscape. It will provide a wide range of recreational opportunities, ecological restoration and cultural and educational programming that will emphasize environmental sustainability (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, 2017).



Figure 49 Parc de la Cour du Maroc (Kopinski [Sa])



Figure 50 Fresh kills park (Ecowatch, 2017)

## 4.7 The Plant, Chicago

The refurbishment of this 87-year old meat packing factory in Chicago, Illinois entails the introduction of various interlinked systems of production to form a Net-Zero Energy system. This project, partially funded by the city's Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, will entail the creation of an urban farm that will grow fresh produce, farm fish, brew beer, produce kombucha and produce electricity from an anaerobic biomass digester that handles about 27 tons of organic waste per day. A noteworthy aspect of this endeavour is the interconnectedness of systems and the role that the Tilapia farm plays within this system. The fish enrich the water with nitrates and ammonia that in turn get circulated to the plant's water system where the water gets purified before being returned into the aquaponic system. (Vinnitskaya, 2012)



Figure 51 Garden and mural (Plant Chicago, 2014)

## 4.8 Conclusion

The precedents served as points of reference to guide any intervention planned for the Gas Works site. These projects illustrated that commemoration and remediation can be done as a single intervention upon a site. Whether through formal interventions that entailed the adaptation of existing structures (such as the Turbine Hotel) or through landscape interventions (such as the Landscape park or Crissy Field, these projects maintained the Genius Loci of their sites whilst re-establishing them as contributors to the public realm either through recreational activities or new innovative functions.