

TERRAIN VAGUE





for Judith
(*1983–†2008)

with love

Terrains vagues.
Urban Interspaces in French Cinema

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submitted by

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**TERRAIN
VAGUE**

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Introduction

A bare tree stands on a barren slope. The trunk and branches are black, the ground is grey. Behind it, the sky like a white wall. A metal frame lies on the slope, broken and crooked, as if it had been thrown away. A few bent springs hang from it. What it was once used for is unclear. It is junk, just as useless as this whole desolate place, which seems to be cut off from everything, even if the hint of an electricity pylon peeking into the background suggests an urban setting. That's all there is to see. Besides for, leading up to it, the steps dug into the bare earth of the slope. Like the metal frame, they are merely the trace of someone who has passed, someone who has gone. The emptiness, uselessness and apparent insignificance of the place create absences that make it seem eerie and ghostly.

The photograph by Man Ray from 1929 is entitled *Terrain vague*¹ (fig. 3) and, in its precise reduction of elements to an absolute minimum, illustrates what this French term refers to: abandoned, forgotten, neglected places in the centre or on the edge of the city, which in English are described in a matter-of-fact, technical tone as fallow land, gaps between buildings, wasteland, residual or interstitial spaces. But none of these makeshift paraphrases provides a satisfactory translation. None of them evoke that uncertainty, uncanniness and indeterminacy that define the atmosphere of the places in Man Ray's photography and are firmly anchored in the concept of *terrain vague*.

But as clear as the image evoked by *terrain vague* may be, its meaning is often unclear. Interestingly, this does not contradict the fact that the term has served as a title for pretty much everything the cultural sector has had to offer in recent decades. Numerous novels and novellas, volumes of poetry, plays, comics, but also music albums, symphonic compositions, paintings, photography and art exhibitions, installations, a film production company, a theatre and a publishing house bear the term in their name or simply call

1 The photograph is in fact part of a photographic study, from which different versions of the same subject in various sections, some under the English title *Waste land* (then dated 1932), are known.

themselves *terrain(s) vague(s)*.² And frequently without reference to actual places in the sense mentioned above. Quite the opposite, in fact. Often a rather metaphorical use of the term prevails here, taking advantage of the fact that the vague charm it exudes usually conceals a certain perplexity as to what it actually refers to.³



(Fig. 3)

From the perspective of the subject and scholarship on it, the phenomenon of inner-city and agricultural wastelands has, in parallel to artistic work on the subject, sparked steadily growing interest since the 1980s: initially in ecology and geography, increasingly in urban and landscape architecture since the 1990s, and more recently in interdisciplinary cultural studies. Under various names and sometimes in conflicting ways, these places – especially in the latter discipline – are examined and discussed, particularly in line with the following descriptions of the subject. Firstly, they are interstitial spaces in many respects: they form spatial and functional gaps in the urban system, they are not only

2 See the Appendix for more detailed information.

3 This also applies in part to international discourse's use of the term in architectural theory, which some believe is where it first emerged as a technical term.

often on the threshold between the private and the public, but also temporally between the no-longer of their former use and the not-yet of a future use. The combination of remnants of human culture in the process of decaying and weathering and a proliferating nature that is reclaiming the space make them hybrid spaces of a third kind. Secondly, these places have always been accompanied by a strong ambivalence regarding their observation and evaluation: what for some is rubbish, an eyesore or a grievance to be overcome, is an attraction and a stimulation for others. Wasteland therefore traditionally always oscillates between two extreme attributions: sometimes they are places of doom, sometimes of promise; sometimes purgatory, sometimes refuge; sometimes *locus amoenus*, sometimes *locus terribilis*, sometimes *fascinosum*, sometimes *tremendum*. Thirdly, these places are characterized not only by the heterogeneity of their manifestations, but also and especially by their potential uses: on the one hand, their potential openness makes them spaces of possibility for creative conversion, reuse or interim utilization, but on the other hand they also become a terrain of conflict where the various political, economic and social actors and interests clash. Where forms of subversive appropriation resist the growing alienation from new urban development in many places, they quickly become a terrain of resistance.

Given the popularity of the term *terrain vague* on the one hand and the attention paid to the phenomenon as such on the other, it is all the more surprising that neither a systematic theoretical investigation of its (intensional and extensional) meaning nor a historically orientated examination of its use (both artistic and scholarly) has ever been undertaken to date. Even more often than its denotative meaning and recent history, however, the origin of the term in French Romanticism and its two-hundred-year history – which can be traced seamlessly through French literary history – remain obscure.

These two areas, namely an interdisciplinary, theoretical description of the empirical phenomenon on one hand, and a media analysis of its representations in French literature and cinema on the other hand, were the fields of research of the project '*Terrain vague. Ästhetik und Poetik urbaner Zwischenräume in der französischen Moderne*', funded by the German Research Foundation and conducted at the University of Cologne from 2014 to 2017 (with an extension until 2018). Within the framework of this project, a monograph I co-authored with Daniel Ritter, titled *Die Stadtbrache als 'terrain vague': Geschichte und Theorie eines unbestimmten Zwischenraums in Literatur*,

Kino und Architektur,⁴ has already been published.⁵ Based on a history of the *terrain vague* in literature, media and discourse, its aim was to develop the term into a theoretical concept that can prove its validity beyond the boundaries of the various disciplines. In this respect, the monograph explicitly aims to appeal to readers who are not literary or film scholars in the narrower sense, but who are interested in *terrains vagues* from the fields of geography, urban and landscape architecture, urban planning, urban sociology, cultural studies or art.

At the same time, it is an attempt not to conduct basic research into architectural theory or urban geography, but rather to systematize historical and theoretical approaches to the *terrain vague*. For all its interdisciplinary nature, the methodological approach remains one of literary and media studies. Because if we seek to establish how these places can be described theoretically from the perspectives of the various disciplines, what these places are and what characterizes them, then on this basis we can also ask how they appear and are used in artistic contexts, what functions and what meanings they acquire there. Due to this specific focus on the representations and modes of representation of *terrain vague*, it is also true that the formulation of a general theory has always been influenced by them. Representations of *terrains vagues* can confirm, expand, modify or falsify the theory in the same way as real *terrains vagues*. Or, to use the image of communicating vessels: not only are both sides in constant dialogue with each other, but the theory can only be formulated to the extent that it has illustrative material, and the illustrative material can only be understood as well as the theory is developed.

This definition of the relationship between theory and corpus has a concrete impact on how the central object of this research can be conceptualized and treated. It is indeed my previous engagement with the literary and film corpus⁶ that leads me to view the *terrain vague* not merely as another urban place that can be described in terms of urban, social, and cultural sciences, but also to conceptualize it in the context of its media

4 Jacqueline Maria Broich/Daniel Ritter, *Die Stadtbrache als 'terrain vague': Geschichte und Theorie eines unbestimmten Zwischenraums in Literatur, Kino und Architektur*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017 (machina, 12). Direct link: <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-4095-3/die-stadtbrache-als-terrain-vague/> (accessed 27 December 2021). Reproduced with permission of Transcript-Verlag (2017); DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839440957>.

5 See also the website of our research project via direct link: <https://www.terrainvague.de/> (accessed on 27 December 2021).

6 This literary and cinematic corpus is openly accessible on our website at www.terrainvague.de/korpus (accessed on 27 December 2021).

representations in a way that consistently considers both the represented space and the representation of space together. For this reason, a sharp and consistent distinction between the *terrain vague* as a phenomenon and the *terrain vague* as a concept is hardly possible and does not always make sense.

And so the path to a theory of the *terrain vague* inevitably leads through its history, which is limited here to the history and meaning of the term, to highlights of literary and media history, and to an excursus into urban-wasteland art and the history of discourse and urban culture.⁷ I will therefore first clarify the lexical meaning of the word and the historical origin of the term, focussing on the various semantic moments that will be further developed later in the theoretical section. This is all the more necessary as I am developing the theory in the form of a systematic model that allows everything that can be said about the *terrain vague* from the perspectives, approaches and concepts of the various related disciplines to be identified and systematically organized. For without being embedded in contexts that form the real-world basis and historical horizon of my considerations, such a model would inevitably run the risk of becoming unintentionally abstract, corset-like and static.

The examination of wasteland in scholarship, but also in urban culture and art, is also intended to show the characteristics with which I develop the systematic analysis model (the theory of the *terrain vague*) in the second part. It will take the form of a matrix, which on the one hand results from the perspectives of the various reference disciplines and accordingly considers the subject matter in terms of the respective 'ontological levels' – physics, economics, politics, sociology, ethnology, ecology and aesthetics. On each of these levels, the statements are assigned to the etymologically derived categories of meaning – *vacuus*, *vagus*, *vâgr* – which serve as heuristic fields of order. This systematization is preceded by a justification and clarification of the parameters on which this analysis is based.

After briefly summarizing the results of the systematic section, I will then devote the third section to the media representations of urban wasteland, focusing on the visual media of photography, comics/*bandes dessinées*, video games and documentary film. As these representations are just as multifaceted and diverse as the phenomenon itself, the term *terrains vagues* is usually used in the plural, in contrast to the theoretical section, which often uses the generic singular.

The fourth section will deal with the aesthetics of urban interspaces in French cinema, whereby I will allow myself a sideways glance at other

7 For a detailed account of the history of the literature, discourse and urban culture, please refer to our monograph, footnote 4, pp. 25–142.

francophone feature films. In this section, I will first look at how cinematic spatial representation works in general, before then examining the specific possibilities of film for staging *terrains vagues* as a motif, shaping them, embedding them in the narrative, and locating them in the diegesis. Before analysing the sequences of interstitial spaces in film and filmed interstitial spaces, the selection criteria for the corpus are presented and the classification according to affinities and intersections is explained in detail. After analysing examples of film sequences, I will summarize my results in a concluding discussion and locate them within the academic debate.

The aim is to explore the reasons why the urban wasteland 'ihren Ruf als städtebauliches Ärgernis verloren hat und sie zu einem Möglichkeitsraum für neue Formen urbanen Lebens avanciert'⁸ – something which manifests itself in many ways in the media representations of *terrains vagues*, particularly in French cinema. Because the concept of *terrain vague*, rooted in French Romanticism, has been continuously used but largely overlooked in theory, it is also my aim to provide a brief historical overview as well as a detailed theoretical and systematic examination of the concept. This will enable me to make statements about the aesthetics of this interstitial space in French cinema within the framework of its reevaluation in architecture, literature, art and visual media.

I devised the systematic section of this work together with Daniel Ritter, wrote it in partial co-authorship with him, and have already published it in our monograph^{9,10} This concerns following chapters: the basis of the 'Introduction', 'History and Meaning of the Term', the basis of 'Terminological and Conceptual Diversity in International Urban Research' (as a modification of our jointly-written chapter 'Die Brache in der internationalen Stadtforschung seit den späten 1990er Jahren'), the 'Theory of the *terrain vague*' except of the subsections 'Ecology', 'Aesthetics', and the 'Consolidation'. I wrote the chapter on 'Ecology' on my own. The one on 'Aesthetics' was written by Daniel Ritter, so I have excerpted it and credited him. In the fourth section, I also refer to the following sub-publications: my exposé,¹¹ my working paper '*Non-lieu* und

8 <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-4095-3/die-stadtbrache-als-terrain-vague/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

9 See footnote 4.

10 Our application for partial publication and partial co-authorship was approved by the doctoral committee on 28 October 2014.

11 Jacqueline Maria Broich, '*Terrains vagues: Urbane Zwischenräume im französischen Kino*', synopsis of dissertation project, University of Cologne, 25 March 2014, available at: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed 27 December 2020).

terrain vague,¹² the sections of the monograph relating to the film sequences and my essay 'Rôdeuses, vagabondes, arpenteuses: flâner sur les terrains vagues de Jacques Rivette'¹³, and, in the 'Final Considerations and Outlook', to the conclusion of our jointly written conference report.¹⁴ All sections were slightly modified and adapted by myself.

12 Jacqueline Maria Broich, 'Non-lieu and terrain vague', <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Non-lieu%20und%20Terrain%20vague.pdf> (accessed 27 December 2020).

13 Jacqueline Maria Broich, 'Rôdeuses, vagabondes, arpenteuses: flâner sur les terrains vagues de Jacques Rivette', in Jacqueline Maria Broich/Wolfram Nitsch/Daniel Ritter (eds.), *Terrains vagues: Les friches urbaines dans la littérature, la photographie et le cinéma français*, Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal 2019 (Littératures), pp. 181–204.

14 Jacqueline Maria Broich/Daniel Ritter, 'Tagungsbericht 'Terrain vague: Die Brache in den Stadt- und Kulturwissenschaften'', in *Romanische Studien* 2 (2015), pp. 379–393.

I. History of the *terrain vague*

1. History and Meaning of the Term

The standard modern definition of the term *terrain vague* is ‘terrain vide de cultures et de construction, dans une ville’, which roughly translates as ‘an undeveloped and uncultivated, fallow area in the city’.¹ Basically all modern dictionaries agree on this. However, a look at the history of the expression and its two-word components, especially the adjective *vague*, makes this standard definition appear to be a minimal definition, as the etymology of the expression reveals a far richer semantic spectrum of secondary meanings and connotations. I will attempt to uncover these in the following.

Originating from Latin loanword vocabulary, the noun *terrenum* undergoes the usual sound change up to its modern French form *terrain* and undergoes a semantic change at the same time.² The original meaning of ‘soil’ and ‘field’ is narrowed and expanded at the same time. Because more generally than the German word ‘Acker’, the modern French term *terrain* refers to a limited part of the Earth’s surface, a ‘site’ which is considered in terms of its characteristics or location. And more specifically than ‘soil’, geography speaks in French of a *terrain* when it considers a particular terrain in its physical form and its geological history. In addition to these two traditional meanings, there are two special, modern uses: in the construction industry, *terrain* is the building ground or the area for which a building is planned; in the military sense, *terrain* refers to the area on which military operations are carried out, which in this context approximates to ‘field’. It is essentially the first of these modern meanings that is key to the concept of *terrain vague*; however, the second can also be present in artistic representations.

The meaning and history of the word *vague*, on the other hand, is much more complicated. In its modern form, the very different etymological lines that

1 Paul Robert (founder)/Josette Rey-Debove and Alain Rey (eds.), *Le nouveau Petit Robert de la langue française*, Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert 2010, p. 2670.

2 With regard to the word *terrain*, I refer to the following dictionaries: *Le nouveau Petit Robert de la langue française* 2010, p. 2536 and Louis Guilbert (ed.), *Grand Larousse de la langue française*, Paris: Larousse 1978, vol. 12, p. 6023.

coincide homophonically in it can no longer be recognized separately.³ In fact, no fewer than three-word origins coincide in this lexeme. The etyma **vacuus* (meaning ‘empty’) and *vagus* (meaning ‘wandering’, from the Latin deponent verb *vagari*) originating from the Latin loanword vocabulary, undergo a phonetic and graphical transformation, which until the fifteenth century partially retains distinct forms, but converges into the same form after the convergence of *vacuus* through variants like *vake*, *vacque*, and *vague*. The feminine noun *la vague* (‘the wave’), on the other hand, has a completely different history, which is independent of that of the adjective *vague*, but still results in the same word form. Its origin is not in Latin, but in Scandinavian, specifically in the Old Norse term *vâgr*, from which the German word *Woge* (‘swell’) is also derived. It is relevant to mention this because the *vague*, in the form that will play a key role in the aesthetics of Romanticism, has a level of meaning that can certainly be described via this separate lineage.

The meaning of the compound term *terrain vague* is initially ‘emptiness’, which goes back to *vacuus*. For a long time, *vague* has been used as an adjective with the meaning ‘qui est vide, et particulièrement qui est vide de cultures’ (‘that which is empty, and particularly that which is empty of crops’)⁴ as well as a noun – *un vague* – which means an ‘empty, unoccupied area’.⁵ However, these meanings of *vague* are outdated nowadays, because as early as the sixteenth century the meaning ‘empty’ was increasingly shifted down towards the term *vide* due to the homonymy with *vague* (from *vagus*). In the nineteenth century, the term *terrain vague*, first documented in 1811, finally largely replaced the previously used expressions *un vague* or *terre vague* and also became the only word combination in French in which the old meaning of *vague* – ‘empty’ – was still preserved.⁶ However, the history of this etymological line is not quite so clear-cut on its own terms. Various specific semantic facets of the ‘emptiness’ meant by *vague* have coexisted since the thirteenth century. Thus, in 1260 *vake* simply meant ‘empty’ and a *terre vacque* (1266) accordingly

3 With regard to the word *vague*, I refer in particular to these dictionaries: *Le nouveau Petit Robert de la langue française* 2010, p. 2670; *Grand Larousse de la langue française* 1978, vol. 6, pp. 6365–6366; Paul Robert (founder)/Alain Rey (ed.), *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert 2001, vol. 2, pp. 1665–1667; Émile Littré/Amédée Beaujean (eds.), *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Paris: Gallimard/Hachette 1958, vol. 7, pp. 1501–1503, and Alain Rey (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert 1992, vol. 3, pp. 3985–3987.

4 *Dictionnaire de la langue française* 1958, vol. 7, p. 1502.

5 See *ibid.*, and *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* 1992, vol. 3, p. 3984.

6 See *ibid.*, p. 3986 and *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* 2001, vol. 6, p. 1666.

meant a ‘terrain où l’on a pas fait de constructions’ (‘an undeveloped area’).⁷ On the other hand, the special use with the meaning ‘vacant’ in the case of unclothed church offices already existed at the end of the thirteenth century, as well as the line of meaning ‘uninhabited, deserted, depopulated’, which persisted until the fifteenth century in relation to regions or houses.⁸ Around 1500, this meaning gains the additional denotation of ‘laisser dans un état d’abandon et de dévastation’, whereby ‘emptiness’ is expanded to include the aspect of ‘being abandoned’ as well as that of ‘being destroyed’.⁹ Nevertheless, the lack of development on an empty site remains largely the central characteristic of *terres vagues*, albeit increasingly in the context of economic considerations: these areas are not cared for, not maintained, not cultivated, and therefore which lie fallow, especially after their former use has disappeared. Since the seventeenth century, the expression *terres vaines et vagues* has also been known, explicitly referring to the fact that land does not produce an agricultural yield, for example because the soil is too poor.¹⁰

What have thus always been semantically co-present since the earlier history of the adjective *vague* (from *vacuus*), alongside the meaning of a general, mere spatial emptiness, especially of a structural nature, are various special forms of this ‘emptiness’, above all of a socio- and cultural-historical nature (because the areas concerned are no longer inhabited, abandoned, neglected, or devastated), or of an economic nature (because they are not or no longer used, especially since they do not provide any yield in the original agricultural sense and are therefore unproductive). All these characteristics are also at least implicitly contained as levels of meaning in today’s concept of *terrain vague* and can, from a subject-independent descriptive perspective, be summarized as the objective characteristics of the areas thus designated.

7 *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé*, ‘vague², adj.’, <http://atilf.atilf.fr/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

8 See *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* 2001, vol. 6, p. 1666, and *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* 1992, vol. 3, p. 3986.

9 *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé*, ‘vague², adj.’ in Jean Froissart’s *Chroniques* from 1409, for example, there is the usage ‘Et saciés que tous li pays estoit adont si effracs de la venue dou conte Derbi ot des Englès, que nuls n’a voit convenance, ne arroy en soy-meismes; mès fuioient devant yaus et s’encloioient ens ès bonnes villes, et laissoient tout vaghe, hostels et maisons’, vol. 4, p. 12, ed. by Siméon Luce: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4061451/fr.image> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

10 See *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* 1992, vol. 3, p. 3986, and the dictionary of the Académie Française: *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française*, Paris: Firmin-Didot 1884, vol. 2, p. 910.

In addition to all these objective characteristics, however, there has been an essential component since the sixteenth century, without which the current fascination with the term *terrain vague* could not be explained: there is interference with the homophonous adjective *vague* (from *vagus*), which has been used since the fourteenth century not only in the concrete sense of aimless wandering but also abstractly for unclear ideas and feelings.¹¹ The fact that the homophonous adjectives *vague* (from *vacuus*) and *vague* (from *vagus*) have been graphically indistinguishable from one another since the sixteenth century at the latest emphasizes their mutual semantic influence. The best indication of this is that since that time *vague* (from *vagus*) has been used not only for unclear mental and spiritual states, but also for empty, interstitial spaces without clear boundaries – ‘*espace vide; espace indéterminé, sans limite précise*’ – whereby the semantic difference between *vacuus* and *vagus* is completely blurred.¹² In these *espaces vagues*, then, the entire semantic court of *vagus* resonates more than subliminally and adds a completely new perspective to the use of *vague* in relation to spatiality. For the *vague*, as it should be familiar from the history of nineteenth-century aesthetics¹³, describes on the one hand on the object side simply a ‘wandering, unclear, blurred’ object, but on the other hand – and therein lies the actual meaning of the *vague* – on the subject side it describes the specific experience of such a ‘*vague*’ object: it is difficult for the mind to grasp, our senses cannot clearly recognise it, our reason cannot clearly determine and identify it. Beyond the various connotations of emptiness, the *terrain vague* is also always associated with the experience of indeterminacy, i.e. with the impossibility or uncertainty of understanding, categorizing, and delimiting.¹⁴

Through this change of perspective on the subjective nature of an object and the qualities of its experience generated by it, the adjective *vague* acquires a fundamental phenomenological and aesthetic meaning, which, from a word-historical point of view, is also located even from an early stage in the context of spatial perception and spatial experience.¹⁵ It is, I argue, precisely this

11 See, for example, *Le nouveau Petit Robert de la langue française* 2010, p. 2670.

12 *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* 2001, vol. 6, p. 1666.

13 On the role of the *vague* in the history of aesthetics, see Remo Bodei, ‘*Vage/ unbestimmt*’, in Karlheinz Barck (ed.), *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 2005, vol. 7, pp. 312–330.

14 For more on this topic, see the aesthetic and cinematic-aesthetic aspects of a *terrain vague* in Chapters III and IV.

15 By ‘phenomenology’ I mean the perspective of subjective experience and experiencing of objects of any kind, whether through perception, imagination, or inter-

double-sidedness of the term *vague* (from *vacuus* and *vagus*), namely the simultaneity of objective and subjective perspectives, which is essential to the concept of the *terrain vague* and which, in its history, has fundamentally determined the coincidence of economic, socio- and cultural-historical approaches on the one hand and phenomenological, aesthetic, and aesthetic approaches on the other.

If we now look at the French and German terms *terrain vague* and *Brache* ('brownfield', 'wasteland') side by side, we realize two things: on the extensional side, the French compound noun is far more restrictive. While in German there are *Wohnbrachen* ('residential wastelands'), *Industriebrachen* ('industrial wastelands'), *Gewerbebrachen* ('commercial wastelands'), *Infrastrukturbrachen* ('infrastructure wastelands') etc., all of which refer to the former use, in French only those wastelands that are open spaces are considered *terrains vagues* with reference to their form. In this respect, 'dysfunctional or unused open space' would be an appropriate translation, which on an extensional level can also refer to open spaces that have not only fallen into disuse after a previous use has been abandoned, but which have never had a function as 'residual areas' that are simply 'left over' in the course of development (such as undeveloped, unused railway triangles). On the intensional side, however, the *terrain vague* possesses, in contrast to this comparatively very technical definition, precisely the substantial double-sidedness of the expression *vague*, which brings together an objective and subjective perspective by thematizing the givenness of an indeterminate, indefinable, indistinct object.

Despite all attempts to narrow down and trace the significance of the *terrain vague*, there ultimately remains a not-insignificant uncertainty regarding its spatial location as an urban phenomenon. On the one hand, the special use of the noun *un vague* as an area 'qui n'est pas bâti, ni cultivé, ni occupé, *dans une ville*' ('an undeveloped, uncultivated, unoccupied area *in the city*') already

pretation, in a bodily anchored worldly context of meaning and use (phenomenologically, an object is not only sensually perceived, imagined, remembered or felt, but also 'animated' with meaning, purpose, and significance, according to Husserl). By 'aesthetics' I mean, so to speak, the phenomenological subset of the purely sensual perception of an object that can be experienced in this way and, as part of this, the theory of sensual perception in general. According to my usage, 'aesthetics' refers to its traditional sense as a subset of the aesthetic, namely in relation to special qualities of the sensually perceptible and perceptible, above all the beautiful, but also the ugly, horrible, pleasant, and unpleasant, and the associated theory of artistically created forms and structures that evoke such aesthetic experiences.

existed in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ On the other hand, when the term *terrain vague* emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the expressions *un vague* and *terre vague*, which it had replaced, disappeared, *terrain vague* was mainly used for the space *extra muros*, more precisely for certain empty areas located directly in front of the city walls and fortifications or customs barriers, which could neither be clearly defined as a city nor as countryside. This applies, for example, to the first reference by the French Romantic François-René de Chateaubriand (1811), but also to other literary uses up to the middle of the nineteenth century. From then on, it was precisely this area that became the scene of the de-solidification of the city and its radical industrial transformation, as a result of which the boundary between city and countryside was dissolved. From this time onwards, the *terrain vague*, as we shall see, appears to be a suitable term not only to describe the economic and social changes that cause the old structures and boundaries to disappear, but also to focus on the ways in which these changes are experienced in the eyes and minds of irritated, worried, speechless, astonished, or fascinated onlookers.

16 *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé*, 'vague², adj.' (my emphasis).

2. Highlights from the History of Literature and Media

2.1 THE *TERRAIN VAGUE* IN POETRY AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

The nineteenth century ends not only with the exoticization of the *terrain vague*, but also with a specific aestheticization that takes place in the course of the preparation of the ‘aesthetic revolution’ that will be proclaimed by the avant-gardes of the first decades of the following century. Without attributing entirely new elements of meaning to the wasteland, there is a decided positivization of the site, which is often portrayed as morbid, disreputable and sinister – not via the political-utopian line, however, which is just as present from the beginning, but via its revaluation as a subject worthy of art. In particular, it was Joris-Karl Huysmans’s art-criticism plea against the aesthetic hierarchization of urban space and for an equally unprejudiced view of the most diverse places, a plea which attributed the same value to the overgrown *terrain vague* as to the spruced-up park. All the locations are ‘délicieux’ and worthy of artistic attention.¹

The realization of this plea is not too long in coming. For even though Paul Verlaine, a major representative of French Symbolism, whose work is clearly influenced by the founder of modern poetry, Charles Baudelaire – in whose work, incidentally, not a single *terrain vague* appears, despite his famous depiction of modernity as the transient, fleeting, and contingent, and his focus on urban scenes which should imply an appreciation for transitory, urban places – does not exactly find the *terrains vagues* ‘delicious’, he is nonetheless the first known poet to use the term and subject the phenomenon to a poetic aestheticization. In one of his older poems, ‘Un peu de bâtiment’² from 1896,

1 Joris-Karl Huysmans, ‘L’Art moderne’ (1883), in Huysmans, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Crès 1928–1938, vol. 6, pp. 118–119.

2 Paul Verlaine, ‘Un peu de bâtiment’, in Verlaine, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. by Yves-Gérard Le Dantec and Jacques Borel, Paris: Gallimard 1962 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), p. 931.

which has only survived thanks to being sent to Victor Hugo, Verlaine uses the term *terrain vague* in a context that sheds light on the structural changes to the Parisian cityscape. The historical background to these changes is the end of 1894, when a law (*la Loi Siegfried*) came into force that favoured the creation of so-called HBM (*habitations à bon marché*) ‘dans ce Paris si laid moderne’ (‘in this so ugly modern Paris’). This prompted Verlaine to make this new structural reality the subject of poetry in accordance with his poetics, a language that dispenses with traditional verse, stanza, and rhyme structures in favour of euphonic sound qualities and lexical ambiguities, which places ‘music before all things’.³ With the help of recurring evocations of misery, Verlaine hints at⁴ how much these new urban wastelands, empty spaces, and leftover areas are in contrast to the former ‘coins pittoresques’ (‘the picturesque corners’), even displacing them. However, Verlaine was not the only one to discover the *terrain vague* for lyrical treatment around the turn of the century.

In his early prose poem ‘Nocturne’ (1915), the cubist-surrealist lyricist Pierre Reverdy brings up to date the indeterminacy and indefinability of the *terrain vague* on which rider and dancer meet. ‘Cependant un cavalier géant court sur une danseuse et tout se perd en tournant derrière un terrain vague. La nuit seule connaît l’endroit où ils se réunissent’⁵ (‘However, a huge rider passes over a dancer, and everything fades away as they turn behind a *terrain vague*. The night alone knows the place where the two come together’). In ‘C’était un paysage plus lointain’⁶ (1917), Reverdy situates a solitary, personified, lonely house amidst a darkly depicted, even sinister *terrain vague*

3 This can be seen, for example, in his poem ‘Art poétique’ (1874), published in 1884 in the anthology *Jadis et Naguère*, a manifesto of the French Symbolists; see Paul Verlaine, ‘Art poétique’, in Verlaine, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. by Yves-Gérard Le Dantec and Jacques Borel, Paris: Gallimard 1962 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), p. 326. It reads: ‘De la musique avant toute chose / Et pour cela préfère l’impair / Plus vague et plus soluble dans l’air / Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose’.

4 The recurring classeme ‘misery’ refers to the isotopy of the poem and is revealed in particular by the following terms: ‘se déshonore’ (‘(self-)dishonoured’), ‘horreur fade’ (‘stale horror, vulgar horror’), ‘terreur’ (‘horror’), ‘la fièvre de bâtir’ (‘construction fever’), ‘laid’ (‘ugly’), ‘d’un aspect vil’ (‘of nefarious, disgraceful appearance’), ‘ça fleure le malsain, ça prédit la misère’ (‘one literally smells the unhealthy in it and prophesies misery/poverty’), ‘fièvres typhoïde’ (‘typhoid fever’), ‘ça vous serre le cœur d’une pitié qui serait du mépris’ (‘it constricts one’s heart with pity, indeed with contempt’); Verlaine, ‘Un peu de bâtiment’.

5 Pierre Reverdy, ‘Nocturne’, in Reverdy, *Plupart du temps: Poèmes 1915–1922*, Paris: Gallimard 1945, p. 26.

6 Pierre Reverdy, *Le voleur de talan* (1917), Paris: Flammarion 1967, p. 24.

of emptiness, which is contrasted with the open sea or ocean – a metaphorical connection that is already resumed in the title of the poem ‘Haut terrain vague’⁷ (1919), in which the image of a ‘plan blanc’ (‘a white, blank map/surface’), similar to the blank sheet of paper in Gaboriau,⁸ reappears and is placed in the context of an emptied cityscape, where facades and palisades inadequately conceal the ‘nothingness’. The *terrain vague*, which Reverdy sketches in *La Peau de l’homme*⁹ (1926), is also a continuation of the comparison made above, in which the connection ‘maison aveugle et solitaire aussi complètement perdue dans un terrain vague’ (‘a blind and lonely house, just as lost on a *terrain vague*’) is a direct analogy to ‘que la barque du pêcheur [...] à la haute mer’ (‘like the fisherman’s boat on the high seas’). And all of this is not far from the railway tracks, which – through half-destroyed wooden barriers – separate old railway lines from fields and roads, which in turn lead, indeed must lead, to the small town. According to Reverdy, there must be a city behind all this, otherwise the unbelievably large quantities of waste that are dumped on the land there could not be justified.

2.2 THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE *TERRAIN VAGUE*: THE 1940S TO 1960S

Starting with the interest of urban wanderers and photographers, who created something like a ‘classic’ image of the *terrain vague* in black and white¹⁰, which is still closely associated with the term for many speakers of French today, the phenomenon received increasing attention from various sides from the 1940s to the early 1960s – similar to the second half of the nineteenth century – and in the course of this also a popularization that reached its temporary peak in those years.

Firstly, the *terrain vague* asserts its place in the genre of the crime novel, even if not necessarily in the texts of that genre’s best-known representatives.

7 Pierre Reverdy, ‘Haut terrain vague’, in Reverdy, *Plupart du temps: Poèmes 1915–1922*, Paris: Gallimard 1945, p. 261.

8 See Émile Gaboriau, *Monsieur Lecoq* (1896), Paris: Librairie des Champs-Élysées 2003, p. 33: ‘Ce terrain vague, couvert de neige, est comme une immense page blanche où les gens que nous recherchons ont écrit, non seulement leurs mouvements et leurs démarches, mais encore leurs secrètes pensées, les espérances et les angoisses qui les agitaient.’

9 Pierre Reverdy, *La Peau de l’homme* (1926), Paris: Flammarion 1968, pp. 47–48.

10 On the *terrain vague* in post-war photo books, especially in Doisneau/Cendrars and Molinard/Clébert, see Wolfram Nitsch, ‘Terrains vagues en noir et blanc: La banlieue de Paris dans les albums photographiques d’après-guerre’, in Philippe Antoine/Danièle Méaux/Jean-Pierre Montier (eds.), *La France en album (XIXe–XXIe siècles)*, Paris: Hermann 2017 (Colloque de Cerisy), pp. 203–216.

Although it appears in Georges Simenon's 1948 novel *Les vacances de Maigret* – one of his 75 works written between 1931 and 1972 that revolve around the main character of Parisian detective Jules Maigret – it does not play a significant role there. It is only marginally thematized as an empty area that cannot contribute to solving the criminal case because possibly suspicious footprints have already been obliterated by the rain.¹¹ In contrast to the snow-covered open space at Gaboriau,¹² however, it is precisely the property of *terrains vagues* to be able to eliminate possible traces of crime – be it because they are often remote, hidden, hardly frequented places, be it because they are unmaintained places exposed to the effects of nature (weather, wild vegetation, decomposition) and to illegal or informal use as dumping grounds, storage or car parks, allotments or the like – because of which they regularly take on a genre-specific function in crime stories. The laconic statement by Paul Morand in his 1930 portrait of New York could be quoted as typical of this: 'On tue les gens en voiture, puis on jette les corps dans des terrains vagues' ('You kill people in cars and then throw their corpses onto empty wastelands').¹³ In this sense, albeit less drastically, there is also a *terrain vague* in Léo Malet's 1948 novel *La vie est dégueulasse*, a classic *roman noir*¹⁴, where the criminals park their stolen getaway vehicle without leaving any trace.¹⁵

The *terrain vague*, on the other hand, is much more present in a lesser-known novel by Pierre Véry from 1943, which was only republished in 1988 and already contains the term in its title. *L'inconnue du terrain vague* (translated into German in 1990 as *Böser Traum um braches Land*) centres its entire plot on an empty, urban wasteland like no other novel.¹⁶ A significant part of the

11 Georges Simenon, 'Les vacances de Maigret' (1948), in Simenon, *Tout Simenon: Œuvres romanesques*, Paris: Presses de la Cité 1988, vol. 3, pp. 7–111, at p. 59.

12 See Gaboriaux, *Monsieur Lecoq*, p. 33.

13 Paul Morand, *New York*, Paris: Flammarion 1930, p. 91.

14 On the *Roman noir* and Léo Malet's significance for this subgenre of the French crime novel, which has been developing under the influence of the American *hardboiled detective novel* since the 1940s, see Michelle Emanuel, *From Surrealism to Less-Exquisite Cadavers: Léo Malet and the Evolution of the French Roman Noir*, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi 2006.

15 Léo Malet, *La vie est dégueulasse* (1948), Paris: Laffont 1989, p. 76.

16 Pierre Véry, *L'inconnue du terrain vague* (1943), Paris: Joëlle Losfeld 2001 (German translation *Böser Traum um braches Land*, transl. by Wolfgang Rentz, Moos/Baden-Baden: Elster 1990). I owe thanks to Zeno Zelinsky for alerting me to Véry, as well as for his recommendation of the following crime novel: Émile Gaboriau, *Monsieur Lecoq* (1896), Paris: Librairie des Champs-Élysées 2003, p. 5. This is another text which helps the urban wasteland to become a genre-specific place. For a closer

novel's action is not merely situated on a *terrain vague*, but also finds its centre and starting point there, as several characters act with regard to this terrain. This includes not only the scene of two murders, but also the motive for the crime and the actions of various inhabitants of a fictitious small town in Normandy called Neugate, all of whom have their own interest in the available open space. First of all, there is an architect who lives in a shack on the wasteland and uses it as a studio, where he works not only on models of Neugate, but also on hypothetical building projects to replace the wasteland, with which he stimulates the imagination of various interested parties. For example, the united butchers and slaughtermen who dream of a new abattoir; the priest who wants a large cathedral; the tanner who wants to expand his tannery facilities; but above all a doctor who wants to provide Neugate with a sanatorium in the service of an anonymous company from Paris, which the mayor, who for his part has a public park in mind for the open space, is trying to prevent. There is also a lawyer who represents the rightful owner – a scientist on a research trip to East Asia, whose fiancée from the Far East (the 'unknown' of the *terrain vague*) inadvertently stirs up the whole city because of her beauty – and who skilfully knows how to profit from the speculation about the future of the wasteland. And finally, there is the owner's 'milk brother', a simple poacher entrusted with guarding the grounds and who is more closely associated with the *terrain vague* (which many in the city consider an eyesore) than anyone else and shares some of its characteristics. The suspects are correspondingly numerous, after first the doctor and then the mayor are violently killed on the terrain, which puts an end to their projects as they were approaching realization. A climate of mutual accusations and growing envy and hatred of 'foreigners' makes it difficult even for the astute detective to successfully identify the perpetrator. And curiously enough, in the dense web of conflicting interests and hostile intentions, the *terrain vague* itself seems to become a kind of actor again and again, possibly not only causing or instigating the murderer to commit the crime, but also committing the murders itself in an act of self-defence. This impression is further reinforced by the fact that the *terrain vague* is repeatedly characterized in a way that brings it into the realm of the animalistic, as if it were a wild animal that sometimes appears sickly, sometimes sleeps quietly under the starry sky, but sometimes can also take on monstrous traits. When it is finally revealed that the guard, who has a kind of symbiotic relationship with this terrain-with-a-life-of-its-own, is the murderer,

look, see Zelinsky's article 'Lieu de crimes crapuleux et coin dans le roman policier français', in Broich/Nitsch/Ritter (eds.), *Terrains vagues*, pp. 71–85.

the suspicion remains that he only acted on behalf of the wasteland and carried out what it – as the actual defining figure of the mysterious story – had in mind.

The reappearance of this book was, by the way, managed by the publishing house Le Terrain Vague, founded in 1955 by Éric Losfeld – who also published works by Eugène Ionesco, Marcel Duchamp, Boris Vian, and André Breton’s last surrealist journal, *La brèche, action surréaliste* (1961–1965) – and was continued after his death by his daughter Joëlle. Losfeld’s surname shares, for speakers of German, a certain affinity with the expression *terrain vague*. The founding of the publisher thus coincided with a veritable heyday of artistic appropriation of the term and the phenomenon it describes, even beyond the authors and photographers already mentioned.



(Fig. 4)

The *terrain vague* then begins to make its presence felt in film: although it already plays a role in (melo)dramas of 1930s Poetic Realism, be it in *L'ATALANTE*¹⁷ (1934) by Jean Vigo or in *LE QUAI DES BRUMES*¹⁸ (Engl. *PORT OF*

17 See *L'ATALANTE*, Jean Vigo, France 1934. Wolfram Nitsch explains that anything is possible for the protagonist Juliette on the suburban wastelands – from love to crime: ‘Die von der Heldin betretenen ‘terrains vagues’ erscheinen ebensowenig als populäre Begegnungsräume wie das Café, aus dem Jules bei seinem Pariser Landgang einen Grammophonrichter entwendet, oder das vom Ehepaar besuchte Ausflugslokal, wo anders als in den meisten *guinguettes* des ‘Poetischen Realismus’, etwa am Hauptschauplatz von Julien Duviviers Film *LA BELLE ÉQUIPE* (1936), nicht die proletarische Verbrüderung, sondern die handgreifliche Auseinander-

SHADOWS, 1938) by Marcel Carné, in which dark areas on the harbour quay or the waterfront are shown (fig. 4), in which often socially disadvantaged protagonists attempt to resolve milieu-specific conflicts in and around dive bars, the *terrain vague* was also taken up by completely different, indeed all genres from the 1940s onwards.

For example, in the prologue to his documentary short film *LE SANG DES BÊTES*¹⁹ from 1949, which deals with the industrial working and slaughtering processes of horses, cows, and sheep in the cruel-looking Parisian slaughterhouses of La Villette and Vaugirard in the 1940s, Georges Franju again very poetically devotes himself to the wastelands on the outskirts of the city: the prologue can be situated onto one of these areas very close to the Porte de Vanves.²⁰

Given the already long history of the *terrain vague* in crime fiction, it is not surprising that one of the masters of French gangster films, Jean-Pierre Melville, also takes a liking to the remote, empty terrain where the atmosphere of absolute fatality characteristic of his films begins. In *BOB LE FLAMBEUR*²¹ from 1956, a gang of burglars uses a *terrain vague* near a military airfield, an empty area on the outskirts of the city near the railway tracks, as a free stage for rehearsing their next big heist.²²

setzung regiert. Vielmehr kommen sie als unwirtliche Orte in den Blick. Bei der Durchquerung eines leeren Eisenbahnschuppens erscheint Juliette in extremer Untersicht, so dass sie zwischen den versprengten Pflastersteinen im Vordergrund und den Oberleitungen im Hintergrund noch verlorener wirkt [...]. Ähnliche Effekte zeitigt die Kadrierung der Etappen auf ihrem Rückweg zum Liegeplatz des Kahns. Als sie sich auf der Straße zu orientieren sucht, wird sie von oben gezeigt und dadurch abgetrennt von den anderen Passanten, die nur noch als lange Schatten in die Aufnahme ragen. Und als sie am Ufer nach der ‚Atalante‘ Ausschau hält, wird sie ganz am Rand der leeren Wasserfläche placiert, so als stünde sie nicht an einem städtischen Kanal, sondern am offenen Meer. Ähnlich exzentrisch nimmt die Kamera später ihren Mann ins Visier, der hier noch hin und wieder am Steuerrad erscheint, damit sich die wachsende Distanz zwischen den Eheleuten ermessen lässt. Nach der Ankunft in Le Havre läuft Jean über eine Brache geradewegs zum menschenleeren Strand, der sich umso öder darbietet, als sich der Strandgänger selbst am Bildrand bewegt.’ Wolfram Nitsch, ‘Jean Vigo: L’ATALANTE (1934)’, in Raff Junkerjürgen/Christian von Tschilschke/Christian Wehr (eds.), *Französische Filme in Einzeldarstellungen*, Berlin: Schmidt 2021.

18 See *LE QUAI DES BRUMES*, Marcel Carné, France 1938.

19 See *LE SANG DES BÊTES*, Georges Franju, France 1949.

20 In Chapter IV.3.1, I go into more detail about Franju’s short film.

21 See *BOB LE FLAMBEUR*, Jean-Pierre Melville, France 1956.

22 See Wolfram Nitsch, ‘Der Gangster als Spieler: Handwerk und Hasardspiel in Melvilles *Bob le flambeur*’, in Hermann Doetsch/Andreas Mahler (eds.), *Gangster-*

In *LE DOULOS*²³ from 1962, the murder weapon and loot are buried by the protagonist in a dark, eerie wasteland; later, he uses the expression ‘terrain vague’ to mark for his accomplice the location on the kind of map commonly used for treasure hunts.²⁴

Jacques Tati’s comedy *MON ONCLE*²⁵ from 1958 also prominently features a nearly prototypical *terrain vague* (with attributes such as the wooden fence that children have to climb through, scattered car tires, scrap metal that can be turned into toys, and a *beignet* vendor who fries up ever more greasy treats for every kid, even though it wouldn’t be allowed at home, while the boys never tire of playing tricks on passersby and even making bets on the tricks that they play).

Not forgetting Marcel Carné’s youth drama *TERRAIN VAGUE*²⁶ (Engl. *WASTELAND*, 1960), in which bored teenagers from the Parisian suburbs come together in gangs on various banlieue wastelands, where they seal their friendships through blood brotherhood, carry out tests of courage as an entrance exam into their sworn circle, and exchange all their secrets, some of which are merely amorous, others criminal.

And finally, the chanson ‘Terrain vague’, first recorded in 1955, written by Pierre Cour and sung by Germaine Montero, should also be mentioned: ‘Un terrain vague, une rue grise, un arbre battu par les vents / et dans la froideur de la bise rien que de l’amour de deux enfants’ (‘A *terrain vague*, a (concrete) grey street, a tree, felled by the wind / and in the (emotional) cold of a kiss / of the north wind nothing but the love of two children.’)²⁷ Here, the *terrain vague* mutates into a glorified, almost kitschy postcard motif, nourished by obligatory elements such as a bare tree, various piles of rubbish, wild thorny vines, the smoky and disreputable atmosphere of the industrial suburbs and working-class milieu and, in the middle of this effectively grouped tableau, the romanticized image of the love of two young people kissing.

welten: Faszination und Funktion des Gangsters im französischen Nachkriegskino, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017, pp. 153–170.

23 See *LE DOULOS*, Jean-Pierre Melville, France 1962.

24 See Wolfram Nitsch, ‘Terrain vague: Zur Poetik des städtischen Zwischenraums in der französischen Moderne’, in *Merkur* No. 758, 2012, pp. 638–644 and in *Comparatio* 5, 2013, pp. 1–18.

25 See *MON ONCLE*, Jacques Tati, France 1958.

26 See *TERRAIN VAGUE*, Marcel Carné, France 1960.

27 Germaine Montero: ‘Terrain vague’ (recorded on 18 February 1955, accompanied by Michel Philippe-Gérard’s orchestra, lyrics by Pierre Cour), 3rd title on the release *Refrains de Paris*, 45 EG 141 M.

This outline of the highlights in literary and media history, whose examples and references could equally have been included in other chapters, is nevertheless justified here, firstly because it is an overview that may need to be read separately, and secondly because it focuses in particular on the 1940s to 1960s, an important and decisive period that was very productive for the *terrain vague*.

It is a cautiously formulated summary of what I call the 'golden age', in which the *terrain vague* has arrived in all media and genres, may have lost its utopian impetus from the nineteenth century, as well as its terror, because it has become a rather ordinary site of crime within a certain genre. It is an era that has left behind the days of avant-garde aestheticization and has been brought into the general consciousness, mainly through the work of suburban photographers. After the *terrain vague* had been a place of revolutionary germination, a place of indeterminacy between city and country, past and future, a place of escape from bourgeois and capitalist constraints, a place of the exotic foreign, a place of warlike horror, a place of everyday wonder and also a place of murderous crime, in was the 1950s on the not-so-difficult path to becoming a general cultural topos, a commonplace or rather a collective place of remembrance, shortly before urban space and urban life underwent another fundamental transformation, which increasingly displaced from the cityscape the *terrain vague* as a functional void and undefined open space.

3. History of Discourse and Urban Culture

So far, I have mainly focussed on the use of the term *terrain vague*, its semantic enrichment and its metaphorical use (through an excursus into French literature) and traced how it is used in individual works to represent places designated as *terrain vague* in a certain way in the medium of language, i.e. to constitute, create, shape, provide them with meanings and make them a functional element of narratives. At the same time, however, I have tried to briefly trace – in the form of highlights – how this literary use of the term (and also the cinematic examination of the phenomenon, which is not independent of the literary tradition) has developed historically. But now I turn to the subject-matter side of the term and thus to the phenomenon itself, which is designated by the primary meaning of the term *terrain vague* in the extra-linguistic reality – that is, the urban wasteland – and attempt to briefly outline firstly the role it plays in cultural social events, and secondly how it is examined and discussed as an object of scholarly discourse. In the course of this, I will try to tie the discourse and cultural history of the wasteland back to the concept of *terrain vague* where possible.

3.1 URBAN WASTELAND ART AND CULTURE SINCE THE 1970S

The fact that human needs for evasion, escape, freedom, and creativity are mostly tied to places and that people therefore tie fears and disgust, curiosity and fascination, desires and longings to them is very clearly demonstrated in the urban wasteland art and culture of the 1970s to 1990s. The scale of how this happens ranges from accidentally bumping into and experiencing things to intentionally shaping places or, in our case, urban wastelands. This reveals a certain tension, as many of these places are ordinary to begin with but appear to be quite extraordinary for an individual. And although they are spatially

limited, they often convey an inexplicable feeling of freedom. In these places, we dream dreams of home and closeness or we long for distance, for (imagined) new things or an 'elsewhere'.¹

The site-creating and site-loving urban wasteland art of the 1970s to 1990s attempted to utilize this tension by expressing praise or denouncing grievances, usually politically motivated.² Sometimes it is not possible to be sure whether they are 'places' at all, as Rem Koolhaas notes in his description of the 'generic city' as a global metropolis devoid of history and identity, consisting of hotel chains that have become unmanageable, gigantic office towers, and sprawling transport infrastructures:

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- 1 On the nature of places and especially on the destruction and creation of 'nowhere', see in this context Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, London: Reaktion Books 2007; or Paul Kingsnorth: *Real England: The Battle against the Bland*, London: Portobello Books 2008; or James Kunstler: *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*, New York: Simon and Schuster 1993.
 - 2 An example of this can be found in Alastair Bonnett, who writes about what he calls *gutter spaces*, which – as remnants of the planning process, auctioned off by the New York City Council – were bought up in the early 1970s by the architect and conceptual artist Gordon Matta-Clark, among others; these micro-pieces of land between buildings, usually only a few metres wide but hundreds of metres long, resemble narrow passageways sunk deep in the shadows, slumbering melancholically between Queens and Staten Island buildings. In addition to maps, historical documents, photographs and deeds, Matta-Clark worked with these spaces because they were considered 'inaccessible', previously obviously public, but legally and commercially unclassifiable. After his death in 1978, the plots of land, which at first glance appeared to be useless, reverted to the city of New York. Since then, there have been continuous publications, tours and art exhibitions to the places he called 'fake estates', which are particularly frequented by artists and psychogeographers. In the fashion of a *reductio ad absurdum*, Matta-Clark was probably concerned with a radical questioning of our obsession with private property, which, in Karl Marx's words, only exists for us when it can be drunk, eaten, possessed, worn on our own bodies, lived in, or used. Because the desire to have something is so omnipresent – everyone is so keen to own something – Matta-Clark shook my sense of the rationality of land ownership. Micro-properties as a critique of capitalism? Even in 2019, these actually worthless 'shreds' of earth, which Matta-Clark brought out of hiding to a certain extent, are still for sale. This is all well set out in Alastair Bonnett, *Die seltsamsten Orte der Welt: Geheime Städte, wilde Plätze, verlorene Räume, vergessene Inseln*, Munich: Beck 2016, pp. 169–173 or in the original: *Off the Map: Lost Spaces, Invisible Cities, Forgotten Islands, Feral Places and What They Tell Us About the World*, London: Aurum Press 2014. My thanks to Annette Blecher for this tip.

There are three elements: roads, buildings and nature; they coexist in flexible relationships, seemingly without reason, in spectacular organizational diversity. [...] In certain frightening spots, all three are simultaneously absent. On these 'sites' (actually, what is the opposite of a site? They are like holes bored through the concept of city) public art emerges like the Loch Ness Monster.³

For Koolhaas, then, there are special spatial situations in which streets, buildings and planned green areas are equally absent as the actual basis of the metropolis. Such that one must deal with holes in the urban fabric through which art and culture seem to literally break through.

Where in reality there is an inexhaustible wealth of artistic and urban cultural activities, only a handful of representative examples can of course be mentioned below. In the Bronx, for example, the northernmost borough of New York City and the subject furore in the 1970s due to high crime rates and rampant house fires, diverse cultural groups (primarily Caribbean, Latin American, African, African American, and European) came together, many of whose members joined forces for intercultural community gardening (Tremont Community Garden, Bronx), for example in Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn or in the Clinton Community Garden, which has existed in Manhattan since 1978 and continues to flourish.⁴ These community gardens are collectively maintained and often publicly accessible within the city. Their initiators come from different backgrounds, but with the common need to grow healthy food in or near a large city and to garden together. They are also frequently neighbours, political activists, religious groups, squatters, undocumented immigrants, homeless people, pupils and students, youth groups and senior citizens who, in addition to the desire for good fruit and vegetables, are interested in an exchange and community life.⁵ Such gardens were often planted on urban

3 Rem Koolhaas, 'Generic City', in Rem Koolhaas/Bruce Mau/Jennifer Sigler (eds.), *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large*, New York: Monacelli Press 1995, pp. 1248–1264, at p. 1254.

4 See David J. Hess, *Localist Movements in a Global Economy: Sustainability, Justice and Urban Development in the United States*, Cambridge: MIT Press 2009 and his 'Case Studies of Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture', based on an interview conducted by J. Blaine Bonham with David J. Hess in Philadelphia in 2005: http://staging.community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/paper-hess_0.pdf, for further information see also: www.pennsylvania-horticulturalsociety.org (accessed on 27 December 2020).

5 Similar to Elisabeth Schwiontek in 'Grünes Glück: Gärten erobern die Großstädte', in *Goethe Institut* online, August 2008, <http://archive.li/SqteZ> (accessed on 27 December 2020), the following articles also deal with the phenomenon of urban gardening: Marit Rosol, *Gemeinschaftsgärten in Berlin: Eine qualitative Untersuchung zu Potenzialen und Risiken bürgerschaftlichen Engagements im Grün-*

wasteland and gaps between buildings, meaning that community gardening has been a community activity practiced on *terrains vagues* since the 1970s.

The Gue(r)rilla gardeners are noticeably more militant. According to Felicitas Rhan, *gue(r)rilla gardening* refers to the secret sowing of plants as a subtle means of civil disobedience and political protest in public spaces, primarily in large cities.⁶ The aim is to beautify derelict areas through greening. The supporters of the movement, which began in New York in the 1970s, included not only environmental activists, anarchists and critics of globalization, but also artists such as Joseph Beuys, eco-pioneers and architects such as Louis Le Roy, who used this unconventional open-space design and *seed bombs* made from plant seeds in a spherical mixture of compost, soil and clay to fight against the 'monocultures of the philistine bourgeoisie'.⁷

At the same time, the phenomenon of urban wasteland also comes to the attention of contemporary photographers, such as the US-American Lewis Baltz, who, as part of the New Topographic Movement, has turned to more remote subjects since the 1970s and, in a certain sense, aestheticized the everyday by photographing single-family housing estates and their intermediate areas, the ordinary on the outskirts of the city, industrial wastelands deformed by people, and other empty spaces.⁸ In Germany, Harald Kirschner, among others, has engaged with *terrains vagues* and other urban wastelands, especially in Leipzig's Grünau district, Halle's Neustadt district, and Berlin's Marzahn district, primarily in the course of the 1980s. From the mid-1970s, prefabricated housing estates were built on city outskirts in East Germany. This was how the SED under Erich Honecker attempted to tackle the

flächenbereich vor dem Hintergrund des Wandels von Staat und Planung, Berlin: Mensch & Book 2006, and Christa Müller (ed.), *Urban Gardening: Über die Rückkehr der Gärten in die Stadt*, Munich: Oekom 2011.

- 6 See Felicitas Rhan, 'Pflanzen statt tanzen', in *art: Das Kunstmagazin*, 11 April 2008 www.art-magazin.de/szene/6400-rtkl-guerilla-gardening-botanik-pflanzen-statt-tanzen (accessed on 27 December 2020).
- 7 See Richard Reynolds, *Guerilla Gardening – Ein botanisches Manifest: Mit großem Handbucheil zu Taktik, Ausrüstung und Wahl der botanischen Waffen*, Berlin: Orange Press 2009, and Josie Jeffery, *Mit Samenbomben die Welt verändern: Für Guerilla-Gärtner und alle, die es werden wollen*, Stuttgart: Ulmer 2012.
- 8 See Lewis Baltz, *The New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California*, New York: Castelli Graphics 1974/Göttingen: Steidl 2013; *San Quentin Point*, New York: Aperture 1986 and *Candlestick Point*, Tokyo: Gallery Min 1989. From the late 1980s onwards, Baltz was more interested in locations with new technologies, in a clinically sterile atmosphere (*Sites of Technology*). On Lewis Baltz's photography, see also Danièle Méaux, to whom I am grateful for these tips: 'Paysages du chaos: À propos de deux séries de Lewis Baltz', in *Focales*, n°1, 2017.

shortage of three million homes. A gain for some, a loss of individuality for others due to the architectural uniformity of the estates and their perceived desolate infrastructure. Kirschner's black-and-white photographs document the character of the construction and the increasing signs of wear and tear on the one hand, and the much more general social needs of the residents of the 'prefabs' on the other. Kirschner's photographs also feature a typical group of wasteland users: children for whom these unfinished neighbourhoods serve as huge playgrounds where they can let their imaginations run wild.⁹

In the field of moving images, on the other hand, director Martin Gressmann has succeeded in creating a long-term documentary with his 2014 film *DAS GELÄNDE*¹⁰, which photographed a site in the heart of Berlin over a period of almost 30 years starting in 1985. The fact that when it was released in 2016 the film was subtitled *WASTELAND: TERRAIN VAGUE* already indicates at this point that the French term *terrain vague* – in the course of its general popularity in the art world¹¹ – had also established itself in Germany.

9 See Harald Kirschner, *Vom Heimischwerden: Leipzig-Grünau 1981–1991*, Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag 2015, and the exhibition 'Traum und Tristesse – Vom Leben in der Platte: Fotografien von Harald Kirschner', shown in the pavilion of the 'Haus der Geschichte' in Bonn between January and May 2016.

10 See *DAS GELÄNDE: WASTELAND – TERRAIN VAGUE*, Martin Gressmann, Germany 2014; see also: www.das-gelaende.de (accessed on 27 December 2020).

11 To name just a few examples (see Appendix): The artist group *Terrain Vague* around Katharina von Koschembahr, Alexia Krauthäuser and Katrin Roeber; the revue *terrain vague*; the art magazine *Terrain Vague* by students of the 'Akademie der Bildenden Künste München'; the exhibition *Terrain vague* by 'Galerie Kai Dikhas' with works by the artists Marina Rosselle Kabila and David Ángel Ranz Guimera; the orchestral piece of music *Terrains vagues* (2000) by the Danish composer Per Nørgård or the album *Terrain vague* (2004) by the French music group 'Les Ogres de Barback'; or the conception of the exhibition *Terrains vagues*, which was prepared by the artist Giuliana Cunéaz for the city of Berlin in 2003. In this project, real and imaginary elements were to flow together. The artist's motivation is to leave consciousness and the mind behind in favour of a transition into the infinite inner world. Cunéaz is particularly interested in the subject of memory. She wants to penetrate into an unknown, enigmatic world, into a space of life and death, to catch a hint of social rhythm, to try to penetrate into unfathomable levels of the human soul. *Terrains vagues*, according to Cunéaz, refers to the undefined levels that aptly connect the end of one world with the beginning of the next: deserted, empty, free, inclusive spiritual spaces. Border areas are explored by means of a mental map that makes it possible to shed light on contrasts with rationality; see Giuliana Cunéaz, *Terrains Vagues*, exhibition in Berlin from 1–22 March 2003, www.giulianacuneaz.com/glc/content/view/32/92/lang.it/ (accessed on 27 December 2020).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the topic of urban wastelands finally entered the consciousness – and not just among architectural theorists and sociologists discussing it in specialist journals, but across the board. We will see to what extent it leads to political programmes at federal level in Germany during these years. But wastelands also become increasingly important in the public consciousness and in art. Perhaps the most decisive reason for this is the reality or ‘state of health’ of many cities at the time. The consequences of de-industrialization have led to an unprecedented amount of urban wasteland and an urban landscape characterized in many places by perforations and fractures.¹² In the USA, for example, almost one in seven square metres of urban space was unused or vacant in 2004.¹³ And many European cities are also affected by this ‘new’ emptiness. The image of the old self-contained and compact city has no longer been a reality for over a century, as the city long ago dissolved its boundaries and spilled over into the countryside. In the 2000s at the latest, however, it became clear that another phase of upheaval had begun, in which the whole of Central Europe experienced a decline in population and the city, which had continued to expand, began to shrink again in many places. But it is not shrinking in size: it is imploding from within. At the same time, urban architects are increasingly talking about a trend reversal in European urban development that will produce a new type of city – one in which emptiness will be the norm and whose future shape will be characterized by the ambiguity, uncertainty and vagueness of unused, vacant spaces. And so, the word is spoken: we live, from an urban planning perspective, in an ‘age of fundamental uncertainty’.¹⁴

At the same time, individual wasteland sites in Germany’s capital, which have become the object of media-effective reutilization or political controversy, are gaining nationwide recognition. Perhaps one of the most prominent examples is the ‘Prinzessinnengärten’, which began in 2009 on ‘Moritzplatz’ (between ‘Prinzenstraße’, ‘Oranienstraße’, and ‘Prinzessinnenstraße’) in Berlin’s

12 While these symptoms are visible in some cities and regions, elsewhere growth and shrinkage exist side by side. Specifically, on the ‘wasteland paradise’ of East Germany after reunification, see Michael Sailer, ‘Über Stock und Stein, Fasan und Kaninchen: Eine kleine (Münchner) Brachflächenkunde’, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 8 June 2003, <http://michaelsailer.de/der%20brachfl%E4chenliebhaber.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

13 The finding of a US study published in 2004 on vacancy within the city is: ‘About 15 per cent of the average large city’s landmass is vacant’. See Ann Bowman/Michael Pagano: *Terra incognita*, Washington: Georgetown University Press 2004, p. 45.

14 The quote is by Thomas Sieverts from the documentary film essay NICHT-MEHR, NOCH-NICHT, Daniel Kunle and Holger Lauinger, Germany 2004.

Kreuzberg district, but which has since implemented a wide range of garden projects on urban wasteland, between high-rise buildings in the city centre and on the periphery, and sees itself as a neighbourhood academy, an open platform for knowledge exchange, and an advocate of cultural practice and activism in the city (and countryside). There is now even a non-profit limited liability company called 'Nomadisch Grün', a garden café and restaurant, and a meeting place for horticultural tours and training courses. The following activities, among others, have been carried out here in the last ten years and are listed here in order to provide examples of the colourful spectrum of practices: city safaris as participatory projects for young people from the neighbourhood (even designated as an innovative model project by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development), cultivating mobile plant beds and planted shopping trolleys to preserve biodiversity, harvesting and cooking with Berlin schoolchildren at a place of informal learning, international volunteer discussion sessions on energy and environmental education, growing installations, a mobile bee museum, network meetings of urban gardening movements (organized by 'Neuland Köln'), pan-European workshops on urban farming and local empowerment, concerts and festivals, discussion evenings, theatre performances, recycling and upcycling in everyday life, art and book exhibitions,¹⁵ construction and communal cultural use of tree houses, sustainable seminar series ('lokal hacken, global denken'), international participatory study and research projects, but also cooperation projects with other cities, such as the 'Hamburger Gartendeck', the construction of a kitchen garden ('CARLSGARTEN') in Mülheim for the Cologne theatre or the communication programme with the *Freedom Growers* in Detroit and New York as well as partnerships with Norway, Portugal, Italy, France, Benin etc.¹⁶ Yes, you read correctly, all this on a (former) *terrain vague* in the centre of the metropolis of Berlin!

Another example is the 'Cuvry-Brache', also located in Berlin's Kreuzberg district. It was a 12,000m² area that served as a refuge for urban nomads, homeless people, refugees, dropouts, survivalists and undocumented people for months. In 2014, around 150 people were still living there in self-built wooden shacks, improvised huts, barracks and igloo tents along the banks of the 'Spree', right next to 'Cuvrystraße'. Behind colourfully pasted construction fences, piles of old mattresses and a whole lot of bulky rubbish, there was a shambles of a village, also labelled as 'Berlin's first slum' and 'Germany's first

15 See, for example, Andrea Baier/Christa Müller/Karin Werner, *Stadt der Commons: Neue urbane Räume des Do it yourself*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2013.

16 See <http://prinzessinnengarten.net> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

favela'.¹⁷ But for years, people not only lived on this wasteland, this extremely precarious interstitial space, but also made art, spray-painted, and performed theatre.¹⁸ The investor Artur Süsskind wanted to have the area cleared in 2014 to build a luxury residential complex, which the residents rebelled against, but things turned out differently: a fire in September of the same year forced the site to be cleared. In December 2014, the street artist 'Blu' finally had the graffiti he had applied to the façades, which were among the most famous in Berlin, painted over with black paint as a protest against urban development policy.¹⁹

Finally, with regard to the wasteland culture of recent years, it remains for us to have a look at an exploration method that has become fashionable, whose international abbreviation *urbex* stands for 'urban exploration'. One discovers, explores, photographs, documents, and enjoys the aesthetics of the industrial ruins, roofs, and other rather inaccessible places, the sewers and catacombs, underground supply systems of larger facilities, military bunkers and tunnels, but also the halls and tunnels of a (historically) authentic atmosphere. The so-called *urbexers* or *urban explorers* love the morbid charm of untidy places,²⁰ as the wildness that sets in as soon as people no longer know what to do with a place frees the spirit. According to the urbexers, the decay even inspires the mind. Whether out of pure personal interest in these unknown spots, out of historical curiosity, or to take on the sporting challenge of illegally entering somewhere despite the obstacles, the motives are diverse. London geographer Bradley L. Garrett also claims that urbex practices are a reaction to the ever-increasing control of public space and the surveillance that accompanies it.²¹ And in his book *Access All Areas*²², Canadian Jeff 'Ninjalicious'

17 See Katherine Rydlink, 'Besetzte Fläche in Berlin: Cuvry-Brache droht die Räumung', in *Spiegel online*, 5 September 2014, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/favela-in-berlin-cuvry-brache-in-kreuzberg-soll-geraeumt-werden-a-987958.html (accessed on 27 December 2020).

18 See the photo series *Theater auf Berliner Brache: Friede den Hütten*, in *Spiegel Online*, 27 July 2014, www.spiegel.de/fotostrecke/cuvry-brache-theaterprojekt-auf-gelaende-in-kreuzberg-fotostrecke-117384-2.html (accessed on 27 December 2020).

19 See Gereon Asmuth: 'Die goldenen Fesseln sind weg', in *taz.de*, 12 December 2014, <http://taz.de/Protest-gegen-Gentrifizierung-in-Berlin/!151161> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

20 See the web article by Claudia Klinger, 'Vom Charme unaufgeräumter Orte', in *Das Modersohn-Magazin*, 27 July 2006, www.modersohn-magazin.de/2006/07/27/vom-charme-unaufgeraumter-orte (accessed on 27 December 2020).

21 See Bradley L. Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*, London: Verso 2013.

Chapman gives practical tips on how to reclaim your own urban environment adventurously. At first, one might think that classic *terrains vagues* are actually far too boring for urban explorers, as their exploratory tours are more of a pan-wasteland phenomenon and therefore not a practice that is only worth practicing on *terrains vagues*. However, if we focus on various current practices of appropriation, we can see that *primal explorers* interested in ritual transitions, moral transgressions, adventurous experiences, overcoming danger, tests of courage, and secrecy also get their money's worth on a *terrain vague*, without wanting to conserve or impart meaning to the place.²³ Or is it the case that the *terrains vagues* and the urban explorers' favourite places²⁴ have had their day?

3.2 TERMINOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL DIVERSITY IN INTERNATIONAL URBAN RESEARCH

For a long time, however, the phenomenon of empty, unused space in the city was hardly an issue in scholarship or the political arena. Even the few texts and films succinctly outlined in the literature and media history of the *terrain vague* have been received and commented on for other themes than their portrayal of urban wastelands. Similarly, the discipline that traditionally has to do with the design and construction of buildings, i.e. generally speaking with the design of space in the sense of filling rather than with the contemplation of emptiness and the handling of 'leftover' space, namely architecture, has taken some time to address the 'gaps' and overcome the *horror vacui* it is said to suffer.²⁵ It was various disciplines of urban research, on the other hand, that four decades ago gave rise to a targeted preoccupation with spatial voids under the banner of *Brache* in German, *friche* in French and *wasteland* or *derelict land* in English

22 See Ninjalicious/Jeff Chapman, *Access All Areas: A User's Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration*, Toronto: Infilpress 2005.

23 'Wenn man anfängt, die Orte zu konservieren oder zu interpretieren, überschreitet man eine Linie.' This statement was made by the British cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey in Felix Stephan's article 'Fenster zur ungeschönten Vergangenheit', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ.de)*, 15 May 2012, www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/urban-explorer-steigen-in-verlassene-gebäude-ein-fenster-zur-ungeschoenten-vergangenheit-1.1355456 (accessed on 27 December 2020).

24 These can be seen on websites such as the following: www.abandoned-places.com, www.forbidden-places.net and www.lost-places.com (accessed on 27 December 2020) or also in Ciarán Fahey, *Verlassene Orte/Abandoned Berlin: Ruinen und Relikte in Berlin und Umgebung*, Berlin: be.bra 2015.

25 On architecture's traditionally difficult relationship to emptiness, see (for example) Andreas Ruby, 'Amor vacui', in *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, H. 4, 2003, pp. 23–26.

(whereby these are only the most frequently used terms within a large terminological diversity that is sometimes difficult to get an overview of). Urban geography, urban planning, and ecology in particular have played a decisive role since the early 1980s. Although the discussion initiated by these disciplines emerges more or less simultaneously in various countries, it is not yet being conducted internationally in the sense of a networked scholarly discourse.

It has been shown that the way scientific thought approaches the phenomenon of urban wastelands is highly dependent on the terms used to describe the subject. Conversely, different terms are used to conceptualize this subject – even though the exact same places may be referred to. It makes a significant difference whether one speaks of wastelands, dysfunctional open spaces, available old sites, or play and spaces of possibility.²⁶ Therefore, I will now attempt to organize the recent international discourse based on central urban wasteland concepts discussed therein.

Since the 1990s, English, the language in which international discourse is conducted, has used a wide variety of terms to describe the spaces in question: *vacant land*, *wasteland* and *derelict land* are, often with the addition of *urban*, the most frequently used terms in urban geography or urban planning articles and correspond most closely to the German term *Brachfläche*. In this area, the term *abandoned space* is also used as a paraphrase; to theorize emptiness as such, *urban void* is used. The term *brownfield* (or *brownfield land*) is commonly used for areas contaminated by former industrial use, which are also referred to in German as *Altstandorte*. Unused agricultural land, on the other hand, is called *fallow land*. All these terms thus emphasize the absence of current use or the physical emptiness of the areas in question. To a certain extent, this also

26 I am primarily referring to the essay by Walter Siebel, 'Urbanität ohne Raum: Der Möglichkeitsraum', in Diethild Kornhardt/Gabriela Pütz/Thies Schröder (eds.), *Mögliche Räume: Stadt schafft Landschaft*, Hamburg: Junius 2002, pp. 32–40. For Siebel, spaces of possibility are places where new forms of urbanity become possible, so-called 'crystallization points of the urban' (p. 40). Siebel also borrows the term *Möglichkeitssinn* (sense of possibility) from Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, where this sense, in contrast to a *sense of reality*, is described thus: 'Fähigkeit, alles, was ebenso gut sein könnte, zu denken, und das, was ist, nicht wichtiger zu nehmen als das, was nicht ist' (1st book, chapter 5). See the following joint, concept-defining monographs and anthologies: Hartmut Häußermann/Walter Siebel, *New Urbanity*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1987, pp. 238–250; see also Häußermann/Siebel, *Dienstleistungsgesellschaften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1995; and Häußermann/Siebel, (eds.), *An den Rändern der Städte: Armut und Ausgrenzung*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2004, and Walter Siebel, *Die Kultur der Stadt*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2015.

applies to the acronym SLOAP, which stands for *spaces left over after planning* and comes closest to the German term *Resträume*.

Another acronym, which was used particularly in the 1990s, combines several of the characteristics of wasteland sites alluded to here: TOADS – *temporarily obsolete abandoned derelict sites*. The fact that the acronym pronounced according to its phonetic value coincides with the word ‘toads’ already makes it clear under what auspices these areas are seen, especially when the article that popularized this term bears the following title: ‘The TOADS: A New American Urban Epidemic’.²⁷ The way in which the three US authors summarize and evaluate their subject matter is helpful in seeking to understand the further course of the discourse. Firstly, they define TOADS as areas that can be of various shapes and sizes – from parcels of land to larger areas of land – that are no longer used productively or have never been used productively; they are also often contaminated by previous industrial or commercial uses or by their proximity to such uses. In contrast to the problem of how urban planners deal with building uses that are unpopular due to their emissions (so-called LULUs – *locally unwanted land uses* or NIMBYs – *not in my backyard*), there has long been little attention for TOADS, which is more than astonishing with regard to the aforementioned authors.²⁸ On the one hand, an increase in such areas can be observed in the USA, but on the other – and this is what makes their spread an ‘epidemic’ – they are not only associated with economic concerns, but also with social problems that have hardly been discussed to date. According to the authors, the economic problems include the fact that wastelands are a waste of the resource ‘land’, that they lead to tax losses due to lack of utilization, and that they have a negative impact on land prices and urban development; in addition, as in the case of abandoned residential areas, they cause further abandonment of land in the surrounding area.²⁹ But according to the authors, there are also numerous social problems: not only are the areas aesthetically unappealing, they also encourage a number of illegal activities that pose a risk to public health, such as the dumping of toxic waste (if the areas are not already contaminated), the lighting of fires, and the consumption of drugs. They also provide space for makeshift camps for the homeless. And in general, they emanate something like a ‘derelict land mentality’, which makes the residents ‘apathetic’ and leads them to inactively

27 See, also in the following, Michael R. Greenberg/Frank J. Popper/Bernadette M. West, ‘The TOADS: A New American Urban Epidemic’, in *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 25, 1990, pp. 435–454.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 435.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 436.

accept their 'depressing' environment as a 'consequence of industrial growth'.³⁰ This is strong stuff, to say the least, even if the article was written against the backdrop of the alarming conditions in the Bronx in the 1960s to 1980s. Regardless of the fact that the massive housing vacancy rate in many US cities at that time was certainly not a consequence of industrial 'growth', but – on the contrary – of the same deindustrialization trends that were also having an impact in Europe, as well as urban policies that were unable to balance out social inequalities and prevent marginalization: never before had the problem-oriented view of wasteland been so drastically set out; never before had wasteland been so equated with poverty and social disadvantage and criminalized at the same time.

The contrast in tone to the discussion in Germany since the end of the 1990s could hardly be greater. But even in France, where mainly the terms *friche urbaine* ('urban wasteland') and *interstice urbain* ('urban interspace') are used and where sociologists and political scientists in particular have taken an interest in urban wastelands since the 1990s, they are far from being described as an 'epidemic' or 'danger' – even if they are often discussed in connection with the social hotspots of the banlieues of large cities. On the contrary, sociologist Laurence Roulleau-Berger examines urban wastelands for their potential to provide space for self-organized forms of socialization in the context of the reality of young people living in precarious situations.³¹ While others see wastelands mainly as a sign of decay, Roulleau-Berger emphasizes the resources that such spaces offer for the emergence of new networks of actors, forms of capital and ideas. With regard to the correlation between socio-economic and spatial marginalization in large cities, economically and politically neglected wastelands embody spatial gaps between the well-integrated and well-organized 'territories' of the city. And just as these territories that form the urban space have a spatial, an economic, and a cultural level, this also applies to the interstitial spaces, the *espaces intermédiaires*: in these, spatial, economic and cultural micro-forms of social organization can form in which young people – Roulleau-Berger cites rap groups from Marseille as an example – pool their resources and develop skills, forms of knowledge, collective identities, and new spaces for action far from public institutions and away from the official labour market in order to defy the various forms of segregation and discrimination to which they are exposed. These wasteland sites, which the young people appropriate not only materially but also symbolically by creatively

30 Ibid., p. 440.

31 See below Laurence Roulleau-Berger, 'La ville en friche: précarités, socialisations et compétences', in *Futur Antérieur* 29, vol. 3, 1995, pp. 103–113.

reinterpreting their lost significance, become central places in those young people's lives – even if the sites are located on the periphery of the city. This centrality is on the one hand the product of the young people's actions and at the same time enables new social structures. The fact that the micro-cultures and micro-societies that initially emerged in these centres without commercial intent can professionalize over time and thus gain access to the 'official' territories of the city is also part of what makes new social structures and new economic competences possible. In this sense, the wasteland is also an 'interstitial space' because it can be home to such 'socializations of transition'. In addition to being a cultural hotbed, it is also a 'stronghold' of political protest and the demand for rights, recognition, and participation – where it helps participants to achieve new scopes of action and opportunities for participation.

Against the backdrop of this still polemical discussion of the 1990s, the Catalan architect and architectural theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió introduced a French term into the international discourse in 1995, a term that was hardly or not at all used in the urbanistic discussion in France itself, linked it to a positive view of wastelands that was already common at the time and from the outset placed it in the context of media representations of the city, in order to add an aesthetic perspective to the discussion about urban wastelands that had previously remained underexposed: *terrain vague*.³² It is doubtful whether he was aware of the almost 200-year history of this term in French literature, because firstly he does not mention it at all, and secondly he takes as the starting point for his reflections the more recent urban photography, which had following an 'existentialist' post-war tradition been interested in 'empty, abandoned spaces' since the 1970s.³³ According to him, photography as a paradigm of artistic engagement with urban space does more than simply reflect our perception of space; it also conveys the affects and experiences that it causes in us, thus communicating between the physical and the psychological and acting as a medium through which we arrive at value judgements about the various places.³⁴ And in order to translate into language what the photographers would have captured in this sense in relation to empty spaces in the city, Solà-Morales develops the term *terrain vague* into a provisional concept.³⁵

32 See Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, 'Terrain vague', in Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anyplace*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press 1995, pp. 118–123.

33 The photographers named by Solà-Morales are John Davies, David Plowden, Thomas Struth, Jannes Linders, Manolo Laguilo and Olivio Barbieri; see *ibid.*, p. 120.

34 See *ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

35 At this point it is worth noting art historian Philip Ursprung's later criticism of Solà-Morales' understanding of *terrain vague*, which in its emphasis on the aesthetic

In doing so, he refers to the etymological lines of *vague* already mentioned here several times, namely *vacuus*, *vagus*, and, somewhat apart from a strict word history, *Woge* (for which I have used *vâgr*).³⁶ On these three levels, he demonstrates the associated qualities of the *terrains vagues*: in the sense of the *Woge*, they refer to the movement, instability, fluctuation, and oscillation with which they are associated; the *vacuus* contains the interplay between ‘empty’ and ‘free’, between the absence of utilization and a sense of freedom, between emptiness and the possible, which is essential for the evocative power of these places; and finally, the *vagus* or *vagari* also convey not only the indeterminate and unclear, but also the associated freedom of movement, vagrancy, and leisure.³⁷ In addition to this threefold meaning, *terrain vague* photography for Solà-Morales shows a characteristic of these places that results from their relationship to their urban surroundings: they are ‘internal to the city yet external to its everyday use’.³⁸ They thus mark an outdoor space within the city that falls outside the everyday utilization of the urban system. From an economic point of view, they therefore exist ‘outside the city’s effective circuits and productive structures’; they are ‘where the city is no longer’.³⁹ They are therefore not only economically but also temporally ‘alien’ to the urban structure and are therefore – although located in the physical interior of the city – ‘mentally exterior’.⁴⁰ This is precisely what makes it a ‘negative image’ of the city and therefore also a possible alternative. For Solà-Morales, this alterity of the *terrains vagues* to the city is accompanied by a further aspect of meaning, which essentially stems from the strangeness of these places. As they are ‘foreign to the urban system’, their emptiness also makes them seem free from any form of power or its representations, reminding us that we ourselves are ‘strangers in our city’, insofar as we as individuals stand outside an apparatus of power that shapes and dominates our urban living environment –

runs the risk of sublimating the harsh reality of economic conflicts that are often the cause of wastelands. Ursprung counters this with the Spanish photographer Lara Almarcegui, who has portrayed the human fate of those directly affected by political spatial planning decisions on planning sites for possible Olympic construction projects in London and Rome; see Philip Ursprung, ‘Beyond the *terrain vague*: Following Lara Almarcegui’, in Octavio Zya (ed.), *Lara Almarcegui*, Madrid: Turner 2013, pp. 49–53.

36 See above, chapter 1.

37 See Solà-Morales Rubió, ‘Terrain vague’, pp. 119–120.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

for example in the form of architecture.⁴¹ The *terrain vague* thus reflects our 'inner strangeness', our fear and insecurity, as well as our 'unease' towards the world.⁴² At the same time, however, they awaken in us the thought of the possible, the utopian, and the future, as well as the desire to escape the power that constantly wants to give us a feeling of security, but ultimately makes us unfree. In this sense, the *terrain vague* stands for a defenceless nomadic life that resists the urban order.⁴³ When the urban wasteland photographers' images for Solà-Morales ultimately also raise the question of what should be done with the empty spaces, this question also takes on an ethical component through the figure of the Other and the Stranger. He not only relates this to the political situation of growing xenophobia and nationalism in an increasingly multicultural Europe, but also turns it critically against the practice of architecture in contrast to that of art: for while architecture, as an instrument of organization, rationalization, and efficiency, knows nothing else to do with empty space than to 'colonize' it and 'violently' transform it with clear forms, defined boundaries, and unambiguous identities and to destroy its 'magic', art seeks the open, undefined edges of an increasingly homogenized and controlled city. Accordingly, Solà-Morales considers the deficiency of an architecture that still needs to learn to allow natural continuities, instead of making clear cuts everywhere, to be significant.⁴⁴ With his contribution, the Catalan takes theoretical reflection on wasteland sites out of the confines of urban planning thinking about the economic and political aspects of pre-/post-use, in order to analyse these sites from a cultural-studies perspective. Similar to the more phenomenological and existentialist humanistic geography⁴⁵ of Yi-Fu Tuan, Solà-Morales takes into account those qualities of spatial experience and practice that are traditionally the subject of the arts (namely the

41 Ibid. pp. 120–121.

42 As might be expected, Solà-Morales makes keyword-like references here to Julia Kristeva's *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard 1988), to Sigmund Freud's *Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Vienna: Internationaler psychoanalytischer Verlag 1930), and to Odo Marquard's 'Zeitalter der Weltfremdheit?' (in Marquard, *Apologie des Zufälligen*, Stuttgart: Reclam 1986, pp. 76–97).

43 The echoes of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's 'Traité de nomadologie' (in Deleuze/Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, Paris: Minuit 1980, pp. 434–527) cannot be ignored here, but are not made explicit by Solà-Morales.

44 See Solà-Morales, 'Terrain vague', pp. 122–123.

45 The relevant works of Yi-Fu Tuan, for example, which have popularized his *humanistic geography* as opposed to a *human geography*, are worth mentioning: *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall 1974, and *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1977.

relationships that people maintain with places individually or socially, mentally and emotionally, meaningfully and existentially⁴⁶), opening up his thinking about the city and space to a humanities tradition and consequently enriches his thought with philosophical, politological, and cultural-theoretical considerations and concepts. In a way, Solà-Morales thus launches an interdisciplinary, cultural-scientific discussion about urban wasteland and links it inextricably with the concept of *terrain vague*.

The immediate consequence of the text is the adoption of the term by Solà-Morales' own entourage. In a Spanish-language volume he co-edited in 1996, *Presente y futuros*, several authors draw on his reflections on the *terrain vague* in order to make them fruitful for their own works.⁴⁷ The photographer Joan Fontcuberta combines the term with that of the palimpsest in order to better illuminate the urban interstitial spaces (*espacios intersticiales de la ciudad*) in their random interplay of historical and semantic-semiotic layers.⁴⁸ His photographs of objects left behind on wastelands – 'Schutt, Dosen, Flaschen, kaputtes Spielzeug, Kondome, alte Zeitungen, Autoteile, einzelne

46 The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (who in the middle of the twentieth century was one of the first to draw attention to the diverse emotional and existential relationships that people have with different places and spaces and who coined the term *topophilia* or the love of places, later taken up by Yi-Fu Tuan) also explicitly refers to art. Bachelard's remarks are part of a phenomenological tradition of 'experienced space', which I will refer to several times; see Gaston Bachelard, *Poétique de l'espace*, Paris: PUF 1957.

47 See Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió/Xavier Costa (eds.), *Presente y futuros: Arquitectura en las ciudades*, Barcelona: Comitè d'Organització del Congrés UIA Barcelona 1996. Valeria Luiselli makes the following connection: 'Un grupo de arquitectos de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, dirigidos por Carlos González Lobo, ha bautizado estos espacios, estas sobras urbanas, con el nombre de 'relingos' [...] relacionado con las 'realengas', vieja voz castellana que se refería a las tierras marginales de la corona, abandonadas o en desuso [...] en ciertos países latinoamericanos, 'realenga' se utiliza para hablar de un animal que no tiene dueño [...] el relingo es una derivación chilanga de otra idea: los *terrains vagues* del arquitecto catalán Ignasi de Solà-Morales. Al igual que los relingos, el *terrain vague* es un espacio urbano ambiguo, un lote baldío sin bordes definidos ni bardas delimitantes, una especie de terreno al margen de la vida metropolitana, si bien físicamente se puede encontrar en pleno centro de una ciudad, en el cruce de dos avenidas principales, o debajo de un puente recién construido.' Valeria Luiselli, 'Relingos', in Luiselli, *Papeles falsos*, Madrid: Sexto Piso 2010, pp. 62–66, at p. 63. My thanks to Wolfram Nitsch for making me aware of this.

48 See Joan Fontcuberta, 'Terrain vague', in Solà-Morales/Costa, *Presente y futuros*, p. 267.

Schuhe und Regenschirme inmitten von trockenem Gestrüpp⁴⁹ – are, as he says, less about the chance encounter of surrealist *objets trouvés* than about an inventory of those traces that suggest a biography of the place, of a life that took place there spontaneously between public and private, between a before and an after, between urban vitality and the melancholy of its miserable remnants; in the palimpsest of the *terrain vague*, and also in his photographs printed on transparent material, the various layers of this life shine through and fill the void with memories.⁵⁰ The Czech architect Irena Fialová also focuses on the temporal aspect in her outline of Prague's urban history after 1989 and argues in favour of the preservation of wasteland sites, which, because they are the product of certain historical circumstances, retain a strong and individual connection to history; this applies in particular to places that are therefore so charged with memory and identity that they sometimes prove to be resistant to urban planning transformation projects.⁵¹ And Joan Busquets affirms the conceptual potential of the *terrain vague*, which, as Solà-Morales has demonstrated, allows us to look at urban wastelands differently. Busquets therefore calls it a *forma de interpretación*, a figure of interpretation, if you will, that allows us to take a positive and inspiring view of urban phenomena that otherwise often appear negative and problematic; after clarifying already known mechanisms of urban development that lead to the creation of wastelands, Busquets concludes that recognizing unplanned, unordered, and therefore 'other' dynamics of the design and use of urban space is of great importance when it comes to rethinking and redefining the traditional rules and practices of urban architecture.

While this rethinking in the discourse of German urbanism has also taken place without the concept of *terrain vague* (but with the help of conceptual alternatives to wasteland), this shows how the French term has helped to internationally spread concepts of 'alternative' urban planning and urban architecture. In 2001, for example, the architect and architectural theorist Luc Lévesque also took up the term and imported it into the French-speaking and English-speaking debates in Canada.⁵² His starting point is the juxtaposition of

49 The original Spanish text reads: 'Objetos abandonados: escombros, latas, botellas, juguetes rotos, condones, matorrales secos, diarios viejos, piezas de automóvil, un calcetín, un paraguas roto', *ibid.*

50 See *ibid.*

51 See Irena Fialová, 'Terrain vague: un caso de memoria', in *ibid.*, pp. 270–273.

52 See in the following Luc Lévesque, 'Le terrain vague comme matériau', in *Paysages*, Bulletin de l'Association des architectes paysagistes du Québec, June 2001, pp. 16–18 or 'The 'terrain vague' as Material – Some Observations', in *House Boat/Occupa-*

two 'antagonistic' points of view and lines of argument regarding the assessment of wasteland sites, which have become an issue and a spreading phenomenon since the 1980s. Both sides of this discourse have already been outlined. On the one hand, Lévesque takes the position that denounces the disorder, emptiness and indeterminacy of these places as an unacceptable consequence of economic decline; the *terrains vagues* undermine the desired image of a prosperous city and the ideals of abundance and order associated with it; action from this perspective often only knows short-term cosmetic repairs or the quick conversion into a car park, while one hopes that future development will somehow solve the problem. The other view, which upholds *terrains vagues* as open spaces within an increasingly standardized and regulated urban environment, welcomes the space they offer for spontaneous, creative appropriation and informal uses that are difficult to find in increasingly commercialized public spaces, which is why the *terrain vague* is seen as having the potential for both resistance and to be an alternative way of experiencing the city. For Lévesque, however, both views are ideologically coloured to a certain degree and therefore need to be relativized. Wastelands can certainly be a sign of economic crisis, of negligent investors, or of or negligent city administrations, but to equate them with urban decay is downright reductionist; conversely, to declare them *a priori* a terrain of emancipation is the expression of a romanticism that is therefore far removed from reality; because, firstly, wasteland cannot be completely decoupled from the forces that created it and these (such as pure speculative intentions) are rarely concerned with the common good, and secondly, these areas do not solely attract uses that tend to be labelled emancipatory, creative or innovative. Instead of adopting assessments of this kind, Lévesque aims for a description of what takes place in the space between the *terrains vagues* described by him as *sauvagerie urbaine* or *urban wilderness*: a coming together of 'modern brutality' (in the form of industrial infrastructure, for example), of 'ruderal colonization' (by flora and fauna) and of 'urbanity' (in the sense of collective appropriation and openness to use), which embodies the contradictions that elsewhere are concealed with all their might, such as that contradiction between the violence and irresponsibility of economic productivity at all costs and the persistent forms of life that appear in the most inhospitable environments. Lévesque's aim is to keep new opportunities for urbanity open instead of continuing to rely on standardized procedures. He seeks to do this not through a principled or systematic preference for the temporary and

tions symbiotiques, Hull/Gatineau: Axené07 2002, pp. 6–7, www.amarrages.com/textes_terrain.html (accessed on 27 December 2020).

spontaneous over the planned and permanent, but by combining these different forms into an 'active amalgam' that incorporates the not-quite-defined, the open and the permissive. Discovering the *terrain vague* in this sense as 'material' means consciously working with the indeterminate in order to achieve a 'hybrid dynamic' that corresponds to our experiences in today's world.

And even if Lévesque's proposals are not very specific and remain somewhat vague, they are very reminiscent of certain positions put forward in Germany towards the end of the 1990s. For example, when Häußermann and Siebel once again formulate their opposition to traditional urban planning: 'Räume des Dazwischen und Zonen des Übergangs zuzulassen und Architekturen zu bauen, die altern können, die Lücken, Zerfall und Zweckentfremdung vertragen, ist das Beste, was die Planung für den Erhalt der urbanen Stadt tun kann.'⁵³ A suggestion that, incidentally, was formulated in 2004 by architect, urban researcher, and author Christine Dissmann into a strategic concept for the preservation of vacant buildings, the so-called 'Dornröschenprinzip',⁵⁴ a strategy of 'Nicht-Handeln',⁵⁵ which she explains as follows:

Sie ist weder mit Strategien der Anverwandlung in Freiraum gleichzusetzen, noch mit Strategien des Denkmalschutzes, die Erhalt und Konservierung in bestimmter Gestalt anstreben und Eigentümer eher be- als entlasten. Das Dornröschenprinzip bedeutet, Zeit zu gewinnen, Räume mit langfristig ungeklärter Zukunftsperspektive liegen zu lassen, um sie vorzuhalten, jedoch nicht um die Zwischenzeit bis zum erhofften wiedereinsetzenden Wachstum mit möglichst hohem Mehrwert zu überbrücken, sondern um eben dieser Zeit des Liegenlassens eine eigene Form und eine eigene Bedeutung zuzugestehen.⁵⁶

Instead of revitalization attempts, the 'Sleeping Beauty principle' makes it possible to process change and transformation by leaving certain places to the forces of nature while they are in their slumber.

With regard to the international discussion, the trend towards a more cultural-scientific approach to the phenomenon is becoming more entrenched, which can certainly also be seen in what is known as the 'spatial turn' in the

53 Häußermann/Siebel, 'Stadt und Urbanität', p. 307.

54 Christine Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere: Zum Umgang mit einer neuen städtischen Wirklichkeit*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2004, p. 212.

55 In this context, Dissmann refers to the principle of 'action through non-action', which goes back to Taoism as 'Wu Wei', according to which one should not act against the nature of things. In her opinion, this is a form of 'passive creativity', see *ibid.*, p. 212.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 213.

social sciences and humanities, towards space as a dimension of the social world.⁵⁷ While urban geography studies continue to be undertaken, of course, continuing to focus on the statistical survey of vacancies and thus on the *vacuus*, the 'new' discourse just mentioned is primarily interested in the *vagus*. This is indicated by common object designations such as *space of uncertainty*, *space of indeterminacy*, or *nameless space*. The fact that *space* tends to take precedence over *place* (which is more likely to be associated with a positivist approach to classical urban geography) in the discussion of wastelands speaks for a change in perspective that has taken place under the impression of the spatial turn, away from 'objective' explanations of causes and descriptions of locations towards the conceptualization of wastelands as spaces of perception, action and possibility, whose subjects are not the urban planners but the city dwellers themselves.

A special forum for contributions in this direction is provided by the British publishing house Routledge, in whose publications various theoretical approaches and concepts have been the subject of lively discussion since the end of the 2000s. Particularly noteworthy are the contributions by architecture critic Gil Doron, who has been using the terms 'dead zone' and 'zone of transgression' since 2000 and has expanded his reflections in various Routledge volumes. His starting point is initially the variety of forms, names and uses of 'wasteland-like' spaces in the city. Disused harbour and railway station facilities, abandoned barracks, collieries, and industrial sites, gaps between buildings, leftover areas between motorways or railway tracks and the edges of supermarkets are just some of the examples he gives of a phenomenon that manifests itself in great diversity and for which, as we have already seen, there are just as many names. For Doron, however, this terminological diversity does not only reflect that of the phenomenon: 'The multiplicity of names, and some of their meanings, show the difficulty in defining those spaces.'⁵⁸ And so he sets

57 On the *spatial turn* in the social sciences and humanities, see above all Stephan Günzel (ed.), *Topologie: Zur Raumbeschreibung in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2007, and Jörg Döring/Tristan Thielmann (eds.), *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2008.

58 Gil Doron, "'... those marvellous empty zones at the edge of cities': Heterotopia and the "Dead Zone", in Michiel Dehaene/Lieven de Cauter (eds.), *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, London/New York: Routledge 2007, pp. 203–213, at p. 203.

himself the task of identifying and describing what is common and special about these places or spaces.⁵⁹

In doing so, he initially draws on common descriptions that consistently conceptualize these spaces in relation to the surrounding urban space as interstitial spaces or gaps. On the one hand, this applies functionally and physically: these are places that look ‘empty’ and appear as if they are no longer being used; they are, so to speak, ‘gaps between the zones of activity’ that themselves have no planned function.⁶⁰ However, its existence as a gap

59 With regard to the conceptual difference between *space* and *place*, a long dispute has been smouldering, which I can neither reproduce nor resolve here. However, it is necessary to make my understanding and use of the two terms transparent, without claiming a definitive solution to the problem. My approach is this: instead of treating space and place, as well as the respective *spaces* and *places*, as disparate areas of phenomena and as concepts that can be clearly separated from each other in their extension and intension, I believe that the problem of ‘space vs. place’ in Wittgenstein’s sense is a pseudo-problem caused by the incorrect use of language or a false understanding of the concepts. Is Cologne Cathedral a place or a space? This question simply cannot be answered because it is absurd. The question does not even arise if we understand space and place as two interrelated aspects, each of which grasps one and the same thing in a specific way. Cologne Cathedral is a well-known, central location in Cologne, a place on the map, a place you can visit, and a place that has a certain historical and current significance. But it is also a place that opens up, that you can enter, that has an interior space in which you can move, again from place to place, from the main altar to a side altar, for example. However, Cologne Cathedral is, as a location with an interior space, itself located in an exterior space, the urban space, within which it is localized, but which in turn consists of the network, i.e. the relations of the various urban places. No matter how you look at it: the location remains the rear-side, the outside, or the inside of the space (and vice versa), in a multiply nested manner, depending on which position and viewing direction I adopt. I therefore argue in favour of the following provisions on the basis of a bodily anchored experience and will now summarize things as follows: *place* is a tangible, limited, spatial entity that is perceived as a unit, is located at a specific point in space, is in relation to other places and can in itself be the bearer of a variety of properties. The place is the Where in which something happens. *Space* is 1° an interior of a place that is associated with a vastness and openness insofar as movement is possible within it (a massive body ‘occupies’ space precisely because it occupies a potentially free space and makes it disappear); 2° the expansiveness, extent, and form of a body; 3° an exterior space that is itself spanned by tangible places as a net within which spatially extended things are localized and can move between them due to the free space. Essentially, I am following Bernhard Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2009, pp. 31–64.

60 Doron, “... those marvellous empty zones at the edge of cities’: Heterotopia and the ‘Dead Zone’”, p. 207.

also has a temporal component that may seem contradictory: they have lost their purpose and thus usually also a future as what they were; they stand between what was and an undefined future, thus existing quasi 'outside time', and yet time does not stand still in them: 'because these spaces are unkempt and free of a programme, they are continuously changing.'⁶¹ After all, they also form an interstitial space in political or legal terms: Although these places usually have private owners, in their existence as wasteland sites they are used by people who are not the owners themselves; and it is not uncommon for informal uses of accessible wasteland sites to be more similar to uses by the private sector.⁶²

These provisions are essential for Doron, but not yet complete, because the aspect that is central to him is missing. In the very first of his texts, in which Doron develops his thoughts, he reports on a place in Tel Aviv that he returns to again and again in later texts: the remains of an old Arab fishing neighbourhood, which the city administration's planning jargon refers to as a *dead zone*, but which on closer inspection turns out to be anything but 'dead', but rather alive and kicking: young people meet there, lovers arrive in cars, filmmakers use it as a set, parties are held at night, and while some are still dancing, the few fishermen who continue to live there in self-built huts start their working day.⁶³ Only for the planners is the zone 'dead', until a new, profitable project flattens the place and introduces a regulated, orderly, 'official' life. Doron reports from similar places all over the world: The old harbour district of Amsterdam has been turned into a cultural centre by the squatting scene; an inner-city wasteland in London is shared by squatters, homeless people, nature lovers, rave party organizers and prostitutes; where the Berlin Wall once stood, there are now construction trailers whose inhabitants practice urban gardening, while vacant buildings in the surrounding area are occupied by punks and immigrants; in an industrial area on the outskirts of Los Angeles, artists have established a community with studios and galleries; and in Chicago, a group of artists who regularly keep the local blues and jazz tradition alive with concerts live in a former Jewish and African American neighbourhood that is facing demolition.⁶⁴

61 Gil Doron, '... badlands, blank space, border vacuums, brown fields, conceptual Nevada, Dead Zones ...', in *Field, a Free Journal for Architecture* 1, 2007, pp. 10–23, at p. 17.

62 See *ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

63 See Gil Doron, 'The Dead Zone and the Architecture of Transgression', in *CITY, Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 4, 2000, pp. 247–264, at p. 250.

64 See *ibid.*, pp. 250–251.

With implicit reference to the French ethnologist Marc Augé, who I will discuss in more detail in chapter 2.5 of the theory section, Doron describes the principle of this transformation as follows: ‘The means by which marginalized communities transform the street from a *non-place* into a *place* is by the displacement of activities that are accepted in another place (sleeping, eating, meeting, selling, performing, protesting etc.) into this non-place.’⁶⁵ Such shifts in utilization can also include activities that are ‘transgressive’ in a broader sense: for example, the use of public space such as a park or pseudo-public wasteland for sexual acts generally violates social conventions and the ‘law of decency’; and the appropriation of a vacant lot as a neighbourhood garden without the owner’s permission violates applicable ‘householder’s rights’. However, since ‘empty’ and ‘unused’ buildings and spaces enable these various forms of transgression – all of which show ‘how the public space is restricted to a very small spectrum of activities, and how many other activities are not permitted’⁶⁶ – to a greater extent than all other urban places, Doron calls them *zones of transgression*. On the part of the protagonists involved in these transgressions, Doron emphasizes those user groups who, because they pursue activities that are denied space by the public sphere or because they are on the margins or outside of society, can be described as ‘placeless’ or ‘urban nomads’:

To be placeless and to inhabit the other’s place is to trespass and to transgress. And indeed, many activities carried out by urban nomads – vending, sleeping, having sex, playing music, planting, painting, inhabiting [...] – are deemed transgressive. [...] The nomadic nature of these activities derives from the fact that they do not fit into established order and do not have a proper place.⁶⁷

In conclusion, Doron also considers the possibility of seeing these places, and in particular the uses he describes, as the opposite of capitalist mechanisms of space production. However, he argues against this when he sketches out Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia (to which I will return several times in Chapter 2 of the theory section) and notes that planning strategies such as land recycling or the revitalization of wastelands are basically methods of the same economic, social, and political system that created these places in the first place, that they are therefore not ‘outside’ this system at all, but have always

65 Ibid., p. 254.

66 Ibid.

67 Gil Doron, ‘Dead Zones, Outdoor Rooms and the Architecture of Transgression’, in Karen Franck/Quentin Stevens, *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*, London/New York: Routledge 2007, pp. 210–229, at p. 220.

fulfilled a specific social function within it: they have always been places of transgression and excess.⁶⁸ However, he does not elaborate on this rather cultural-anthropological point. In his texts, however, he seems more interested in the question of why planners and architects traditionally understand these places as disorder, dirt, waste, dead zones, or emptiness, when it turns out that they are full of life – albeit obeying a ‘different’ order. Doron can only imagine one answer: what happens in these zones is beyond the control of planning. ‘The Transgressive Zone is where architecture and planning reaches [sic] the limit of the plan and the intentions of the architect’.⁶⁹ What applies to a lesser extent to all architecture, namely that its spatial product always develops a life of its own that can never be completely foreseen and controlled, even if this is often the wish, applies to these zones more than to any other space: they embody an architecture that transcends itself, an architecture beyond architecture, so to speak, insofar as it occurs without planning, without being commissioned, without the subject of the architect – ‘on its own’, so to speak. And this is precisely the thorn in the side of architects – a thorn they want to drive out, because it calls them into question.⁷⁰

Gil Doron’s approach of understanding wastelands or ‘derelict’ areas and buildings – to summarize all the phenomena he mentions – primarily from an action-oriented perspective as places of ‘other’ spatial production is also shared to a certain extent by Tim Edensor, who takes up the concept of the ruin in relation to industrial wastelands. His thesis also states that they are ‘spaces in which the urban is practiced otherwise’, although he particularly emphasizes an aesthetic perspective in relation to Doron.⁷¹ Even if Edensor focuses on buildings formerly used for industrial purposes, which firstly are not open spaces and secondly do not have to be located in the urban space and can therefore be described as wasteland but not as *terrains vagues*, his considerations are nevertheless very interesting for an overall view. This is because the role of the materiality found in these places in relation to sensual, physical and imaginative experience, a role which he emphasizes and which can be related to a certain extent to all forms of wastelands, has not yet been sufficiently addressed in the discourse on wastelands presented here.

68 Doron, ‘... those marvellous empty zones at the edge of cities’: Heterotopia and the ‘Dead Zone’, p. 210. On this point, see chapter 2.5 of the theory section.

69 Doron, ‘The Dead Zone and the Architecture of Transgression’, p. 258.

70 Ibid., p. 259.

71 Tim Edensor, ‘Social Practices, Sensual Excess and Aesthetic Transgression in Industrial Ruins’, in Karen Franck/Quentin Stevens (eds.), *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*, London/New York: Routledge 2007, pp. 234–252, at p. 252.

His observations focus on the fact that a whole series of activities carried out on industrial wasteland sites by various user groups not only take place without instructions or regulations for use, without obvious rules and without control by cameras or passers-by and are for this reason alone 'outside the ordinary',⁷² but are also characterized by spatial and material conditions in a way that differs from urban spaces used in a 'normal' way. This applies to those who – whether as organized and equipped urban explorers or not – explore the spaces of the ruins, climb over walls, climb into shafts or silos, walk through dark alleyways, climb machines, swing on ropes, thus displaying physical behaviour – a physical behaviour more familiar from adventure playgrounds or sports facilities, but with the constant threat of falling in or off, which is why the kinaesthetic pleasure of exploring the space is combined with a heightened awareness of the material condition of the buildings and objects.⁷³ This also applies to those who use the inside of the facilities with skateboards or inline skates or the outside area with mopeds or BMX bikes, and who utilize spatial conditions and special ground conditions that cannot be found in urban areas. It also applies to those who take part in the various forms of vandalism, traces of which can be found on almost all industrial wastelands, because often the destruction and alteration of found objects is not only done out of the pure desire to break things (a desire which must be suppressed in public spaces), but also out of curiosity to see how the various materials (iron, steel, concrete, ceramics, glass, wood etc.) react to physical impact, how they look or sound or how they smell when they are set alight.⁷⁴ And lastly, this also applies to those who have an eye for the extraordinary, for bizarre world of shapes and colours that they encounter when exploring these places: there are never-before-seen objects in different sizes, shapes, and random combinations, parts of buildings characterized by various stages of decay and devastation, peeling paint, dried chemical substances, birch trees breaking through walls and deformed objects covered in lichen, moss and rust, fungi, and cobwebs, of which – as with the *objet ambigu* – it is no longer even possible to say whether they are organic or inorganic, of natural or industrial origin. Anyone who has explored the inside of one of these ruins knows how surreal this chaotic and strange world created by unknown forces can be.⁷⁵

72 Ibid., p. 235.

73 See *ibid.*, pp. 242–245.

74 See *ibid.*, p. 237.

75 See *ibid.*, pp. 241–242 and p. 245.

For Edensor, such industrial wastelands, but also derelict open spaces, where discarded objects,⁷⁶ various materials, anonymous users, natural forces, and an imagination stimulated thereby often come together by chance, are places of ambiguity that do not fit into the order of a structured and segmented urban world in which things, people, and activities are assigned to specific places.⁷⁷ However, they are not only the rejects of this order, the waste, so to speak, of a culture of overproduction, as the term *junkspace* coined by Rem Koolhaas suggests,⁷⁸ but also its surplus: proof that spatial orders, no matter how much they are trimmed for efficiency, regulation, coherence, unambiguity, and prefabricated meanings and patterns of behaviour, are never completely closed or seamless. Somewhere, the excess of a life that is more diverse and uncontrollable than the agents of order would like always breaks through.

Before I conclude the history of the wasteland as an object of scholarly, political, and artistic discourse, let us have a brief look at two relatively recent contributions from the context of the international English-language discussion: In the 2012 Routledge volume *Urban Wildscapes*, theoretical lines already familiar from Doron and Edensor are combined with landscape planning and ecological issues.⁷⁹ On the one hand, this is about appreciating the spontaneous, uncontrolled development of flora and fauna on urban wasteland and leftover areas, which, as the last truly wild landscapes in our society, have an ecological significance that should not be underestimated compared to a rural landscape that was traditionally associated with wilderness but is now completely organized. On the other hand, various forms of 'wildness' are discussed on a design or social level, including both urban architectural approaches to the conscious handling of wild areas, be it the large-scale residential wasteland, the micro wasteland of an overgrown street corner, or 'wild', i.e. unforeseen, uncontrolled uses. However, the overarching question of how the experiential potential of the wild can be integrated into the city is addressed less with a conceptual, theoretical examination than with case studies of specific locations in various cities around the world, which I do not intend to pursue further here.

The same applies to the Routledge volume *Terrain Vague: Interstices at the Edge of the Pale* from 2014, which first of all of course shows that the

76 On the aesthetics of chance on the *terrain vague*, see chapter II.2 (theory section).

77 See *ibid.* p. 251.

78 See Rem Koolhaas, *Junkspace: Repenser radicalement l'espace urbain*, Paris: Payot 2010.

79 See Anna Jorgensen/Richard Keenan (eds.), *Urban Wildscapes*, London/New York: Routledge 2012.

concept of *terrain vague* continues to have a central and firm place in the international debate.⁸⁰ However, although the definition itself does not go beyond the influential essay by Solà-Morales (which is reprinted after the preface) before the book fans out into case studies that look at various actual *terrains vagues* around the globe, analyse individual art actions associated with *terrains vagues*, and formulate application-related guideposts in dealing with *terrains vagues*. We are reminded once again of the multitude of phenomena, terminological rivals and theoretical interpretations that are to be reconsidered via this term. The foreword once again emphasizes the semantic complexity of the term – a complexity which enables it to be a ‘collective term for a multitude of subtypes of marginal, leftover land’,⁸¹ which in the following refers to wasteland, leftover areas, gaps between buildings, and any kind of neglected, overgrown, ‘underused’, or undefined land. *Terrain vague* is also introduced as a term that focuses on the ‘positive uses and aspects’ of these places and is also to be developed as a concept that is useful not only for the fields of urban planning, urban design, urban architecture, and landscape architecture, but also for human geography, cultural studies, film studies, and literary studies. Among the theoretical references compiled in the introduction, none should be unfamiliar at this point: the historical complexity of *terrains vagues*, their openness to spontaneous, informal, alternative, or creative activities, their existence as a refuge for marginalized social groups, their critical potential vis-à-vis traditional and normative production and practice of urban space, their significance for ecological diversity in the city, their temporal character as temporary places, and their aesthetic interpretation as places for a different experience of the city or as stages for spatial artistic interventions.

The next step will be to offer a theoretical concept of *terrain vague* that can also be used in cultural and media studies: in the following, when I attempt to unify the different phenomena, terms, and theoretical approaches outlined in the first chapter into a concept under the term *terrain vague*, there are primarily two things that need to be done, which, in my opinion, have been too rarely addressed in the contributions collected here from nearly forty years of ongoing discussion: firstly, I would like to systematically organize the various characteristics, aspects, perspectives, and interpretations and put them together to form a clear picture. And secondly, I would like to emphasize and elaborate on the cultural studies theories that have repeatedly flashed up as references in the discussion reconstructed so far. Because one thing is quite

80 See Manuela Mariani/Patrick Barron (eds.), *Terrain Vague: Interstices at the Edge of the Pale*, London/New York: Routledge 2014.

81 Ibid., p. xi.

clear: I do not want to go into the fine details of the individual disciplines, nor do I want to address all the specialist issues or analyse a large number of empirical cases of existing *terrains vagues*, their uses, and the political, social, and urban-planning disputes that have been fought over them. Rather, I would like to outline a general theory of the *terrain vague*, guided in equal measure by the history of this concept in French modernism, by the history of scientific discussions about the corresponding phenomena, and by reference concepts from the humanities.

II. Theory of the *terrain vague*

1. Parameters of the Analysis

1.1 ONTOLOGICAL LEVELS

On the way to a systematic representation of the *terrain vague* as an undefined, urban interstitial space, we will now look back once again at the discourse history of the urban wasteland as reconstructed in the previous section.¹ This is because by determining in which respects, from which perspectives, with regard to which aspects, and according to which criteria the wasteland has hitherto been analysed, conclusions can also be drawn as to how the characteristics of a complex phenomenon can be ordered in the course of its theoretical representation and how the various statements that can be made about the subject can be structured and related. Of course, categorization as a whole does not follow logically from the matter itself; this project will always require decisions that cannot completely exclude a certain degree of arbitrariness and that follow ‘external’ requirements. So, it is also my aim to find parameters that are not too specific, to maintain clarity and the larger context, and general enough to associate them with the perspectives and subject areas of individual reference disciplines. However, the fact that I take these parameters from the wealth of scholarship on the broader phenomena and concentrate on aspects that run through numerous investigations reinforces my conviction that in the end, it is not a completely ‘external’ grid that I impose on the subject, but a system whose individual elements are firmly anchored in the structure of the phenomena themselves. For this reason, I call the parameters that form the first level of my system the ‘ontological levels’.

From the outset of this, there is always talk of the physical form of the places, of their emptiness or fullness, of the material conditions in which they

1 For an early sketch by Daniel Ritter and myself of a systematic presentation not only of the poetics but also of the topology of the *terrain vague*, see Jacqueline Maria Broich/Daniel Ritter, ‘Terrain vague: Essai sur la topologie et la poétique de la friche urbaine’, in Philippe Antoine/Wolfram Nitsch (eds.), *Le Mouvement des frontières: Déplacement, brouillage, effacement*, Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal 2015 (Littératures), pp. 163–181.

are located, of their position, their size, their order or disorder. Even if, in reality, the actual content and spatial form of a social phenomenon can never be separated from the social, political, and symbolic conditions that produce it and make it what it is, I can still try to dissociate this pure materiality and spatiality from its 'superstructure' in the analysis – if only to clarify certain controversies about the physical definition of places. The first ontological level is therefore physics. And this naturally also includes the temporal aspects of the phenomenon. Since I speak of 'phenomenon' and not of the 'wasteland in and of itself', it goes without saying that – just as I do not assume a material space that can be considered independently of the way we humans experience it – I do not conceive of time as something that takes place 'outside' our experience. Only under this premise will it make sense to make statements such as that the *terrain vague* has its own temporal structures, which would of course be absurd from the strictly objectivist and positivist view of the natural sciences. In addition to the temporal structures inherent to the *terrain vague*, its historical dimension also plays a role on this level – a role which can be influential for this, as well as for all other levels, because 'in space, we read time'.² And finally, metaphysics traditionally comes after physics, which is why this will also be the place to reflect on the meaning of certain physical characteristics of the *terrain vague* itself – in particular, emptiness.

The central criterion for determining what is and what is not a derelict area in the city in the early urban geography debate is that of utilization. The talk of pre-, re- and post-use, of intermediate and secondary uses, or of informal and spontaneous uses, all point to an aspect of urban places that can be summarized under terms such as 'functionality' or 'purpose'. On the one hand, the norm of the functional destination of areas is a question of urban planning principles; on the other hand, the actual existence of uses depends on economic, but also on political and social factors, and likewise on the question of what is recognized as 'official' use. At this point, however, it is not yet a question of the type of use or the users themselves, but rather the question of the pure 'utilization' of these places. And since the question of the use of a thing belongs to the core area of economics – which can also be seen from the fact that the early definitions of wasteland, which placed the presence or absence of use at the centre, generally had an economic argument – I designate economics as the second ontological level of the *terrain vague*, a level that deals with functionality and purpose.

2 This is the title of a work by the historian Karl Schlögel that was influenced by the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities: *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit: Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, Munich: Hanser 2003.

Wastelands are often referred to as no-man's-land or as ownerless terrain, regardless of whether there is a legitimate claim of ownership on paper or not. It is also claimed that wastelands form an area between the public and the private or a zone in which other rules apply, no control prevails, and existing power relations are changed, reversed, or cancelled. And indeed, the many public disputes surrounding the preservation or conversion of a wasteland site relate to the question of who has or should have power over disposable urban 'open space' and the shaping thereof. This is the political side of the *terrain vague*, which is why the third ontological level is that of politics.

Regardless of whether the wasteland is said to favour certain uses that are harmful to the general public, or whether it offers a space for those who cannot find a place in society, it is always seen and evaluated as part of a larger social space within which it can take on certain functions and meanings. Who are its users? What is the nature of these uses, and how do they relate to other uses with regard to specific forms of social organization or specific forms of socialization? To whom do they offer a space for emancipation, to whom a refuge, and why? And how are spaces meaningfully designed through social action? Space was understood early on as a 'projection of social forms',³ and conversely, it is also possible to ask to what extent space creates social forms and constellations. All this is negotiated on the fourth ontological level, that of sociology.

What makes an initially arbitrary place in material and social space a place for us in the first place? What meanings, functions, and experiences must be associated with a place? And if certain conditions of 'locality' are not met, do we then have at hand 'placeless' places, 'non-places', or similar? There are also places that enable experiences that are existentially or culturally linked to certain phases or situations in life, or places that are assigned to a separate or special area of human life. I deal with aspects of this kind in relation to the *terrain vague* on the fifth ontological level, the level of cultural anthropology or ethnology.⁴

3 See Georg Simmel, 'Über räumliche Projektionen sozialer Formen' (1903), in Simenon, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901–1908*, ed. by Rüdiger Kramme et al., Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1995, vol. 1, pp. 201–220.

4 The two terms for the academic field that deals with the study of the diverse social and cultural relationships of human societies are primarily historical. While ethnology, which developed in nineteenth century Europe, originally studied 'foreign', non-European cultures or 'peoples', cultural anthropology (which originated in the USA), and social anthropology (which came from the UK) see themselves as the humanities' counterpart to scientific anthropology and likewise study the cultural and social life of human groups and societies. Nowadays,

In earlier discourse on wastelands, concerns about the economic uselessness were countered by the discovery of wasteland as natural space. And to this day, the renaturalization of disused areas is an attractive option in many respects. But what happens between the abandonment of a use and a targeted revitalization or repurposing, during a time when humans surrender to the 'natural' course of events a space they have created and moulded to themselves? What kind of nature are we dealing with then and what significance can it have for the life of a city or life in a city? These questions move on the sixth ontological level, that of ecology.

Of course, places and spaces are not only treated from the 'outside' as a theoretical object of ecological, ethnological, sociological, political, economic, and physical observation. And even if this observation is based on the empirical experiences of individual people, it is always abstracted from these on the levels mentioned, thus making it possible to draw conclusions about the characteristics of the places and spaces themselves in their social context. However, they can also be considered in relation to how they work not 'out there' in the world, but in an inner perspective of experience. The first step will be to examine them as objects of sensory perception and to ask what specific sensory experiences they trigger. In this context, it can certainly be a question of qualities in perception that are traditionally referred to as 'aesthetic', such as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime etc. However, if one wishes to consciously focus on the entire spectrum of sensory experience, which considers all senses and all possible qualities, the term *aisthetic* is more appropriate.⁵ But can the inner experience of a place or space be reduced to sensory perception? What about all the other components that fall under the concept of experienced space in spatial theory, i.e. other subject-place relationships such as emotional connections, symbolic attributions, or individual judgements?⁶ However, since

however, the terms are used almost synonymously; see Frank Robert Vivelò, *Handbuch der Kulturanthropologie: Eine grundlegende Einführung*, ed. by Justin Stagl, transl. by Erika Stagl, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta ²1995, pp. 13–21 and 329.

- 5 On the concept of *aisthetics* as opposed to *aesthetics*, see Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (1990), Stuttgart: Reclam ⁷2010, pp. 9–12.
- 6 *Experienced space* is the everyday space understood under phenomenological auspices, insofar as it is perceived, experienced, and shaped by people in all its physical, social, cultural, symbolic, and psychological layers, in contrast to the space of mathematics, which is constructed from an abstraction of the same. Otto Friedrich Bollnow also makes a systematic distinction between *experienced space* as the content of everyday experience and *lived space* as the structure of human existence itself, which is locally bound and spatial; see Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum* (1963), Stuttgart: Kohlhammer ¹¹2010, pp. 13–25.

the *terrain vague*, in addition to these phenomenological qualities, is also repeatedly associated with certain aesthetic notions such as the ruin, the vague, the terrible, or the random, and the term is used particularly in such contexts, I am placing the seventh and final ontological level here: that of aesthetics.

These, then, are the seven ontological levels with regard to which I will undertake my investigation of the *terrain vague* as a phenomenon and concept. Since the division into these levels is an attempt to work out and analyse different aspects of one and the same thing individually, although these aspects in fact only occur 'in admixture'. I will therefore seek to separate in theory what is inseparable in reality – it is clear that they are closely interwoven, overlap, relate to each other, and are addressed several times in the analytical presentation. However, they will each appear in a different light and thus reveal different facets of the phenomenon.

On all seven levels, two basic perspectives can also be adopted, which differ in terms of whether the *terrain vague*, with everything that is and happens there, is viewed on its own or in relation to its surrounding space. In the first case, one is interested in the intrinsic properties of the phenomenon, so to speak, in the second in its extrinsic or relational properties. This distinction was already made by Descartes, who separated the 'inner' from the 'outer' place for his concept of place (for him, spatiality only exists through the extension of localized things): while the inner location is determined by the size and shape of an extended object, its outer location depends on its positional relationships to other extended objects. We therefore call the two perspectives internal-topological and external-topological.⁷

1.2 CATEGORIES OF MEANING

At the same time as I am interested in this ontological side, I also turn to the conceptual side of the *terrain vague*. What does this term mean? Just as I have now defined the various ontological levels, which in some ways resemble the Aristotelian categories that on the one hand determine questions about an object and on the other designate essential and accidental property areas

7 For Descartes' distinction between an 'inner' and an 'outer' place, see his *Principia philosophiae* II/15. Against the background of the discussion of space fuelled by the *spatial turn*, this distinction is elaborated by Laura Frahm in the context of a reflection on the description of physical space in film as a 'topology of the inside' or a 'topology of the outside'; see Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2010, pp. 88–100.

(position, nature, material etc.),⁸ it is also necessary to make explicit the way in which the term conceptualizes its object. To explain this, I must first and foremost look at the intensional side of the term. This is because two terms – take as examples *evening star* and *morning star* – can refer to the same set of objects (here Venus), as Gottlob Frege has already shown, while differing in their conceptual content ('the brightest star in the evening sky' vs. 'the brightest star in the morning sky').⁹ And this is precisely where the conceptual nature of a term becomes apparent. Concepts do more than just summarize things in the world into quantities and refer to them. Terms can also add, select, weight, evaluate, and interpret properties. This depends on how one positions oneself in relation to the subject and which of its aspects are emphasized or illuminated. The following picture illustrates this: while the ontological levels constitute a dark space, so to speak, which is there whether one looks into it or not, the conceptual approach of the term is like a bundle of cones of light that one directs into this space and that let one see there one thing or the other. So how are the cones of light of the term *terrain vague* aligned?

Let us first have a look at how the set of objects designated by the term is determined on the extensional side. The term *terrain vague* refers to 'unused, derelict open spaces'. According to this pure definition of quantity – we also remember the modern standard definition in French – the central, defining elements are those of a physical and economic emptiness or an absence of buildings and uses. For this reason, the term can refer not only to wasteland sites in the narrower sense (i.e. commercial, industrial, transport, or residential wasteland sites etc.), but also to leftover areas, border areas, peripheral zones, and similar phenomena. The aspects through which the extensional definition of the term occurs can all be related to the etymological line of *vacuus*. They

8 The categories in Aristotle's work of the same name are both predicative and ontological categories: on the one hand, they denote forms of statements that are typically formulated as questions (What? How big? What kind? Where? When? etc.) and so determine what can be said about an entity, but also the corresponding forms of being or properties themselves. According to this context, the category that is not said about others, but only for itself, namely the individual, also enjoys ontological priority: it is the first substance compared to the accidentals. See Aristotle, 'Categories', in Aristotle, *Philosophische Schriften*, Hamburg: Meiner 1995, vol. 1, pp. 1–42, and Otfried Höffe: *Aristotle*, Munich: Beck 2006, pp. 164–177.

9 See Gottlob Frege, 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung', in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100, 1892, pp. 25–50, available at: www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/frege_sinn_1892 (accessed on 27 December 2020).

determine the first 'cone of light' of the term or, as I will use it from now on, the first category of meaning: emptiness/absence/negation (because emptiness is the negation of fullness, and absence is the negation of presence).

However, the *terrain vague* not only denotes an 'empty' area, but also an indeterminate place, which can be seen on the economic level, for example, in its dysfunctionality, i.e. its functional indeterminacy. At the same time, it was repeatedly pointed out that in this form of indeterminacy lies an openness for new, non-'official', informal, spontaneous, improvised, individual uses. Both aspects are inherent in the etymon *vagus*, which, however, conceals further attributions of meaning and modalities of perspectivization. On one hand, this relates to qualities of subjective experience, as the vague is inherently a concept that can refer not only to an object itself (such as 'vague ideas'), but also to the perceptual or existential manner of an object which is not necessarily vague in itself, but which for the subject appears unclear or fuzzy. Ultimately, however, it is about the structural interweaving of object and perception into a single, unseparated phenomenon in experience, which is why the vague always already contains a phenomenological approach to facts, in which it is about the dissolution or suspension of clear, recognizable forms. On the other hand, the etymon *vagus* is also related to the verb *vagari*, which denotes 'wandering' or 'wandering about', and thus a diffuse movement. One could also speak of the dissolution or suspension of clear directions, guidelines, or rule, and likewise of openness and freedom. All of this can be summarized in the second category of meaning: indeterminacy/suspension/openness.

When we speak of *terrains vagues* as transitional spaces, as symptoms of crises and signs of upheaval, this refers to the interpretation of the phenomenon in terms of its significance within a temporal, historical event that has to do with transformations of social structures and orders. In the French noun *la vague*, which goes back to the Nordic etymon *vâgr*, we see the image of the wave, which can stand for various forms of change and upheaval and thus also for the transgression of previous conditions in the sense of a transgression. This etymological line is independent of that of the French *vague* (as derived from Latin *vacuus* and *vagus*) and is therefore absent from the conceptual history of *terrain vague*. But I am by no means interested in making etymologically supposedly guaranteed meanings into an epistemological or hermeneutical criterion. I don't want to be like Kratylos, nor like Heidegger.¹⁰ The

10 In Plato's dialogue of the same name, Cratylos represents the linguistic philosophical position of semantic naturalism, according to which linguistic designations are not assigned to their object arbitrarily or by convention, but are inherently correct in such a way that the reality of things can be deduced from the

literary history of the *terrain vague* proves, however, that places described in this way have at all times not only been ascribed characteristics that fall under the categories of emptiness/absence/negation and indeterminacy/suspension/openness, but also that they are associated with major historical, social transformation processes as well as with uses and experiences that are presented as transgressive in relation to what is legally and morally valid or commonplace. The third category of meaning is therefore transformation/transgression.

These are the three categories of meaning that I will use to organize the properties and theoretical references within each of the ontological levels in order to unite both 'dimensions' in a matrix in the systematic presentation of the *terrain vague*.

But before that, a note on a possible impression that I would like to avoid. Regarding the categories of meaning, it will not be about constructing a simple duality between 'objective' determinations with reference to the *vacuus* category of meaning and 'subjective' determinations with reference to the *vagus*. This is made impossible simply by the fact that a characteristic like 'functional indeterminacy' does not stem from a 'subjective impression' but rather from objectively determinable facts. And conversely, 'emptiness', whether on a physical or economic level, is not free from interpretation and is by no means purely 'objective'.¹¹ What is labelled as 'empty' and what is labelled as 'full' depends on the context and is also a question of perspective: one person sees the absence of a principal use within an area, the other sees an abundance of secondary uses. There is another reason why the division into a crude dualism of 'subjective' and 'objective' does not work. I might affirm that the determination of emptiness is subject to interpretation and is therefore not purely 'objective', but that does not necessarily make it 'subjective' – in any case not 'purely' or 'radically' subjective, just as the experience of emotions,

observation of words and their etymological examination; see Plato, 'Cratylus', in Plato, *Werke*, ed. by Gunther Eigler, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2005, vol. 3, pp. 395–575. In Heidegger's hermeneutics of being, etymological analyses also play a central role in answering the question of the meaning of certain phenomena and ultimately of being itself, albeit under different theoretical and methodological auspices; see Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Tübingen: Niemeyer 192006.

11 As early as 1980, a pioneering British study pointed out: '[Dereliction] remains to some extent a matter for subjective judgement. [...] [A] precise definition of dereliction is virtually impossible'. Rupert Nabarro/David Richards/Honor Chapman, *Wasteland: A Thames Television Report*, London: Thames Television 1980, p. 11.

thoughts, or sensory impressions is simply not divisible. Interpreting wasteland as a sign of upheaval, for example, is an interpretation insofar as a certain sense, a certain meaning, which the phenomenon itself does not reveal as evidence, first has to be extracted and developed. But not by recourse to purely 'subjective' experiences such as those mentioned above, but to facts recognized intersubjectively as facts, plausible theories, and comprehensible explanations. Just because an interpretation is disputable does not mean that it is 'subjective'. In fact, we will potentially have to deal with objective, subjective, and intersubjective components in all three categories of meaning,¹² without being able to make any fundamental categorizations in this regard. Rather, the concept of *terrain vague* unites the different categories of meaning in their respective complexity, just as it does with the perspectives that refer to the different ontological levels.

In this respect, I am dealing with a concept of integration, as it integrates these different approaches to the phenomenon. At the same time, however, it is also a concept of interpretation, because it allows the phenomenon to appear in this or that light and interprets it. The following systematics is thus to be understood as an analysis of the concept in the sense of an unfolding of its conceptual content, but also as a hermeneutics of the phenomenon of the *terrain vague*.

12 To clarify my use of these terms: 'Objective' facts are those that are considered indisputable and are recognized without much interpretation: that there is, for instance, no building on a site and no recognizable current use. 'Intersubjective' facts are those with explanations that are debatable, but comprehensible, plausible, divisible in their content, such as: 'wastelands are often a result of structural change'. Finally, 'subjective' facts are qualities of sensations and events of inner experience that are not divisible, such as: 'the sight of this wasteland makes me uncomfortable'; the content of the sentence is intersubjectively understandable, but how this discomfort feels for *you* is something *I* am unable to understand.

2. Systematic Analysis

2.1 PHYSICS

2.1.1 Spatial and Temporal Emptiness

The physical form or the material spatiality of the *terrain vague* is characterized by emptiness. *Terrains vagues* are open spaces in the sense that they are not built on and are therefore sometimes referred to as ‘empty land’. If there are isolated structures in the centre or at the edge of their area, they are usually deserted, especially of people, because they are abandoned and uninhabited. At least as first meets the eye. However, what appears to be so easy to judge at first glance is by no means clear-cut on closer inspection. For ‘emptiness’ is not an absolute, but a relative definition that refers to contextual conditions and expectations. A water bottle is labelled ‘empty’ even if, strictly speaking, there are still a few drops of water in it; a warehouse is considered ‘empty’ if there are no or hardly any goods stored in it, even if its hollows are ‘filled’ with shelves; and a house is also considered uninhabited if individual squatters or homeless people have secretly set up home there. So ‘emptiness’ seems to refer to the absence of what should actually be somewhere, what should be essential there, like the water in the water bottle and the stored goods in the warehouse – and to no small degree. What the *terrain vague* thus ‘lacks’ refers analogously to expectations towards its urban context. Its supposed intrinsic emptiness therefore turns out to be an extrinsic emptiness. After all, a *terrain vague* can have a lot to offer in addition to makeshift, temporary dwellings. As already mentioned, a wide variety of objects can accumulate there, from waste of all kinds, discarded equipment, stranded cable reels, shopping trolleys, and rubber tyres to thorny undergrowth and even cannibalized car wrecks. But none of this is expected on a municipal site that is not exactly a designated collection point for scrap metal. The perception of the *terrain vague* as ‘empty’ is therefore better explained by the absence of what essentially makes up our image of the city that embeds it as its reference space: namely, a certain idea of density and fullness. Due to their unexpected emptiness, *terrains vagues* in the

midst of an urban network of dense development, especially deserted in the midst of dense settlement, act like ‘holes’ or ‘gaps’ in the morphology of the city, like ‘cracks’ in the urban fabric, like ‘wounds’ in its fabric. A park – another possible type of urban open space – can also be undeveloped and form the same contrast to the surrounding buildings (such as Central Park in Manhattan). The difference is that the ‘emptiness’ of the park is an expected one: one knows that it is a park, the open space is defined as such and structured, organized, designed, and maintained accordingly. But none of this applies to the *terrain vague*: it is precisely such because its physical, material form is not the product of intentional, creative, and ordering actions in the sense of urban architecture.

Here we find ourselves at an interesting transition from emptiness to disorder, which mythologically is already laid out both in the ‘yawning emptiness’ of the chaos of Greek cosmogony and in the ‘desolate and empty’ hullabaloo¹ of Jewish cosmogony. At the same time, we are approaching a veritable metaphysics of emptiness, which has been driving architectural theory for several decades: what does emptiness in the city mean in principle? And does it even exist?

On the one hand, there are those who reject the notion of the existence of architectural emptiness. These include the Dutch architecture critic Hans van Dijk, who argues that no place or space is ‘empty’ *per se*, but that emptiness is always already a colonialist construct that serves as a justification for violently occupying spaces and designing them according to the colonialists’ requirements; according to him, this explicitly applies not only to the historical European colonization of other continents, but also to architectural practice in general.² Here, an apparent physical emptiness is used to assert other forms of

1 ‘Hullabaloo’ here translates the German text’s use of the word group ‘Tohuwabohu’ (Hebrew: תוהו ובוהו *tōhū vā/wa vōhū*, ‘formless and void’ or ‘total chaos’), which is translated by Martin Luther in the 1st book of Genesis (Genesis 1:1-2) as ‘wüst und leer’ (‘formless and void’). It is only through the ordering of the impenetrable, opaque and incomprehensible, from which God creates the world, that meaning emerges. The Jewish philosophers of religion and dialogue Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, on the other hand, render the Hebrew expression as literally as possible in their *Schrift* and translate it as ‘Irrsal und Wirrsal’ (‘madness and confusion’). These and other etymological explanations of the term can be found, for example, at: www.baer-linguistik.de/beitraege/jdw/tohuwabohu.htm (accessed on 27 December 2020).

2 See Hans van Dijk, ‘Colonizing the Void. Urbanization: The Landscape as Ally’, in Hans van Dijk/Adriaan Geuze et al. (eds.), *Colonizing the Void: Adriaan Geuze, West & Architects, Rotterdam*, Dutch contribution to the Venice Architecture Biennale 1996, Rotterdam: NAI 1996 (no page number).

emptiness (cultural emptiness, social emptiness, emptiness of meaning³) and thus to seize the ‘space to be filled’.



(Fig. 5)

There are also those who literally ‘fear’ emptiness. The concept of *horror vacui* goes back to the hypothesis originally put forward by Aristotle and held until modern times, according to which there can be no vacuum because nature ‘shrinks back’ from emptiness and all cavities are filled with matter in order to prevent emptiness.⁴ In a figurative sense, however, the term is also used for those who see a problem in urban emptiness. In retrospect, Andreas Ruby attested to such a *horror vacui*, to name just one example, at the 1987 ‘International Building Exhibition’ in Berlin, which was dedicated to the hopeless battle against Berlin’s internationally recognized emptiness.⁵ As Luc Lévesque has aptly pointed out, the emptiness does not fit in with the image of the prosperous, functioning city that urban policy strives for and brokers.⁶

In general, Berlin is a common point of reference in the discussion about the architectural treatment of emptiness, especially for fans of the city. The

3 On the systematic distinction between different types of ‘emptiness’ implicitly considered here, see Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere*, pp. 31–42.

4 See Aristotle, ‘Physics’ (Book IV, Chapters 6–9), in Aristotle, *Philosophische Schriften*, vol. 6, pp. 87–101. In art criticism, the term refers to the tendency of certain epochs or artists to fill in empty spaces, especially in painting.

5 See Andreas Ruby, ‘Amor vacui’, in *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, book 4, 2003, p. 36.

6 See again Lévesque, ‘Le terrain vague comme matériau’, pp. 16–18.

reasons for appreciating urban emptiness can take many forms. Wim Wenders, for example, who has repeatedly staged Berlin's wastelands in his films, mentions several motifs of his *amor vacui*. Berlin's empty spaces initially have great narrative potential. As 'wounds' of the city, they convey stories 'besser als jedes Geschichtsbuch'.⁷ One reason for this is that these empty spaces function like peepholes into time, because in addition to a very physical view through the dense city, they also allow a glimpse into its history. On the other hand, according to him – and analogous to film – storytelling can only happen if gaps are left that the viewers or observers can fill with their feelings and experiences; it is only through this kind of openness that films, and thus also cities, come to life.⁸ In addition to this reception-aesthetics-based view of the city as a text, Wenders also praises the existential feeling of freedom that these open spaces offer us in contrast to the impenetrable and overpowering nature of metropolitan architecture.⁹ And lastly, he talks about the need to distance oneself from the city in order to see and understand it better. Just as one sometimes encounters remnants of civilization in the desert that make one understand what the desert in its emptiness actually is, one can have a reverse experience when one encounters the 'desert' in the middle of the city in the form of an empty space, such as a clearing: It 'setzt die umgebende Fülle einer Stadt in eine Perspektive, läßt sie in einem anderen Licht erscheinen'.¹⁰ Part of this other light that Wenders speaks of is not least the experience that – when you come to a place in the city where the natural ground, which completely covers the city, breaks through – you are reminded that something essential is 'fortgefeht': the city is so full that it is actually empty, while the desert is so empty 'daß sie vollkommen angefüllt ist mit Wesentlichem'.¹¹

In contrast, the architect and architectural theorist Philipp Oswald arrives at a metaphysics of urban emptiness that speaks less of the enabling conditions of certain experiences.¹² In relation to Berlin, he does praise the emptiness for the experience of openness and expansiveness that it enables. Only this time it is not the desert, but the land that penetrates the compact city from the outside into its innermost core in the course of its dissolution – which is why Walter Benjamin already spoke of the cities being 'allerorten durchbrochen

7 Wim Wenders, 'The Urban Landscape' (1991), in Wenders, *The Act of Seeing: Texte und Gespräche*, Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag der Autoren 1992, pp. 116–129, at p. 123.

8 See *ibid.*, p. 124.

9 See *ibid.*, p. 125.

10 Wenders, 'The Urban Landscape', p. 127.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

12 See Philipp Oswald, *Berlin – Stadt ohne Form: Strategien einer anderen Architektur*, Munich/London/New York: Prestel 2000, p. 60.

vom eindringenden Land'¹³ – and which embodies the non-urban, the other of the city, or the absence of the city-in-the-city. In addition to this experiential perspective on the physical emptiness of the city, Oswald also adopts a metaphysical view in a more classical sense, namely when it comes to the significance of emptiness in processes of becoming, change, and emergence. On the one hand, he interprets this in terms of cultural history when he points out that the emptiness of modernization is 'inscribed', inasmuch as permanent change leads to constant renewal and temporary emptying: 'Wie eine Raupe ihre Schalen abwirft, so liegen in der modernen Metropole die Hüllen des Gestern herum' – be it because the reorganization of space sheds wasteland, because residual spaces that cannot be utilized accumulate between infrastructures, because open spaces are kept ready for future projects, or because poor planning leads to gaps and vacant spaces that are reintegrated into the urban corpus today and created elsewhere tomorrow.¹⁴ What Oswald calls the 'paradoxe[r] Teil ihrer Ökonomie der Fülle' in relation to the modern city can also be generalized in such a way that every act of filling produces emptiness elsewhere, i.e. that emptiness is the dialectically inherent and inevitable counterpart to abundance. In this respect, fullness and emptiness are two equally valid cosmological principles whose constant conflict is what gives rise to change in the first place. However, Oswald also points to the extent to which emptiness can be seen as a principle that – in Aristotelian terms – is presupposed as the potency of every act, so to speak as an enabling principle for change and emergence in general. He quotes Rem Koolhaas' statement that '[w]here there is nothing, everything is possible. Where there is architecture, nothing (else) is possible'¹⁵ and affirms that emptiness generates the unforeseen New, while also referring to the biblical story of creation, according to which the world was created out of the void.¹⁶ If I now add Andreas Ruby, who also describes emptiness as a 'generatives Prinzip' of urban planning and as the 'prima materia' of urban space, referring thereby to Buddhist thought, according to which emptiness does not represent a lack but rather the medium in which the becoming and passing away of things take place,¹⁷ then I already have enumerated four patterns of explanation (those of Greek and Jewish

13 Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* (1928), Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1985, p. 36.

14 Oswald, *Berlin – Stadt ohne Form*, p. 60.

15 Rem Koolhaas, 'To Imagine Nothingness', in *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 238, 1985, p. LXVII.

16 See Oswald, *Berlin – Stadt ohne Form*, p. 63.

17 Ruby, 'Amor vacui', pp. 36–37.

mythology, then those of Aristotelian¹⁸ and Buddhist metaphysics) for emptiness as a prerequisite or principle of becoming. The philosophical ulterior idea, to which Koolhaas, Ruby and Oswald each referred only in keywords, can perhaps be continued in this way: if architectural emptiness is seen as an abundance of possibilities and, conversely, architectural abundance as an emptiness of possibilities, it is because architectural substance is equated with metaphysical substance. Because then it must be the case that where substance is present, the thing is fixed to an unchangeable essence, while an empty, substanceless space is not fixed. And if I continue to maintain that the architectural substance of the city (compared to which the *terrain vague* appears empty) consists essentially in the fixedness of form and function, then I arrive at the following formula: the emptiness of the *terrain vague* is the present absence of an urban entity. And therein lies the reason for its fundamental indeterminacy.

But let us now first describe the temporal structures of the *terrain vague* under the banner of emptiness/absence/negation. Caught in a 'time gap' between an abandoned use and a new use that has not yet been established, it seems as if time stands still on the *terrain vague*. Time is negated in two ways by the double not of no-longer and that of not-yet: both the past and the future are absent. For those who do not notice the creeping, slow change brought about by the rampant ruderal vegetation and the selective, informal secondary uses, the area is therefore dead, a *dead zone*, a dead organ in which nothing happens any more, in the midst of a pulsating urban body, but outside of time.

Architect Christine Dissmann sees one reason for this perception of temporal emptiness in the contrast of different speeds, of deceleration and acceleration, which can exist in close proximity in the city.¹⁹ According to her, the acceleration of time is due in particular to the coupling of the interrelationship of space and time to their scarcity as a resource: in areas of increased economic activity, alongside the intensity of space utilization in terms of the demanded area, there is also a growing pressure to exploit time. As a result, it becomes fluid to a certain extent and accelerates in perception, which is due to the fact that the compression of space and time correlates with a

18 Aristotle himself denies the existence of void, but by referring to it as 'matter', Ruby equates it with Aristotle's ὑλη, which is only potentially existent and is actualized only through form, the μορφοτή. Aristotelian hylemorphism also seems to underlie Koolhaas' quote, because where one of the infinite possibilities inherent in matter is realized through form, no second can exist at the same time.

19 See Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere*, pp. 108–111.

density of events, options and social interactions. This is all the more true as the speed in such areas is further increased by the connection to a global communication network and its flow of information due to reduced spatial and temporal distances. In a way, Dissmann is describing a phenomenon that the French ethnologist Marc Augé has already described in relation to our late-modern living environment as 'supermodernity'.²⁰

Their central feature is a threefold excess brought about by transport and communication media: we live in an overabundance of events resulting from the acceleration and multiplication of information; we live in an overabundance of space because we have simultaneous and immediate images of all places in the world and can travel greater distances in less time, so that the scales change completely; and we live in an overabundance of offers of meaning, which not only leads to an individualization of world views and interpretations, but also to a social fragmentation into individualized groups.

In contrast to Augé, however, Dissmann is explicitly not concerned with a general and global tendency towards the compression of space and time, but with the fact that not all places are equally involved in this process, which in reality takes place very unequally. He states: '[s]o wie der globale Markt in der Lage ist, weltweit Räume auf seinen Rhythmus zu synchronisieren, *entsynchronisiert* die Nichtteilhabe am globalen Markt Räume vom Rest der Welt'.²¹ This would make the *terrain vague* the most 'desynchronized' space in the city. Even speculative wastelands that are under a certain amount of economic pressure to be utilized are only wastelands because the pressure to use them has not yet reached a sufficiently profitable level. And most of the other *terrains vagues* are such because there is currently no pressure to utilize them at all. Without this pressure, space and time become less dense; emptiness and stagnation spread, all the more so the further away the *terrain vague* is from communication networks and information flows, the further away it is from economically 'booming' centres and the less accessible it is. It forms the greatest possible contrast to the hectic pace, abundance of events and fast pace of life that prevail in the surrounding city, an antipole of deceleration compared to today's much lamented accelerated time,²² an island of calm where, as Wim Wenders says, you can recharge the 'batteries' that

20 See Marc Augé, *Non-lieux: Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris: Seuil 1992, pp. 38–56.

21 Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere*, p. 111 (italics in original).

22 See also Hartmut Rosa's theory of social acceleration, which has now become a classic: *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2005.

protect us against the 'Übermacht des Großen' and the fast, the overcrowded and the economically monopolizing.²³ But woe unto us if the *terrain vague* is no longer the peculiar, contrasting anomaly amidst a dense environment! Because too much space and time, Dissmann warns, leads to their devaluation.²⁴ In structurally weak regions, where cities are affected by depopulation and caught up in the cycle of a declining economy, emigration and a lack of tax revenue to maintain the infrastructure, there is an oversupply of space and time, which is reflected in the increase in wasteland sites and unemployment. In such disadvantaged regions, slowness no longer has the character of evasion and voluntariness, but of hopelessness. Accordingly, despite all the talk of creative and participatory utilization potential, the *terrain vague* here can always bear the stigma of boredom and wasteland.

Finally, the relationship of the *terrain vague* to the past can also be illuminated under the temporal aspect of emptiness/absence/negation. The expression 'no-longer' should not be taken too literally. Certainly, one former use has been abandoned, but that doesn't mean the past has disappeared without a trace. It remains tangible and perceptible in and on what it has left behind. In this respect, the *terrain vague* itself and the various objects located on it are traces of a historical event and as such are present. They maintain a direct, causal, historical and symbolic relationship to that which produced them and are thus, as Benjamin writes about the trace in contrast to the aura, the 'Erscheinung einer Nähe, so fern das sein mag, was sie hinterließ'.²⁵ This is certainly one of the reasons why the *terrains vagues* have fascinated us for centuries – we remember that the term itself was probably born at the sight of the ruins of days gone by and was used by François-René de Chateaubriand. And especially where the accumulation of traces from different times leads to overlapping layers of present absences, and the *terrain vague* becomes a palimpsest on which the past accumulates, it forms a direct contrast to the linear and unidirectional time of the economically active city, in which everything of the past, unless it is officially musealized and artificially preserved, immediately disappears again. The city seems to live in a permanent state of topicality, constantly pushing towards the future.

23 Wenders, 'The Urban Landscape', p. 125.

24 See Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere*, p. 111.

25 Walter Benjamin, 'Das Passagen-Werk', in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1982, vol. 5, p. 560.

2.1.2 Spatial and Temporal Indeterminacy

However, the physical form of the *terrain vague* is not only characterized by emptiness, but also by a general disorder or the dissolution of prevailing and expected orders in the city. There are things lying around that have been thrown or left lying around and never cleared away, that have been deliberately placed there by anonymous people, moved again by others or broken; in addition, the weathering and decay impose the ravages of time on them. The shape of the *terrain vague* and the constellation of the objects on it are subject to constant, if not always immediately noticeable, change. But none of this, and this is the central point, happens according to a predetermined plan devised and pursued by some authority. It happens in a chaotic, entropic, diffuse, unpredictable way, which is why *terrain vague* is the absolute opposite of classic urban design. This provides the greatest possible contrast to the image of the orderly city. As André Leroi-Gourhan points out, the city has been regarded since early human history as the humanized space *par excellence*, one which arose from the fact that humans ‘domesticated’ the ‘wild’ natural space and structured it according to their needs as a reflection of an ordered universe.²⁶ Even today, the city still represents the epitome of the human-made cosmos (which in ancient Greek means not only the entire world or universe, but above all the perfect order of this world), which also characterizes the traditional self-image of urban planning: nothing that stands in the city, no building, no rubbish bin, no paving stone, no street furniture, no tree and no green space stands there without it having been decided that this is exactly where it should be. There are laws and regulations for this, which anyone who has ever tried to fight for a bench in a square as part of a citizens’ initiative will know.

But it is not so on the *terrain vague*: where former users and legal owners have withdrawn, and the city administration can do no more than provide the privately owned area with a privacy screen, municipal regulatory measures are often no longer effective. Untamed nature pushes back into the human cosmos, the place goes wild, just like a lack of control or jurisdiction means that the spontaneous uses no longer have to adhere to any predetermined regulations and no longer have to fear any sanctions. If you want to place a bench, sofa or group of tables here, you don’t need to ask anyone – just do it.

26 See André Leroi-Gourhan, *Hand und Wort: Die Evolution von Technik, Sprache und Kunst*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1980, pp. 238–240.



(Fig. 6)

The fact that it has fallen out of the urban organization system also leads to a certain indeterminacy in the appearance of the *terrain vague*. The history of literature (but also that of filmed *terrains vagues*) shows that Walter Benjamin or Wim Wenders were not the first to speak of the desert-in-the-city or countryside-in-the-city and that the question of the ‘nature’ of the *terrain vague* – is it part of the city or not? – had already been posed several times in the nineteenth century, long before it became a term in architectural theory. The *terrain vague* is often flanked by paraphrases that testify to the difficulty of categorizing it and therefore interpret it as a highly ambiguous place. As with Balzac, who tells of a ‘neutral’ or ‘genderless’ space in which Paris is simultaneously present and absent, because it has something of all urban places and yet is nothing of all that, but a ‘desert’.²⁷ And likewise Hugo, who

27 ‘... espace sans genre, espace neutre dans Paris. En effet, là, Paris n’est plus; et là, Paris est encore. Ce lieu tient à la fois de la place, de la rue, du boulevard, de la fortification, du jardin, de l’avenue, de la route, de la province, de la capitale; certes, il y a tout cela; mais ce n’est rien de tout cela : c’est un désert’; Honoré de Balzac, ‘Ferragus’ (1833), in Balzac, *La Comédie humaine* ed. by Pierre-Georges Castex et al., Paris: Gallimard 1976–81 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 5, pp. 901–902. And in German translation: ‘[E]ine geschlechtslose Fläche, eine neutrale Fläche in Paris. Dort ist Paris in der Tat nicht mehr und ist dennoch dort. Dieser Ort hat zugleich etwas vom Platz, von der Straße, vom Boulevard, von der Festung, vom Park, von der Allee, von der Landstraße, von der Provinz und von der Hauptstadt, von alledem hat er gewisslich etwas, und dennoch ist er nichts von alledem: er ist

describes the emptiness of the banlieues at the gates of Paris as a fascinating amphibian in which the city is still there and the country is already there.²⁸ Of course, this still-and-yet has to be seen against the urban-historical backdrop of the de-solidification, de-densification and expansion of the industrializing city in the nineteenth century – all processes that make the *terrain vague* a hallmark of this period. But even today it is sometimes surprisingly difficult to tell whether certain empty spaces are construction sites that have not yet been started or have been paused, fallow land, a neglected backyard, an empty car park or a temporarily overgrown meadow. The *terrain vague* has never lost its power to elude certain categorizations, to question categories and to appear incomprehensible, strange and equally fascinating or irritating.

In terms of temporality, the indeterminacy is particularly evident in the temporary, provisional and precarious character of the *terrain vague*. As a temporary state, the emptiness of the *terrain vague* is, as a rule, a temporary intermediate state and is therefore ‘zumindest der Idee nach zeitlich begrenzt’, namely by the achievement of a desired, permanent final state.²⁹ For this reason, *terrains vagues* are sometimes also called ‘transitional spaces’, ‘transitory or ephemeral spaces’, ‘transformation or development spaces’ or even ‘waiting spaces’. The duration of the interim period in which they find

eine Wüste’; Honoré de Balzac, ‘Ferragus’ (1833), in Balzac, *Die Geschichte der Dreizehn* (= *Histoire des Treize*), transl. by Ernst Hardt, Leipzig: Insel 1909, p. 152.

28 ‘Error songeant, c’est-à-dire flâner, est un bon emploi du temps pour le philosophe, particulièrement dans cette espèce de campagne un peu bâtarde, assez laide, mais bizarre et composée de deux natures, qui entoure certaines grandes villes, notamment Paris. Observer la banlieue, c’est observer l’amphibie. Fin des arbres, commencement des toits; fin de l’herbe, commencement du pavé; fin des sillons, commencement des boutiques; fin des ornières, commencement des passions; fin du murmure divin, commencement de la rumeur humaine; de là un intérêt extraordinaire.’ Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (1862), ed. by Maurice Allem, Paris: Gallimard 1951 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), (2nd part, vol. 4, I), p. 447. And in German translation: ‘Träumend umherzuschweifen, das heißt zu flanieren, ist für den Philosophen ein guter Zeitvertreib, besonders in jenem ländlichen, bastardähnlichen, ziemlich hässlichen, aber sonderbaren Gebiet, welches bestimmte große Städte, vor allem aber Paris umgibt. Die Bannmeile beobachten heißt ein Amphibium beobachten. Ende der Bäume, Beginn der Dächer, Ende des Grases, Beginn des Pflasters, Ende der Furchen, Beginn der Läden, Ende der Wagenspuren, Beginn der Leidenschaften, Ende des göttlichen Gemurmels, Beginn der menschlichen Unruhe, das macht sie ungemein interessant’; Victor Hugo, *Die Elenden* (= *Les Misérables*, 1862), 3rd part: *Marius* and 4th part: *Idyll and Epopoeia*, transl. by Paul Wiegler and Wolfgang Günther, Berlin Volk und Welt 1983, p. 11 (translation modified by me).

29 Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere*, p. 109.

themselves can be completely indefinite. Some inner-city areas are built on again after a short time, while in the case of certain other large wasteland sites that have been standing on the outskirts of peripheral, deindustrialized cities for years, it is questionable whether an economic or social development will ever set in that will bring them back into the normal utilization cycle. In the meantime, the area vegetates, within just a few years a first birch forest develops there, children and neighbours enjoy it, and suddenly, nobody would have thought it, a helipad is to be built there, which nobody needs or wants.³⁰ In any case, the *terrain vague* has always been the 'Gegenstück zur Dauerhaftigkeit und Abgeschlossenheit des gebauten Raums' – an open space without structure, form or direction.³¹

Let's draw a first general conclusion from the categories of meaning emptiness/absence/negation and indeterminacy/suspension/openness. The *terrain vague* has a fundamentally different spatial and temporal structure to the surrounding city. However, this is not just any arbitrary intermediate space that is defined by the fact that it either spatially separates and simultaneously connects two different things as a third or forms an island of difference within an identical space. Certainly, the same applies to the *terrain vague*, but in a way that it represents a contrast in all the aspects mentioned so far, touching upon essential determinations of urban space. Therefore, one could speak of the *terrain vague* as the perfect negation of the city, or at least of urban norms. I wrote above that the *terrain vague* is the present absence of the city in the city. But I don't want to forget that it is the city itself that creates it in the first place.

At this point, it is appropriate to discuss Michel Foucault's concept of so-called heterotopias in more detail for the first time.³² Foucault defines heterotopias as places that are categorically differently structured and organized in relation to their reference space, whereby their 'otherness' results

30 This at least reflects the controversy surrounding Cologne's Kalkberg from the perspective of those who fought to preserve it as a wasteland, including the architect and active promenadologist Boris Sieverts; see for example Clemens Schminke, 'Hubschrauber-Landeplatz in Köln: Die Fronten am Kalkberg sind verhärtet', in *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* online, 16 June 2016, www.ksta.de/koeln/kalk/hubschrauber-landeplatz-in-koeln-die-fronten-am-kalkberg-sind-verhaertet-2424-1312 (accessed on 27 December 2020).

31 Oswald, *Berlin – Stadt ohne Form*, p. 62.

32 See in the following Michel Foucault, 'Des espaces autres' (1967), in Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald, Paris: Gallimard 1994, vol. 4, pp. 752–762 (German 'Von anderen Räumen', in Foucault, *Dits et Écrits: Schriften in vier Bänden*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2005, vol. 4, pp. 931–942).

from the specific relationship in which they stand as a microcosm to the social macrocosm. Depending on the nature of this relationship, different subtypes of heterotopias emerge. What they have in common, however, is that they are each seen as ‘counter-places’, insofar as they ‘fall out’ of the ‘normal’ spatial structures of their surroundings.³³ Because they enable a spatial organization that contradicts, suspends, neutralizes or reverses that of the non-heterotopic, so to speak ‘homotopic’ or ‘normal’ surrounding space (thus the main types of the relationship between heterotopia and reference space), Foucault also characterizes them as places ‘outside of all places’ or as ‘actually realized utopias’. I will return to this concept several times in the course of my analysis and examine various subtypes of heterotopias in more detail. At this point, I am initially only interested in one form, namely the one that Foucault calls the universalizing heterotopia.³⁴ This includes, for example, the botanical or zoological garden, which as a microcosm is structured categorically differently from the macrocosm in that it places elements that exist separately and at a great distance from each other (such as giraffes and polar bears) next to each other in a very small space. In this way, the universalizing heterotopia reflects the large in the small. If I now claim that the *terrain vague* reflects the city in exactly what it is not or in its opposite (emptiness vs. fullness, openness vs. closedness, indeterminacy vs. determinacy, random disorder vs. intended order etc.), then the expression of the negative-universalizing heterotopia suggests itself, even though Foucault does not use the expression it in this way. In relation to the temporality of ‘other’ places, Foucault provides the concept of heterochrony, which refers to a subtype of heterotopia that results from a break with the usual, homotopic time structures. Two polar types of heterochronia face each other: on the one hand, there are the heterochronies of endless accumulation, such as libraries and museums, where ‘time is incessantly accumulated and piled up’.³⁵ Just as the heterotopia is a place outside of all places, this type of

33 ‘des lieux réels, [...] des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d’utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles les emplacement réels, tous les autres emplacements réels que l’on peut trouver à l’intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables’, pp. 755 f.

34 See *ibid.*

35 ‘Les hétérotopies sont liées, le plus souvent, à des découpages du temps, c’est-à-dire qu’elles ouvrent ce qu’on pourrait appeler, par pure symétrie, des hétérochronies.’ *ibid.*, p. 759. Foucault again divides the heterotopias into ‘hétérotopies du temps’ as spaces of infinite time accumulation (museum, library) and ‘hétérotopies chroniques’, spaces of an almost festively celebrated fleeting, transient time

heterochrony is accordingly outside of all time, since in it all times are (supposed to be) archived for all time, but without being themselves subject to transience. On the other hand, there are the heterochronies, which do not aim for co-presence and permanence, not for eternity, but on the contrary gain their otherness precisely from the precarious temporality, from transience itself. This includes, for example, the time of the carnival, during which rules are suspended that are immovable in the rest of the time, so that ephemeral 'other worlds' are created for this 'other time'. The *terrain vague*, however, does not conform to this strict alternative of ephemeral and eternal heterochrony. It is true that the *terrain vague*, in its temporal otherness, is characterized by a transitory character, but at the same time, as we have seen with the *terrain vague* as a palimpsest, it has the quality to accumulate layers and traces of past times. However, regardless of whether I understand it as a hybrid heterochrony or a negative-universalizing heterotopia, an essential difference to the places Foucault speaks of cannot be overemphasized. Foucault, whose analyses of social and historical phenomena revolve around the nexus of language, space and power and examine the position of a subject surrounded by various orders of knowledge, discourse and power, is primarily interested in social institutions, prisons, hospitals, brothels and similar places, all of which fulfil a very precisely defined function in society and were consciously created to fulfil this function, even if this function may change over time. For the *terrain vague*, however, the exact opposite is the case.



(Fig. 7)

(fairground, holiday village). See also Rainer Warning, *Heterotopien als Räume ästhetischer Erfahrung*, München: Fink 2009, p. 13.

2.1.3 Violent and Cyclical Transformation

The *terrain vague*, especially in the case of derelict land and its frequent occurrence, is indisputably a direct consequence of historical upheavals and a symptom of times of social crisis. The examples, which range from antiquity and the Industrial Revolution to today's times of contraction, need not be repeated here. I will come back to the sociological view of the *terrain vague* as a transitional space later on. At the level of physics, the only thing that remains to be said about materiality is that it is often the result of massive, sudden and violent spatial changes that leave nothing as it was. In French literature, one can observe that the *terrain vague* is associated not only with drastic, radical, but planned transformations of urban space, such as the 'Hausmannization' of the nineteenth century or post-war modernizations (which could have a downright shocking effect on city dwellers), but also with wartime destruction. This happens explicitly for the first time in relation to front cities in World War I. And this association was not completely lost in the later twentieth century. Patrick Modiano is not alone in linking the impression of urban emptiness created by an old, radically remodelled Parisian neighbourhood after the war with that of a bombing.³⁶ And for Jean-Paul Sartre, too, the many *terrains vagues* in American cities, which he admired for their openness and mobility, seemed in 1945 like the result of a bombing raid that had swept away an entire block of houses and left behind an empty space used as a car park.³⁷

Concerning temporality, it remains to point out the cyclical transformation of places, which tears them out of their existence as *terrain vague* at more or less regular intervals. 'Dies gilt etwa für Jahrmärkte, diese völlig leeren Plätze am Stadtrand, die sich ein oder zwei Mal im Jahr füllen mit Buden, Ständen, den unterschiedlichen Gegenständen, mit Faustkämpfern, Schlangenfrauen und Wahrsagerinnen,' Foucault remarks very aptly in this regard.³⁸ What Foucault fails to mention, however, is the fact that these completely empty spaces on

36 See Patrick Modiano, 'Dora Bruder', in Modiano, *Romans*, Paris: Gallimard 2013, pp. 643–735, at p. 727 f: 'À leur emplacement, il ne restait plus qu'un terrain vague, lui-même cerné par des pans d'immeubles à moitié détruits. On distinguait encore, sur les murs à ciel ouvert, les papiers peints des anciennes chambres, les traces des conduits de cheminée. On aurait dit que le quartier avait subi un bombardement, et l'impression de vide était encore plus forte à cause de l'échappée de cette rue vers la Seine.'

37 See Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Villes d'Amérique' (1945), in Sartre, *Situations III*, Paris: Gallimard 1949, pp. 93–111, at p. 106.

38 Foucault, 'Von anderen Räumen', p. 940.

the outskirts of the city themselves already bear heterotopic and heterochronic traits, so that in this case a repetitive mutation from one type of heterotopia-heterochrony to another takes place. The fact that such a cyclical transformation occurs quite frequently must lie in an intrinsic relationship between the *terrain vague* and certain uses that Doron, for example, described as marginal and nomadic. I will come back to this later, but for now I would like to show the circus that Wim Wenders placed so impressively on a *terrain vague* at the Berlin Wall in WINGS OF DESIRE³⁹ from 1987.



(Fig. 8)

2.2 ECONOMY

2.2.1 Functional Emptiness

Alongside the physical emptiness, the functional emptiness is the most obvious characteristic of the *terrain vague*. The absence of a current use is not only the defining criterion for all types of wasteland sites (whether developed or not), but also for those ‘unused’ areas that are not necessarily the result of the abandonment of a previous use, such as certain gaps between buildings or residual areas that remain as unused interstitial spaces between ‘functioning’ areas in the sense of *spaces left over after planning* (SLOAPs). This means that

39 See WINGS OF DESIRE, Wim Wenders, Germany 1987.

‘non-utilization’ or ‘functionlessness’ is the characteristic that links all the different phenomena covered by the scholarly discourse described above.

But what exactly does this property mean? First of all, we note that all areas in the city are actually functionally defined, i.e. all areas are assigned a specific type of use. The main types of use, which can all be further differentiated, include green spaces (such as parks, allotments, cemeteries and sports fields), traffic areas (for road and rail transport), community areas (for children’s day-care centres, schools, churches, sewage treatment plants or substations) or building areas (such as residential, commercial or mixed building areas). The allocation of such functions is carried out by planning instruments of public administration, in Germany for example by the so-called spatial development plan at federal and state level, the land use plan at the level of individual cities and the development plan at the level of individual urban districts.⁴⁰ In this context, ‘unused’ means that the function assigned to a particular area by the planning authority is not currently being fulfilled. For example, it may be that a certain public open space, such as a sports field, has an assigned function in the land use plan, so strictly speaking it is not ‘functionless’, but is *de facto* no longer used by any sports groups, is overgrown and is therefore considered a wasteland because the ‘proper’ or ‘official’ main use has been lost. If, on the other hand, an area is privately owned and therefore part of the private land and property market, a distinction can still be made as to whether the lack of use is of a commercial or non-commercial nature. If of a non-commercial nature, non-utilization means that the owner does not use their building or green space in a recognizable way for their own private purposes (be it for living, gardening, parking or similar). If commercial in nature, non-utilization can be determined by an economic criterion: no economic activities (be it trade, services or production) are currently taking place on it. It is therefore outside the value-added cycle and awaits its ‘reintegration’ through so-called land recycling or its economic ‘revival’ through so-called revitalization. In the meantime, however, it is economically dead – a *dead zone*.

The reasons that can lead to such an ‘absence of use, of activity’, which Solà-Morales also mentions as an essential characteristic of *terrains vagues*,⁴¹

40 However, the difference between the spatial development plan and the land use plan is not only a spatial one, but also a legal one, insofar as the different levels imply different obligations and effectiveness and depend on different political decision-making processes. For information on building law, which in reality is far more complex and multi-layered, see Wilfried Erbguth/Mathias Schubert, *Öffentliches Baurecht: Mit Bezügen zum Umwelt- und Raumplanungsrecht*, Berlin Schmidt ©2014.

41 Solà-Morales, ‘Terrain vague’, p. 120.

are manifold, as we have already seen. They can stem from social or economic macro trends that are generally closely linked (such as rural-urban migration, regional structural change, urban shrinkage), can relate to the urban development of individual districts (such as the low attractiveness of a particular district or neighbourhood due to its proximity to industry or transport infrastructure, poor accessibility and marginality, a certain population structure etc.) or relate more to micro phenomena (such as inheritance disputes, complicated ownership structures, a location or form of land that is unsuitable for use, poor accessibility etc.) Many authors in the more recent discussion emphasize the extra-topological characteristics of *terrains vagues* that arise from this economic perspective. Because they represent functionless or functionless spaces within a system in which all other spaces are 'productive', Solà-Morales characterizes them as 'unincorporated margins, interior islands void of activity', as 'outside the city's effective circuits and productive structures' and therefore as 'internal to the city yet external to its everyday use'.⁴² The simultaneity of being inside and outside, in the sense that the *terrains vagues* are physically inside but functionally outside the urban system, makes them foreign bodies, 'strangers to the productive efficiency of the city'.⁴³ Doron also summarizes the relationship between the *terrains vagues* and their embedding space as a topological outside: 'in both spatial and socio-economic terms, these spaces are the "constitutive outside"'.⁴⁴ And where productivity, efficiency and profitability are the norm, their 'outsidedness' is quickly reinterpreted as 'rebelliousness'. The *terrains vagues* then appear as the resistant counterpart to the growth and development imperative of economic vitality: 'As non-utilitarian spaces, they oppos[e] the capitalist society and even more so the architectural profession, the notion of design and production and as such they [are] spaces of resistance.'⁴⁵

But just as the talk of 'emptiness' has turned out to be one that can only be understood in relation to certain expectations and reference values and can therefore also be viewed as contested, the talk of functionlessness and non-utilization can also be examined more closely. Let's take the example of a slightly overgrown gap in a residential area that is used daily by children playing and dog owners walking their dogs. Describing these as 'functionless' would merely mean that the potential residential function assigned to the area is not currently fulfilled. I therefore differentiate between an 'official' function, i.e.

42 Ibid., p. 120.

43 Ibid., p. 122.

44 Doron, '... those marvellous empty zones at the edge of cities', p. 207.

45 Ibid.

a function theoretically designated *ex officio* for a subsequent use according to the land use plan, and the factual, 'informal', i.e. unplanned, unallocated uses, or between the 'official' function and the many functions that the area can have for the various 'informal' users. And the same applies when an area is labelled as 'unused': This does not mean that there are no actual uses of the area at all, but merely that the area is currently not being used in accordance with its 'official' function. The two ascriptions therefore generally refer to a normative urban-planning description and not to a factual, sociological description. And it is in this perspective that I now record the following: the *terrain vague* is characterized by the absence of a current 'official' use, but not necessarily the absence of a potential 'official' function.

2.2.2 Functional Openness

So, what happens if an area has an assigned function according to an official land use plan, but this function is not currently fulfilled, i.e. it is therefore 'unused'? Let us first assume the opposite case: we have a commercial area whose function is currently fulfilled by a large DIY store, for example. This is the 'official' use, which 'fills' this area functionally insofar as it excludes any further or other uses. On the one hand, of course, this applies to official uses (where there is a DIY store, there cannot also be a public green space), but also to informal uses: during business hours, no use other than the intended use is possible, let alone permitted, either in the DIY store or outside in the car park – no skating, no playing, no gardening. In this sense, the area is functionally 'defined' or 'closed'. However, such an area can also be temporarily unoccupied by the official main use during a certain time of day or night, or on particular days of the week. Suddenly the DIY store car park, provided it is not surrounded by a fence that is locked at night and on Sundays, lends itself to several spontaneous uses: playing street hockey, driving remote-controlled cars, learning to ride a bike. When the main use ceases, the area is potentially no longer functionally determined, but indeterminate; no longer functionally closed, but open. What distinguishes the *terrain vague* from a DIY store car park on Sunday, however, is the fact that the latter is still completely dominated by the main use, which only pauses for a short time, while the former is characterized by the absence of a main use at all, i.e. by a fundamental functional indeterminacy. This results in a wealth of informal uses that are not assigned by anyone or anything – a functional openness that surpasses even public open spaces – by a significant degree. In contrast to the urban context, I can ultimately state from an extra-topological perspective, the

potential of the *terrain vague* for diverse, informal uses is an ambiguous *ability-to-be*, which opposes the unambiguous *must-be* of other urban spaces.

As the '(as yet) undetermined' urban place,⁴⁶ the *terrain vague* not only possesses an essential malleability and changeability, but also conveys a specific impression. In contrast to other urban sites, which usually leave no doubt as to what function they serve or what use they are predominantly put to, the *terrain vague* provokes a reaction of amazement or wonder.⁴⁷ What is this place for? What is happening here? Its ambiguity thus resembles the ambiguity of what Paul Valéry called *objet ambigu*.⁴⁸ Just as many such ambiguous objects can be found on the *terrain vague*, it is itself a *lieu ambigu*, an ambiguous place in the city.

46 In analogy to Arnold Gehlen's definition of the human as 'noch nicht festgestelltes Tier', which goes back to Nietzsche. Gehlen sees the essential characteristic of humans compared to animals in the fact that humans are not determined by instincts in the shaping of their cultural, social and individual lives, but are capable of acting and, as 'deficient beings', do not have a biological specialization, but rather a high ability to adapt and, above all, to learn: see Arnold Gehlen, *Der Mensch: Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt* (1940), Bonn: Athenäum 1955, p. 9.

47 Analogous to what Plato (*Theaetetus*, 155d) sees as the beginning of all philosophizing, a *terrain vague* often also evokes a (dis)believing amazement, entirely in the sense of θαυμάζειν ('to wonder, to admire, to marvel, to wish to know'): an emotional stirring, comparable to inner restlessness, upon experiencing a condition/event/situation that does not meet expectations and therefore, arouses curiosity, fosters intrinsic motivation to restore emotional balance through discovery, exploration, experimentation and learning. See Ekkehard Martens, *Vom Staunen oder Die Rückkehr der Neugier*, Leipzig: Reclam 2003.

48 It is an ambiguous object whose nature and origin are difficult to determine. See Paul Valéry, 'Eupalinos ou l'Architecte' (1921), in Verlaine, *Œuvres*, ed. by Jean Hytier, Paris: Gallimard 1957–1960 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 2, pp. 79–147, here pp. 115–121. I am grateful to Wolfram Nitsch for this tip: 'Abenteuerspielplatz mit Altlast: Das *terrain vague* als Bühne der Imagination', in *ilinx 5* (Berliner Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft), Leipzig: Spector Books 2021, pp. 40–42.



(Fig. 9)

2.2.3 Transformative Uses

Especially for such *terrains vagues* that are commercial or industrial wastelands, their increased occurrence is symptomatic of drastic economic upheavals that can affect the entire urban living space and the urban way of life. The proliferation of urban wasteland is a phenomenon that inevitably accompanies the transition from an industrial to a service society and makes it very visible in the urban corpus. The *terrain vague* has also shown its seismographic function in French literature. In the literary and cinematic examination of the *terrain vague*, a correlation can also be established between the frequency of media treatment of urban wastelands and their real, historical occurrence. The *terrain vague* thus repeatedly becomes an epoch-specific theme. In the nineteenth century, for example, in the texts of Émile Zola, where it regularly appears in the context of the radical transformation and modernization of the Parisian city centre on the one hand and the emergence of a new urban fringe criss-crossed by interstitial spaces between the core, industry and working-class suburbs on the other. In the twentieth century, it was above all the developments of the 1950s to 70s that once again fundamentally shaped the city centre and the surrounding area and were reflected in literature and film in the artistic engagement with wasteland sites. For example, when Jacques Réda make old factory buildings and disused railway tracks, (as left behind on the outskirts of the Parisian city centre by industry moving further into the surrounding area or

even abroad) the subject of poetic reflections⁴⁹, when Jacques Tati observed the process of suburbanization and romantically depicts the interstitial space between new, functionally separate suburban areas and the old inner-city districts on the verge of demolition,⁵⁰ or when Marco Ferreri shot a western in the huge hole dug in the ‘Belly of Paris’ by the demolition of the ‘Quartier des Halles’ in the course of yet another modernization of the city centre.⁵¹

However, the *terrain vague* is not only the direct consequence of large-scale transformations of urban space through historical developments in social and economic structures but is itself also the object of transformations. On the one hand, this can refer to informal uses that are transformative insofar as they convert the existing space according to the users’ own ideas and needs without simultaneously establishing a new main use. This refers to cases in which the *terrain vague* is turned into a football pitch, a dog run, a barbecue area, a moonscape or a jungle for children’s play or a meeting place for young people who furnish the area with old furniture for this purpose. On the other hand, it refers to uses that are transformative in the sense that they establish a new, albeit not official, main use and aim for a more permanent conversion, as in the case of neighbourhood gardens, construction trailer sites or open-air theatres. Strictly speaking, where such permanent uses occur, it is no longer possible to speak of a *terrain vague*, because the criterion of emptiness and indeterminacy is no longer fulfilled on either a physical or a functional level, even though the condition of the area as a *terrain vague* made these new uses possible in the first place. A distinction should therefore be made between uses that only convert the area in a temporally and spatially very limited way and leave its ‘essence’ as a *terrain vague* untouched – which is why they might be called ‘incidental’ transformative uses – and uses that fill the physical and functional void to such an extent that a new, complete, albeit not ‘official’ in the urban planning sense, main use is established – which is why these could be called ‘substantial’ transformative uses. For the latter in particular, it should be noted from the point of view of the economy and transformation that the *terrain vague* can be the basis for the emergence of new, often initially informal economic structures, which – as Laurence Roulleau-Berger points out – are

49 This can be read in Jacques Réda: ‘Appuyé dans cette attitude pensive’, in Réda, *Les Ruines de Paris (1977)/Die Ruinen von Paris*, ed. by Wolfram Nitsch, translated by ‘Transports’, Passau: Stutz 2007, pp. 56–59 and in ‘La Petite Ceinture’, in Réda, *Châteaux des courants d’air*, Paris: Gallimard 1986, pp. 140–144.

50 See MON ONCLE, Jacques Tati, France 1958.

51 See TOUCHE PAS A LA FEMME BLANCHE, Marco Ferreri, France/Italy 1974. The term ‘Belly of Paris’ was taken from Émile Zola’s 1873 novel of the same name, ‘Le Ventre de Paris’ (in Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, vol. 1, pp. 601–895).

especially important for marginalized groups who have little or no access to ‘proper’, non-precarious employment. This is because alternative or parallel forms of work can emerge there, which absolutely have a chance of professionalizing in the future.⁵²

Both types of transformative uses of a *terrain vague*, the accidental as well as the substantial, ultimately fall under Gil Doron’s concept of transgression. They show how the use and design of urban space in the *zones of transgression* can take place in a way that eludes planning by municipal authorities. The categories of meaning used here to organize the individual properties and theoretical references on the various ontological levels also represent, in their order, the logic of the causal relationships that lead to this concept of transgression: the absence of official uses or the functional void results in a functional indeterminacy that frees up the *terrain vague* for various transformative uses which represent a transgressive practice of social, urban space production in that they transcend the usual forms of this practice.

2.3 POLITICS

2.3.1 Masterlessness and Absence of Power

Both in the literary history of the *terrain vague* and in the academic debate on wasteland and other empty, unused spaces, the impression that these places are ownerless sites or powerless and lawless zones is a recurring theme. Of course, this is not the case *de jure*, because on paper, every area of the city can be assigned to private or public owners. And yet, *de facto*, there is often nothing on these spaces that represents an actual ruling power, as they are perceived as empty, abandoned and unused – and indeed they are. Undoubtedly, the areas are typically secured by a fence surrounding them. But as notes the geographer and author Philippe Vasset, who has visited dozens of wasteland sites in Paris that are hidden behind areas left white (*zones blanches*) on the *Institut National Géographique’s* regional map, this is the ‘paradox’ of the wasteland: it is always fenced in and seemingly secured, but if you look long enough, you will always find a hole in the fence somewhere and, as his explanations also show, you will always find traces of informal or illegal use.⁵³ Indeed, there are also ‘high-security wastelands’ that are protected by cameras, guards and dogs; Vasset also reports on these. But much more common are

52 See Roulleau-Berger, ‘La ville en friche’, pp. 103–113.

53 See Philippe Vasset, *Un livre blanc*, Paris: Fayard 2007, p. 14.

those *terrains vagues*, on whose fence (which has been broken for years) hangs a half-rotten 'No entry' sign, which sometimes reinforces the impression of the absence of power even more forcefully than on freely accessible wasteland.

As a rule, the *terrains vagues* thus appear free of hegemony, free of a controlling power, free of an authority that determines them – and therefore anarchic. They are characterized by the absence of a formative will. They are not dominated by a power that directs, determines, defines and imposes meanings or functions. For Solà-Morales, they are known to be a 'void of strong forms representing power'⁵⁴ and therefore obviously evoke a sense of freedom.⁵⁵ Alberto Pérez-Gómez, an architect from Solà-Morales' circle, even calls them 'espacios que tienen un potencial para escapar de la hegemonía de la dominación panóptica y del control tecnológico mucho mayor', i.e. 'spaces that have the potential to escape the hegemony of panoptic domination and even greater technological control'.⁵⁶ This status of *terrains vagues* as power-free spaces is of course also a prerequisite and a reason for their openness to various forms of transgressive and transformative uses.



(Fig. 10)

The impression of the absence of power leads to the *terrain vague* being repeatedly referred to as 'no man's land', although – as Nitsch shows – this can

54 Solà-Morales, 'Terrain vague', p. 121.

55 See *ibid.*, p. 120.

56 Alberto Pérez-Gómez (1996), 'Espacios intermedios', in Solà-Morales/Costa, *Presente y futuros*, p. 277.

at best be an inauthentic use of the term.⁵⁷ However, this gives the impression that the *terrain vague* is a kind of neutral zone, similar to international waters or *duty-free zones* at airports, where certain rules suddenly no longer apply. The only difference is that on the *terrain vague* it is not only certain rules that are suspended, but all of them: no terms of use or usage guidelines, no prohibitions on behaviour and no controls or sanctions. One constant, especially in the nineteenth century, is the *terrain vague* as a secret meeting place and refuge for young lovers, who can escape the very tight neighbourhood control network of bourgeois morality into dark corners of empty, unobserved open spaces.⁵⁸ But even today, the *terrains vagues* are still a place of refuge and retreat for many. In the parallel world discovered by Vasset in the Parisian *zones blanches*, groups living on the margins of society are almost omnipresent: Roma and Sinti who temporarily live on various wasteland sites on the outskirts of the city; homeless people seeking shelter in unused

57 See Wolfram Nitsch, 'Niemandsländ: Ein unbestimmter Zwischenraum jenseits des *terrain vague*', in Jacqueline Maria Broich/Daniel Ritter, *Die Stadtbrache als 'terrain vague': Geschichte und Theorie eines unbestimmten Zwischenraums in Literatur, Kino und Architektur*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017 (machina, 12), pp. 285–299.

58 Thus we read in Émile Zola's 'La Fortune des Rougon' from 1871: 'Les garçons et les filles du peuple, ceux qui doivent se marier un jour, et qui ne sont pas fâchés de s'embrasser un peu auparavant, ignorent où se réfugier pour échanger des baisers à l'aise, sans trop s'exposer aux bavardages. Dans la ville, bien que les parents leur laissent une entière liberté, s'ils louaient une chambre, s'ils se rencontraient seul à seul, ils seraient, le lendemain, le scandale du pays; d'autre part, ils n'ont pas le temps, tous les soirs, de gagner les solitudes de la campagne. Alors ils ont pris un moyen terme; ils battent les faubourgs, les terrains vagues, les allées des routes, tous les endroits où il y a peu de passants et beaucoup de trous noirs'; Émile Zola, 'La Fortune des Rougon' (1871), in Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart* ed. by Armand Lanoux and Henri Mitterand, Paris: Gallimard 1961–67 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 1, p. 18. In German translation: 'Die Burschen und Mädchen aus dem Volk, die sich später einmal heiraten wollen und durchaus nichts dagegen haben, sich schon vorher ein wenig zu umarmen, wissen nicht, wohin sie sich flüchten könnten, um ungestört Küsse zu tauschen, ohne sich allzusehr dem Klatsch auszusetzen. Obwohl die Eltern ihren Kindern volle Freiheit lassen, so würde doch, wenn diese sich ein Zimmer mieteten, sich unter vier Augen träfen, das schon am nächsten Morgen in der ganzen Gegend Ärgernis erregen. Andererseits haben sie keine Zeit, jeden Abend die Einsamkeit der freien Flur aufzusuchen. So haben sie einen Mittelweg gewählt: sie durchstreifen die Vorstädte, unbebautes Gelände [*les terrains vagues*], baumbestandene Straßen, alle Stellen, wo wenig Leute vorbeikommen und viele dunkle Schlupfwinkel sind'. Zola, *Das Glück der Familie Rougon (= La Fortune des Rougon, 1871)*, Munich: Winkler 1974, p. 26.

areas; immigrants living on abandoned railway premises.⁵⁹ And Jean Rolin encounters, during his aimless journey through the outskirts of Paris, dropouts such as that young man who, in the early 2000s, lived on the edge of the construction site of the *Stade de France* amid a completely overgrown area in a kind of trailer, finding there the space, peace and freedom that were denied to him in the overcrowded and bleak housing estates of the *banlieue*.⁶⁰ As a place located in wild nature where you can sleep and live undisturbed and rent-free in the open air in the centre of Paris, the *terrain vague* takes on the character of a place that should not be able to exist. However, its utopian features are also familiar from scenes in which it is used by children. In this case, in addition to the absence of rules of use, there is usually also the fact that there is no 'official' play equipment on the empty space that prescribes certain behaviour or meanings. The absence of power is thus transformed into a freedom of imagination. This can be observed particularly impressively in little Nick's favourite playground by René Goscinny and Jean-Jacques Sempé, where everything can be symbolically reinterpreted: a wrecked car becomes an aeroplane or a bus, a stone becomes sports equipment and the *terrain vague* itself becomes a campsite on the banks of a body of water.⁶¹

Finally, from an extra-topological perspective, I note that all these uses, which only arise from a certain power vacuum and an absence of rules, represent interactions with found space that do not follow patterns predetermined 'from above', but rather constitute a counter-space to the rest of the regulated urban system 'from below', so to speak, in the interaction of the users themselves with each other and with the space. Or as Gil Doron puts it in relation to industrial wasteland sites and which is readily transferable here:

[I]n contrast to formal public space, where the rules of behaviour are determined by norms and laws ... the industrial ruin's space has no such laws. It is agonistic and radically democratic since the ways of being in this place are negotiated between the various groups and individuals who use it rather than those who pass laws elsewhere.⁶²

59 See Vasset, *Un livre blanc*, pp. 18, 20–21, 23–24, 44. On the presence of Roma and Sinti on *terrains vagues* and their literary treatment, see Sidonia Bauer, 'Gens de voyage et terrain vague dans la littérature française du 19^{ème} au 21^{ème} siècles' [unpublished lecture at Schloss Wahn, University of Cologne, 3 November 2016].

60 See Jean Rolin, *Zones*, Paris: Gallimard 1995, pp. 134–137.

61 See René Goscinny/Jean-Jacques Sempé, *Les récrés du Petit Nicolas* (1961), Paris: Gallimard 1994, p. 66. See also Goscinny/Sempé, *Le petit Nicolas et les copains* (1963), Paris: Denoël, p. 28 and 101.

62 Doron, 'badlands, blank space, border vacuums, brown fields, conceptual Nevada, Dead Zones', p. 17.

2.3.2 Public-Private Hybridity

The existing power and ownership structures on the *terrains vagues* are mostly unknown and unclear. Even if not the case in reality, they often give at least the impression that they are neither subject to public law nor to the power of disposal of a private individual. Because even though they are rarely perceived as regular public spaces, the presence of private owners can be recognized. Sometimes, however, the real power relations are also irrelevant, for example when there appears to be a certain indifference towards the space on the part of both the owners and the users: the former don't seem to care about their land and the latter care very little about the actual ownership claims. The informal uses of the *terrains vagues* thus take place, as Doron notes, in a grey area between private and public space: 'These informal usages, predominantly carried out by those who are not the owners of the place, create a space that is neither private nor public.'⁶³ But this matter can be differentiated even further. On the one hand, the aforementioned hybridity of the space certainly arises from the fact that users who are not themselves the owners of the private space use it like a public space: they picnic or barbecue there, they do sport or walk their dog, in other words the typical patterns of use of a public park. On the other hand, hybridity can be increased even further, namely when users who are not the owners of the space use, design and thus appropriate it entirely according to their own purposes and ideas, as if there were no rules other than their own freedom to do as they please. These practices of space utilization and spatial design then have the character of genuinely private uses: the space is furnished with furniture, people garden or compost there, trade takes place, services are offered, people have sex there. As 'private' as these uses may seem, the area remains *de facto* accessible to the public. The result is a hybridity like that of a 'public living room',⁶⁴ with the difference that none of the users is the owner of this space. In this respect, it is clear that sooner or later there will or must be conflicts between the two parties.

Thus, by assuming a hybrid existence, the *terrain vague* is capable of dissolving the separation between the public and private spheres, thereby resisting a traditional fundamental determination of the urban. For Hans Paul Bahrdt, this separation even represents the central, defining characteristic of modern urban life:

63 Ibid., p. 16.

64 Silke Steets, '*Wir sind die Stadt!*' *Kulturelle Netzwerke und die Konstitution städtischer Räume in Leipzig*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus 2007, p. 182 ff. (Chap. 6: Öffentliche Wohnzimmer).

Eine Stadt ist eine Ansiedlung, in der das gesamte [...] Leben die Tendenz zeigt, sich zu polarisieren. [...] Es bilden sich eine öffentliche und eine private Sphäre, die in engem Wechselverhältnis stehen, ohne daß die Polarität verloren geht. [...] Je stärker Polarität und Wechselbeziehung zwischen öffentlicher und privater Sphäre sich ausprägen, desto städtischer ist [...] das Leben einer Ansiedlung.⁶⁵

Hartmut Häußermann and Walter Siebel also regularly emphasize the polarity of public and private spaces on a functional, legal, social, structural and normative level as a traditional constant of urbanity.⁶⁶ In the context of an embedding space that is essentially characterized by precisely this polarity, the hybridity of the *terrain vague* can be described with a formula we are already familiar with: once again, it is to a certain extent the presence of an urban entity that is absent.

The hybrid state of the *terrain vague*, which, according to Silke Steets, is achieved in relation to various places in the city that share this characteristic through what she calls 'räumliche Mikropolitiken des Dazwischen', also crosses other binary polarities.⁶⁷ In her examination of various creative scenes (artists, architects and club promoters) in Leipzig in the 1990s and early 2000s, she investigates how certain places, including explicitly wasteland, are used to create 'spaces of the in-between', which not only elude the opposition between public and private, but also between avant-garde and market, between trend and niche, protest and affirmation, legality and illegality. These are spaces that, on the one hand, are created in a self-organized manner by networks of individual initiators in the sense of a cultural 'off' far from the established and commercialized market, without the involvement of any institutions, thus having a subcultural, subversive undertone. On the other hand, they also cater to demand within a scene and have an independent-entrepreneurial background, where being positioned on the sidelines is consciously utilized for promotion purposes. As an example, Steets cites the club landscape of the 1990s, which readily utilized wasteland sites as temporary party locations and thus proverbially blossomed. Some of these clubs even survived into the 2000s

65 Hans Paul Bahrtdt, *Die moderne Großstadt: Sociological Reflections on Urban Development* (1961), Opladen: Leske and Budrich 1998, p. 106.

66 See in particular Walter Siebel, 'Zum Wandel des öffentlichen Raums – Das Beispiel Shopping-Mall', in Adelheid von Saldern (ed.), *Stadt und Kommunikation in bundesrepublikanischen Umbruchszeiten*, Wiesbaden/Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2006, pp. 67–82.

67 Silke Steets, 'Doing Leipzig: Räumliche Mikropolitiken des Dazwischen', in Helmuth Berking/Martina Löw (eds.), *Die Wirklichkeit der Städte*, Baden-Baden: Nomos 2005 (Soziale Welt, vol. 6), pp. 107–121.

and live economically from their image of being hidden, of being off the beaten track. As Steets emphasizes, it is no longer possible to speak naively of the subversive potential of such spatial practices. Certainly, in their origins, these are forms of spatial production that ‘temporarily suspend urban regularities’.⁶⁸

They are variations on what Guy Debord described with a decidedly revolutionary gesture as *détournement*. The Situationists understood this to mean the deliberate misappropriation or ‘repurposing’ or ‘twisting’ of cultural objects (such as works of art or popular cultural symbols) in a way that exposes and opposes dominant power structures.⁶⁹ And indeed, the unauthorized appropriation of a wasteland site and its transformation into a subcultural centre is at odds with the dominant modes of production of space and vehemently questions the grammar of use inscribed into the city. But since large, globally active companies, as Steets reports, have been using situationist happenings as an advertising strategy, discovering the subcultural as a resource and appropriating artistic forms of protest, the system-critical potential of such practices has been lost. Strategies such as *détournement* have been ‘recuperated’ by the market and made ‘mainstream’ to the same extent that the creative sector has been largely caught up in a ‘Selbstökonomisierung und Vertrieblung der Lebensführung’.⁷⁰

While the *gue(r)rilla gardening*, seed bombs and community gardens of the 1970s, for example, and likewise the illegal parties on wastelands in the 1990s could still be considered genuine forms of political protest and effective practices of resistance, according to Steets, this can since the early 2000s no longer be claimed universally with regard to such classic forms of subversive spatial practices. And it follows that the *terrain vague*, which is, so to speak, the enabling ground for many of these practices, cannot simply be seen as a ‘place of against’ or a ‘place of no’. What can be inferred from Steets’ considerations, however, is that the *terrain vague* still possesses the necessary absence of action-determining elements and rules, and thus the necessary openness to create micro-spaces through material design, symbolic interaction and social interaction,⁷¹ which, even if they are not countercultural in the classical sense,

68 Ibid., p. 116.

69 On the concept of *détournement*, see Guy Debord: ‘Mode d’emploi du détournement’, in Debord, *Œuvres*, ed. by Jean-Louis Rançon, Paris: Gallimard 2006 (Quarto), pp. 221–229.

70 Steets refers here to the critique of the so-called ‘new capitalism’, as formulated by scholars including Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello; see Boltanski/Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris: Gallimard 1999.

71 In her sociographic description of various practices of spatial production, Steets utilizes the terminology of a spatial sociology coined by Martina Löw. According to

nevertheless elude categorization into either subversion or the market. They are thus located in an in-between, which can be seen as a new site of critique insofar as it allows for spatial micro-politics that ‘Fluchtlinien und lokale Brüche *innerhalb* der gesellschaftlichen Herrschaftsorganisation erzeugen’, from where the question of the possibilities of freedom and critique can be posed anew.⁷²

However, as we will see below, the discussion about the *terrain vague*’s potential for resistance as a possible site of opposition is not solely a recent one. Now I focus on theoretical concepts that have conceptually prepared considerations like those of Steets.

2.3.3 Refractory Smoothness

But let us first return to the so-called ‘transgressive’ uses: it is appropriate at this point to distinguish between uses that are transgressive in a moral-legal sense and uses that are transgressive in a political sense. However, this is not intended to introduce strict typification, but merely to indicate directions. On the side of moral-legal transgression are uses that are more or less clearly labelled as illegal, criminal activities without a consciously socio-critical impetus behind them. Examples range from capital offences to minor scams can be found in abundance in the literature. The tradition of crime novels and crime films offers a wealth of cases in which the *terrain vague* is used as a place to dispose of corpses or as a hiding place for stolen goods, murder weapons or getaway vehicles, or even becomes the scene of cold-blooded murder itself.⁷³ In contrast, the occasional drunkards, some of whom hang around empty, unused sites in Émile Zola’s work, are far more harmless.⁷⁴ And more recently, Philippe Vasset, for example, has reported on wasteland sites in Paris that act as trans-

her, space is only ever created on the basis of so-called *spacing*, i.e. the (re)ordering of material goods and subjects, which are performatively and meaningfully synthesized into ‘space’ through social action. Conversely, however, spatial *settings* also have an action-structuring effect, whereby the traditional contrast between constructed social space and physical natural space disappears in favour of a more actor-network-theoretically conceived space of interaction; see Martina Löw: *Raumsoziologie*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2001.

72 Steets, ‘Räumliche Mikropolitiken des Dazwischen’, pp. 119–120 (italics in original).

73 To name just one example: Pierre-Alexis de Ponson du Terrail, *Rocambole: Les drames de Paris I: L’Héritage mystérieux*, Paris: Dentu 1866, p. 36 and *Rocambole: Les drames de Paris II: Le Club des Valets-de-cœur*, Paris: Dentu 1866, p. 228 and *Rocambole: Les exploits de Rocambole*, ed. by Laurent Bazin, Paris: Robert Laffont 1992, p. 26 and p. 575.

74 See Émile Zola, ‘L’Assommoir’ (1877), in Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, vol. 2, p. 628.

shipment centres for the trade in stolen goods.⁷⁵ But what about cases in which people illegally climb over the fence of a *terrain vague* in order to meet there as minors to drink at night, to look for a place to sleep there as homeless people, to have fun there as lovers in the thicket, to act out their vandalistic impulses on discarded equipment? How 'criminal' are such acts apart from the fact that they take place on a *terrain vague* to which one has gained unauthorized access? These are more likely to be administrative offences. However, you come across these so often on *terrains vagues* that the general impression is that breaking the rules is the norm here, so to speak.

By contrast, I define transgressive in a political sense as those cases that more or less explicitly pose the question 'who owns the space?' by making their own claims to it in the sense of appropriation and overriding the usual rules that determine who is permitted to use which space and how. This happens, for example, when youth gangs declare a wasteland (whether in fiction as in the comic *Totoche* or in Marcel Carné's *TERRAIN VAGUE* or in reality) to be their territory and create new hierarchies of their own there, when subcultural groups such as punks and squatters consciously stage the occupation of 'empty' space as a transgression against the usual power structures, or when artists turn unused leftover areas of the city into a stage for interventions that aim to bring socio-critical food for thought and new modes of perception into the otherwise highly regulated public space. All these forms of appropriation can, despite the limitations expressed by Steets, be seen as political acts whose strategy consists of spatial transformations of existing power relations.

75 See Vasset, *Un livre blanc*, p. 76.



(Fig. 11)

However, the extent of the *terrains vagues*' transformative potential is open to debate, at the latest since Henri Lefebvre spoke out on this topic. For the author of *La production de l'espace* from 1974, an attempt to apply the Marxian method of historical materialism together with its critique of capitalism, its theory of political economy and its analysis of production relations to space as a social and historical product, can easily be regarded as a pioneer of all more recent critical investigations of political and social forms of 'space production'.⁷⁶ In order to be able to describe Lefebvre's view of the *terrain vague*, I must first expand a little: in his examination of the production of societal and especially urban space, there is an overlay of a historical and a systematic perspective, each of which is crucial for a triad of concepts.

On a systematic level, Lefebvre is concerned with grasping space neither 'purely materially' nor 'purely ideally' and instead with capturing it in its real complexity. He differentiates between three aspects: the spatial practice ('la pratique sociale') is the 'perceived' space ('l'espace perçu') produced on the basis of social conditions through everyday behaviour.⁷⁷ The space, as well as its subspaces, is created through processes that can be perceived from the outside: circulation of things and signs, movement of people, social interaction. In short, spaces such as universities, supermarkets or city squares only become what they are because of what happens there. In contrast, there are the spatial

76 See Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (1974), Paris: Anthropos 42000.

77 See *ibid.*, p. 48.

representations ('les représentations de l'espace'), by which is meant the space planned, tailored, arranged, i.e. 'conceived' space ('l'espace conçu') by planners, architects and technocrats, which exists in the mode of representations on plans, in models and in heads and significantly structures the 'perceived' space.⁷⁸ Finally, spatial practice and spatial representations are contrasted with the spaces of representation ('les espaces de représentation'). This is the space 'experienced' by the residents and users themselves ('l'espace vécu') with everything that the space or spaces symbolise for them, including evaluations, fantasies, imaginations, emotions, projections and artistic processing.⁷⁹

While all three of these aspects are present at all times and in all places, albeit in different weights and proportions, on the historical level Lefebvre characterizes a conceptual triad that is to be understood as a succession of large-scale epochs in the genesis of modern capitalist space. The absolute space ('l'espace absolu') of archaic cultures forms the beginning.⁸⁰ It is a kind of 'natural space' or a metaphysical, sacred space that has a reality of its own that transcends the human sphere. On the one hand, it refers to 'natural' characteristics of ritually significant places such as caves, springs, rivers or mountains and is culturally associated with phenomena such as birth and death. On the other hand, it embodies a divine truth and legislation that structures the spiritual and social life of a group. The historical space ('l'espace historique') was then created on its substrate in the Middle Ages and early modern period.⁸¹ Through this space, absolute space loses its absoluteness and directive: it is 'relativized' and used and exploited for purely human, desacralized, worldly purposes of accumulating various resources (knowledge, technology, objects, signs, money). Lefebvre describes this space as 'historical' because it is in and above all through it – through the network of trade routes, through the medieval city and its marketplaces, through the modern state and its centralized power – that the modern capitalist model of production is established from the end of the Middle Ages onwards. The continuation of 'historical' space through industrialization and late capitalism is ultimately abstract space ('l'espace abstrait').⁸² It is the space of neoliberal, globalized capitalism, in which all things and signs have only one value, which is derived

78 See *ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

79 See *ibid.*, p. 49. The spaces of representation thus coincide with the experienced space of the phenomenological tradition from Husserl to Bachelard to Bollnow.

80 See *ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

81 See *ibid.*, p. 60.

82 See *ibid.*, pp. 60–77.

from formal market relations and is therefore 'abstract'. Qualitative differences, which once characterized the 'absolute' space, have disappeared in favour of quantitative differences, in which the exchange or market value, which is decoupled from the concrete space, is measured. The use-value of space, which still plays a role in the 'historical' context, is liquefied in the market of speculation and investment. The consequences of the abstraction of space are as drastic as they are numerous. There are no more subjects in 'abstract' space: it itself is the subject that moves the objects within it; state subjects are also appropriated. The 'lived' space thus gives way to the 'conceptualized' space: The space is planned and organized purely rationally and technocratically according to functional usage requirements. The 'abstract' space also tends towards complete homogenization, fragmentation and control: everything in it becomes interchangeable and is made comparable and equal through quantitative determinations, functions are spatially separated, social relationships become more rigid, and every form of violence and deviation is suppressed. The alienation that already began in relation to nature in times of 'historical' space now spreads to all levels. The reason for this is the reversal of means and ends: the social product of space is no longer the means to fulfil individual and collective human ends. Instead, individuals are the means to the end of the functioning of the capitalist system as, as one might say with reference to Marx's characterization of capital, an 'automatic subject' or a 'self-moving substance' that follows its own norms and imperatives, which are alien to authentic human life.⁸³

However, Lefebvre would hardly be a neo-Marxist thinker if this linear historical logic were not countered by a dialectical counter-moment. This results, so to speak, from the contradictions or the imperfection of the 'abstract' space. After all, any attempt to establish an all-encompassing order inevitably comes up against limits. And so there are surpluses of homogenization in 'abstract' space, differences that cannot be completely levelled out, that break through somewhere and undermine the socially dominant order of spatial production in order to enable alternative, autonomous forms of spatial appropriation. Lefebvre refers to the space that resists the 'abstract' space in this way as differential space ('l'espace différentiel').⁸⁴

After everything I have summarized so far about the practice of the *terrain vague*, one might now think that Lefebvre sees in this space a paradigmatic

83 See Karl Marx, 'Das Kapital', in Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 23, Berlin: Dietz 1968, vol. 1, second section, p. 169.

84 See Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, pp. 64–68.

case of differential space. In fact, however, for him it seems to be little more than a final fading stage of that same space. For in the worst of all cases, namely if ‘abstract’ space in Hegel’s sense were to represent the stable final state of the historical process, the *terrain vague* would be ‘l’ultime recours de la vitalité irréductible’: the last source and the last retreat of a vitality that cannot be completely killed.⁸⁵ ‘Would be’, mind you. For Lefebvre is not quite so pessimistic and introduces the concept of differential space in the first place in the conviction that the inner contradictions of ‘abstract’ space release a space that brings together what it separates and excludes. However, Lefebvre is probably referring more to permanent, stable, enduring forms of protest, ultimately also organized in class struggle, for which the *terrain vague* with its basic characteristics of a temporary, intermediate, indeterminate and ambiguous place does not seem suitable. However, Lefebvre also places his hopes in art, explicitly in situationist strategies of transformative spatial perception and practice, which emphasize the *espace vécu* against the predominance of the *espace conçu*. Apparently, Lefebvre wrote the book before he had a chance to get to know a number of subversive forms of spatial production that have emerged on *terrains vagues* (from community gardens to artist neighbourhoods and protest camps). It is possible that these would not have met his requirements either. But the *terrain vague* can by no means be accused of not having inspired art in a significant way.

The interplay between socially dominant conditions and a space that opposes them is encountered again two decades later in a renewed actualization of large-scale criticism of capitalism. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari use the pair of concepts of ‘smooth’ and ‘striated’ space (‘l’espace lisse’ and ‘l’espace strié’) in an attempt to describe the power inscribed in space in such a way that it becomes visible in the dynamics of two interrelated processes – even if initially only in the conceptual distinction in the face of a reality in which the two principles only exist in transitional and mixed forms.⁸⁶ On the one hand, there is the powerful appropriation, structuring and organization of space, which is referred to as a ‘striation’. In this sense, space that is striated and closed by a state power bound to a territory, for example by borders, walls, fences or paths, has the function of controlling all forms of circulation, be it the migration of people or the flow of goods, and thus maximizing control over every form of free, multidirectional and diffuse

85 Ibid., p. 64.

86 See Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, ‘1227 – Traité de nomadologie: la machine de guerre’ and ‘1440 – Le lisse et le strié’, in Deleuze/Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*, Paris: Minuit 1980, pp. 434–527 and pp. 592–625.

movement. Accordingly, the striated space is associated with the cultural-anthropological concept of sedentariness. This is countered by the principle of the nomadic, which correlates with a space that is open and 'smooth'. This is precisely not the result of striation through rational, technical organization and political control (which is why striated space is associated with the Greek concepts of *logos* and *polis*), which fixes territories, divides up space, allocates it and establishes central points within it that determine paths and movement. On the other hand, it is the absence of striation that leaves a smooth space, which in turn structures nomadic life, insofar as the directions and routes of unlimited movement arise independently of specific points due to its conditions and laws (which is why it is associated with the *nomos*). While the city is the striated space par excellence, the paradigms of smooth space are the steppe, the desert and the sea, insofar as they are imagined as free of striations in the above sense. However, it is not the case that the 'smooth' space is at the mercy of the 'striated' space or merely forms its basis. For there are ways of 'deterritorializing', i.e. smoothing out, the '(re)territorialized', striated space through inventive, transformative and differential ways of acting and living, which are compared to the nomadic invention of the 'war machine', which has the state and the city as its enemy, but does not literally fight them and instead creates 'lines of flight and resistance'. On the one hand, such smoothing of space naturally includes such obvious examples as civil disobedience, riots, strikes, guerrilla warfare or revolutions. On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari also point to less revolutionary, more everyday practices when they speak of a certain 'way of being in space' ('*manière d'être dans l'espace*'), which can be both a 'smooth travelling' and a 'smooth living' and is generally characterized by an 'open becoming' (in relation to 'progress') and a 'free acting' (in relation to 'work').⁸⁷

In relation to my topic, this therefore includes all spatial practices that use the potential of dysfunctional free space in a spontaneous and unplanned, playful and creative or emancipatory and self-organized way, without 'striating' it anew, and that evade the state order. Such 'smooth' ways of being in space can be found, to choose just one particularly vivid example, on the half-hectare area located in the middle of the winding road layout at the 'Porte de Paris' in Saint-Denis, which is difficult to access between two national roads, a motorway and the turning basin of a lock on the Canal Saint-Denis.⁸⁸ It is used

87 Ibid., pp. 602–611.

88 In the following, I refer to my own exploration of the city, which I undertook during an excursion to Paris in autumn 2016 together with Wolfram Nitsch, Daniel Ritter and the Parisian promeneur Denis Moreau.

by people for various reasons. And sometimes a group of committed citizens who campaign for the preservation of the area (for which several construction projects have already been discussed and planned without any of them being realized) organize festivals at which local residents meet. These are temporary actions that leave no traces other than perhaps the fact that the informal name given to the area by the residents, 'La Maltournée' ('the miscarried/the lost'), can now also be found on official city maps – an indication that the practical and symbolic appropriation of the space by the residents is now experiencing striating headwinds again. But just as smoothing always brings striations onto the scene, it is also the striation itself, as Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, that opens up smooth interstitial spaces both outside and inside the striated space.⁸⁹ In the case of La Maltournée, the contrast between abundance and emptiness, plannedness and wildness, speed and slowness, highly frequented mono-functional traffic areas and the underused, dysfunctional green space, economic activity and wasteland, controlled circulation and diffuse movement, closedness to individual experience and openness to appropriation is so drastic that one could justifiably speak of a smooth eye at the centre of the striating cyclone.⁹⁰

If I now reinterpret the substantial indeterminacy of the *terrain vague* as its indeterminate substance, then I ultimately also come very close to what Deleuze and Guattari call, on a very metaphysical level, a 'matter of movement, of flow, of variation'.⁹¹ It forms the 'material', so to speak, for all smoothing, nomadic or deterritorializing processes that in turn have their essential core in so-called 'vague essences' (or 'substances' or 'entities') that are not random, but in principle imprecise and restless and fundamentally different from 'fixed essences'.⁹² I only need to add a few characterizations that have already been elaborated in the course of the study to conclude by affirming that the *terrain vague* is indeed the smooth space of the city *par excellence*: not only has it been repeatedly referred to in literature as a 'desert' and metaphorically associated with the 'sea'; in the light of the different perspectives, I was also able to describe it as the 'non-established' place in the city, to demonstrate its functional openness to, show its quality as a fundamentally temporary, changeable stage that can move in all directions in its ambiguity; I have drawn

89 Ibid., p. 601.

90 I owe the picture to Axel Sowa's article on 'La Maltournée': 'Dans l'œil du cyclone, rien n'est joué; Autour du bassin de la Maltournée, Saint-Denis', in *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 368, 2007, pp. 60–65.

91 Deleuze/Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, p. 507.

92 Ibid., p. 454.

attention to the tendency to break the rules and to the transgressive uses that circumvent, bypass, question and override the prevailing norms of state spatial planning and economic imperatives. And on different levels, I have repeatedly arrived at the formula of the absence of an urban entity. With a view to the power of striated space, which tends towards totalization, but which in turn produces smooth islands, I can finally add: the *terrain vague* shows us, in the face of an increasingly surveilled, incrementally privatized and normalized urban space, that the same tendencies that seek to achieve total control at all levels of human life allow ‘fallow’ remnants to grow at the edge of their striation, demonstrating not only the vitality but also the diversity and tenacity of this life.

2.4 SOCIOLOGY

2.4.1 Social Marginality

The fact that *terrains vagues* fall outside the system both spatially and functionally, that they are typically abandoned and neglected, and that they are often located in peripheral zones – on the edge of the city, on the edge of economic activity, on the edge of public attention, on the edge of political ambitions of urban development – motivates a descriptive paradigm according to which these places are not integrated into the urban system, but stand outside it. The *terrains vagues* are to a certain extent the ‘outsiders’ among urban places. This metaphorical narrowing of a definition of *terrains vagues* as spatially and economically extraterritorial places with social figures that embody the marginalized, the precarious, the minoritarian, the deviant and the foreign can easily be continued. Accordingly, the *terrain vague* would be the unemployed among urban places because it is not ‘productive’. Under the surfaces it would be left behind like an orphan and excluded like a homeless person. In the absence of an official name and an official function, the *terrain vague* is neither signposted nor shown on city maps, which is why it would amongst the spaces be like an undocumented person who has no ‘official’ existence. The fact that the *terrains vagues* have indeed always been used or even inhabited by people in precarious and marginal living conditions adds a very factual dimension to the rhetorical proximity of figures of exclusion with topological definitions of the *terrain vague*: be it homeless people or vagabonds who have set up their sleeping quarters on a *terrain vague*, Roma and Sinti who live there temporarily, dropouts who live there in a construction trailer, drug addicts who hide there to consume illegal substances, prostitutes and hustlers who offer their services there, punks who can ‘hang out’ there undisturbed.



(Fig. 12)

These are all examples that Philippe Vasset compiles based on his real-life explorations of the Parisian *zones blanches*, thus perpetuating a literary *topos* that is almost as old as the term itself: the *terrain vague* as a place of the marginalized. The fact that this tradition is based in particular on texts that endeavour to present a realistic, even sociographical portrayal that is often linked to a socially critical perspective shows that this *topos* is not merely a product of imagination, but a reality of particular symbolic power. The *terrain vague* thus has a firm place in texts and films that tell of life in the *banlieue*, for example in the *littérature beure* or *cinéma beur* of Mehdi Charef, where the *terrain vague* is not only the setting for a desolate and hopeless life of immigrants of Arab origin in large suburban housing estates, but also a field of action for those who are excluded from the resources and opportunities for participation that middle-class citizens enjoy.⁹³ The same can be said of the *blousons noirs*, the ‘half-strengths’ in Marcel Carné’s *TERRAIN VAGUE* (*WASTELAND*) from 1960.⁹⁴ And what the *villes nouvelles* and *cités* of the post-war period are, the Parisian *zone* of the first half of the twentieth century can be regarded as the nucleus of the later *banlieue*. Here, too, the *terrain vague* is a prototypical place that characterizes the appearance of the shanty towns around Paris and embodies the collapse of the social and geographical fringes

93 See Broich/Ritter, *Die Stadtbrache als ‘terrain vague’*, Chapter I.2.10, pp. 58–72.

94 See *ibid.*

of the city. In Louis Calaferte's work, for example, the *terrain vague*, on which the *zone's* adolescents play their evil games, is a symbol of a milieu of poverty that is as spatially separated from the rest of the city as it is culturally and socially different from the bourgeoisie (who observe the *zonards* like a hawk) and at the same time is the place where bourgeois morality is transgressed on a daily basis and the structural violence of exclusion and neediness degenerates and escalates into physical violence among the inhabitants.⁹⁵ The lineage of the *terrain vague* as a place of the marginalized can be traced even further back to its origins in the nineteenth century, where in Zola's work it is inextricably linked with the working-class districts at the gates of the city that first emerged as a result of industrialization and is accordingly often mentioned in the same breath as the dirt, the soot, the sheds, chimneys and shafts and the proletarian misery of a new urban and social reality.⁹⁶ But even in pre-industrial Paris, the phenomenon of the *terrain vague* already appears under the concept of the 'nameless place' as part of a series of places that harbour the 'other' and 'deviant' in society. As early as 1833, Balzac wrote: 'Autour de ce lieu sans nom, s'élèvent les Enfants-Trouvés, la Bourbe, l'hôpital Cochin, les Capucins, l'hospice La Rochefoucauld, les Sourds-Muets, l'hôpital du Val-de-Grâce; enfin, tous les vices et tous les malheurs de Paris ont là leur asile'.⁹⁷

Interestingly, the 'nameless place' of the *terrain vague* is here at the centre of a series of institutions that all fall under Foucault's concept of hetero-

95 See *ibid.*

96 'Dehors, la Maheude s'étonna de voir que le vent ne soufflait plus. C'était un dégel brusque, le ciel couleur de terre, les murs gluants d'une humidité verdâtre, les routes empoissées de boue, une boue spéciale au pays du charbon, noire comme de la suie délayée, épaisse et collante à y laisser ses sabots. Tout de suite, elle dut gifler Lénore, parce que la petite s'amusait à ramaser la crotte sur ses galoches, ainsi que sur le bout d'une pelle. En quittant le coron, elle avait longé le terri et suivi le chemin du canal, coupant pour raccourcir par des rues défoncées, au milieu de terrains vagues, fermés de palissades moussues. Des hangars se succédaient, de longs bâtiments d'usine, de hautes cheminées crachant de la suie, salissant cette campagne ravagée de faubourg industriel. Derrière un bouquet de peupliers, la vieille fosse Réquillart montrait l'écroulement de son beffroi, dont les grosses charpentes restaient seules debout. Et, tournant à droite, la Maheude se trouva sur la grande route.' Émile Zola, 'Germinal' (1885), in Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart* ed. by Armand Lanoux and Henri Mitterand, Paris: Gallimard 1961–67 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 3 (2nd part, ch. 2), pp. 1206–1207.

97 See Balzac, 'Ferragus', pp. 901–902. Or in German translation: 'Rings um diesen namenlosen Ort erhebt sich das Findelhaus, die Entbindungsanstalt, das Krankenhaus Cochin, die Kapuziner, das Armenhaus La Rochefoucauld, die Taubstummenanstalt und das Val-de-Grâce-Hospital, kurz, alle Laster, gar alles Elend von Paris hat hier seine Heimstätte.', pp. 152–153.

topia, and indeed all under the subtype that he calls ‘hétérotopies de crise’ and ‘hétérotopies de déviation’⁹⁸ (heterotopias of deviation and crisis). These may be the most obvious categories of heterotopia for Foucault because they directly relate to societal institutions he examined, such as the prison or the clinic, which identify subjects who deviate from a norm defined by historically formed discourses then spatially separate them from the rest of society, isolate and control them.⁹⁹ With regard to heterotopias, a distinction can now be made as to whether the isolation of the deviant subject is only temporary during a phase that is as such part of ‘normal’ human life, or whether it is permanent because the deviant subject or their behaviour or condition is ‘abnormal’ in and of itself. In the first case, Foucault speaks of crisis heterotopias. They create special, sacred or forbidden threshold places for subjects who are in a state of crisis relative to the reference group.¹⁰⁰ The subject is supposed to make his individual transitional experiences in isolation from the rest of society in an ‘other space’ in order to be reintegrated into the given order. Foucault includes in this type, for instance, the postpartum period, as well as military service, which represents the *elsewhere* where, outside the family, the first expressions of male sexuality were once supposed to occur, and the honeymoon, the geographically indeterminate *nowhere*, where, according to Foucault, the deflowering of the young woman took place. On the other hand, there are so-called heterotopias of deviation, which serve to collect subjects whose behaviour or condition deviates in principle from the social norm and to accommodate them more or less permanently separately from the rest of society.¹⁰¹ The exclusion of a discursive ‘other’ through certain orders of knowledge thus has its material counterpart in the very concrete spatial exclusion of subjects qualified as ‘deviant’, who are isolated in institutions such as psychiatric institutions, sanatoria or prisons.

98 Foucault, ‘Des espaces autres’, p. 755 f. *Crisis heterotopias* refer to sacred or forbidden spaces that are reserved for people in a state of crisis (spaces of birth, adolescence, menopause, ageing and death). The crisis heterotopias condemned to disappear today are being replaced by *deviation heterotopias*, i.e. spaces in which people whose behaviour deviates from the norm are accommodated (sanatoriums, clinics, retirement homes, prisons).

99 See Michel Foucault’s numerous relevant writings: *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*, Paris: Librairie Plon 1961; *Naissance de la clinique: Une archéologie du regard médical*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1963; *L’Ordre du discours*, Paris: Gallimard 1971; and *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris: Gallimard 1975.

100 See Foucault, ‘Des espaces autres’, p. 755 f.

101 See *ibid.*

How can *terrains vagues* be interpreted as heterotopias of this type, especially since I described them as the ‘place of the excluded’? Balzac’s description of place, in which both crisis and deviation heterotopias occur, marks a very relevant difference for this question: while all other places have a generic or individual name, a place that also harbours ‘vice and misery’ remains nameless. Unlike the others, it is not an official social institution. Unlike the others, it was not created systematically, intentionally and for a specific purpose by the state authorities in power. In this sense, the dysfunctionality of the *terrain vague* and the functional determinacy of the heterotopia, the nameless existence of the first and the official existence of the second, the contingent emergence of the first from the loss of a former use and the deliberate construction of the second for a social purpose, are mutually exclusive. This is perhaps where the difference between function and use becomes most apparent. Because even if the *terrain vague* has not been assigned this ‘function’ by anyone, it is *de facto* used as exactly that: as a space that is open to those to whom most spaces in society are closed. And this reveals another difference: the ‘inmates’ of a deviant or crisis heterotopia arrive there under social or police coercion, making it an instrument of power that has a controlling, punitive, disciplinary or corrective effect on the subjects’ bodies. The users of *terrain vague*, on the other hand, use this space for their own purposes.

In the case of marginalized users and types of use, this shows two things: on the one hand, that the users and the *terrain vague* are equally the product of an exclusive social order. The *terrain vague* is not systematically created; it is a systemic product of a society whose economic, political and symbolic power relations manifest themselves simultaneously on a spatial and social level, but not in such a way that the space is a mere projection of these relations, as if it were only a kind of epiphenomenon of the social, but in such a way that the space is the result and the instrument of effective orders that open up access to certain resources and opportunities for some and at the same time make access more difficult or deny it to others. Space is thus the aggregate state of power itself. The creation of an inner order simultaneously produces an outside, and it is the same mechanisms of the same social order that produce social outsiders and also create places and spaces that do not belong, have no economic value, are functionless, are not attractive to the market and fall out of the system. In this sense, the use of *terrains vagues* by marginalized users reveals that they have no other space available for their uses – either because the use is prohibited, because it deviates from what is permitted and normal, or because the users have no spatial and economic resources – which proves their *conditio* as marginalized. On the other hand, however, it also shows that for them the

terrain vague simultaneously represents the possibility of having a space at their free disposal at all – and contrary to their *conditio* – so that the supposed heterotopia of deviation turns much more into a ‘heterotopia of emancipation’, which is an ‘other’ space to such an extent that it gives space to those who ‘actually’ have no space.

2.4.2 Minoritarian Vitality

At this point, the focus is suddenly no longer on the negativity of not being integrated, but on the positivity of being so and being able to be. What I described just prior, namely the *terrain vague* as a self-excluded place that becomes a spatial possibility for the excluded to act and live there – contrary to their *conditio* as persons who are largely excluded from social participation and various forms of resources – leads back to concepts and theoretical approaches that now come together to form a unified picture.

When Gil Doron speaks of so-called *urban nomads*, he is referring to groups of people who are figuratively and literally pushed to the ‘margins’. From various cities around the world, he reports on communities that are outside of society due to their lifestyle or status and are ‘placeless’ in the sense that there is no space available for certain of their activities, which is why they have to resort to so-called *edge spaces*, i.e. empty, unused residual areas next to streets, rivers and under bridges: groups of homeless people living on the side of city motorways in San Francisco, immigrants in Rome who have built their emergency shelters on the banks of the Tiber and cultivate a kitchen garden, or gay people in Singapore (where homosexuality is brutally punished) who have no public space and meet in secret on empty spaces under the city’s motorway bridges.¹⁰² Their nomadic (because temporary, marginalized or even persecuted and placeless) uses are, as Doron also points out, opposed to a public space that is increasingly restrictive. He also reports on official planning offices in various cities that do everything in their power to restrict the use of public space to a very specific, clearly defined range of activities using all legal and architectural means, and to ‘cleanse’ parks, squares and streets frequented and used by homeless people, street vendors, beggars, street musicians, prostitutes or migrants of ‘undesirable elements’ – not least to prevent neighbouring areas from losing value due to the presence of such subjects and uses. The consequences of such zero-tolerance policies and the domestication of public space are, as Doron goes on to explain, forms of segregation and

102 See Doron, ‘Dead Zones, Outdoor Rooms and the Architecture of Transgression’, pp. 214–222.

exclusion based in particular on social status, origin and gender. The reference to the 'smooth' spaces, which Deleuze and Guattari also call 'nomadic' spaces, is obvious. The nomadic essence, the essential quality shared by *terrain vagues* and the uses and users addressed here, is the 'uncontrollability' of a movement associated by me with *vagari*, a movement that cuts across existing orders. In the 'striated' space *par excellence* – the urban space – the nomadic is the threatened minority; it turns both the *terrains vagues* into minoritarian spaces and its users into minoritarian groups.

In this sense, Hélène and Marc Hatzfeld and likewise Nadja Ringart speak of *espaces mineurs* in relation to unused interstitial spaces in the city.¹⁰³ In doing so, the authors conceptualize what we have already seen from different perspectives: the *terrain vague* as *espace mineur* is the product of the *espace majeur*, i.e. the regular urban space that surrounds it. However, this applies not only physically and causally, but also normatively: the *espace majeur* determines what an 'orderly' urban space has to be: namely defined, functional, productive and organized. It also determines what is permitted, appropriate and expected and what is not. The *espace majeur* is thus a controlling, restrictive space, a 'striated' space, within which the *espace mineur* forms a niche both 'of the other' and 'for the others'.

The concept of *espace mineur* also refers to Deleuze and Guattari, specifically to their concept of *littérature mineure*, which they develop in their reflections on Franz Kafka's writings.¹⁰⁴ Essentially, *littérature mineure* is not merely a literature created by members of a minority, but is defined by its specific relationship to the majority society, which results from a particular use of language. The *littérature mineure* is thus the literature of a minority, which uses the language of the majority and thereby 'deterritorializes' it in that this language is no longer the instrument of a dominant power, but of the one who counterposes it. In this way, the *littérature mineure* inevitably acquires a political momentum, because the use of the majority language by the minority places the pressure of the narrowness of minority life in the space of the majority public sphere, which in turn leads to the statements of such a text being understood as representative of the collective of the minority and acquiring an overall social relevance. This can be applied analogously to the *espace mineur*: the uses of the *espace mineur* utilize certain sub-spaces of the

103 See Hélène Hatzfeld/Marc Hatzfeld/Nadja Ringart, *Quand la marge est créatrice: Les interstices urbains initiateurs d'emploi*, Paris: Éditions de l'Aube 1998, pp. 13–21.

104 See Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, Paris: Minuit 1975, pp. 29–50.

public *espace majeur*, which through this appropriation is no longer an instrument of disciplinary power, but an enabling space for minority life – and likewise for the political articulation thereof, because here, too, the users visibly carry the pressure of their confinement (as in the case of the thousands of migrants who lived in temporary tent camps in various public spaces in Paris in 2016, including edge places, before the camps were repeatedly evacuated by the police¹⁰⁵) into the public space. And finally, here too, their actions become a collective expression that raises questions that concern and affect society as a whole.¹⁰⁶

Against this background, Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat also sees the dysfunctional interstitial space with reference to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's concept of *multitude*¹⁰⁷ as a place of retreat for a multitude of lifestyles, existences and practices that deviate from the dominant model, are rejected and marginalized and that, in the interstitial space, can maintain and prove their vitality.¹⁰⁸ For him, the *interstices* represent the last remaining remnants that still withstand the general regimentation of urban space and life, resist homogenization and, due to their provisional and indeterminate status, represent a kind of 'reserve of disposability' for other, 'open and collaborative, mutable and transversal (i.e. transverse)' processes of 'urban production'.¹⁰⁹ The interstitial space has the property of proving time and again that society is not identical with itself, i.e. that there are differences beyond the consensus, the norm, conformity and

105 See for example: 'À Paris, les campements de migrants se multiplient', in *France 24*, 29 October 2016, www.france24.com/fr/20161029-paris-campements-migrants-multipliant-calais-demantelement-jungle (accessed on 27 December 2020).

106 Despite the emphasis on the potential of the *terrain vague* as an *espace mineur*, there is nothing to romanticize about it. The fact that certain groups have to resort to unused areas for their activities or needs – and do not have spatial resources at their disposal (affordable housing, youth centres, caravan sites, gardens, safe spaces for minorities) – is proof of their placelessness in society. Just as, conversely, the marginality of some *terrains vagues* or their existence beyond economic and social attractiveness is proven by the fact that they become the last available space for marginalized existences. And so there is nothing to gloss over the fact that these groups would be helped more if they were not marginalized in the first place. For this reason, the *terrain vague* can be praised for being a spatial resource for minorities and in this sense an *espace mineur*, but at the same time it does not cancel out the status of its users: it emphasizes it and offers only a relative and temporary improvement in their situation, not a fundamental one.

107 See Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: Harvard University Press 2000.

108 See Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat, 'Multiplicité interstitielle', in *Multitude* 4, No. 31, 2007, pp. 115–121.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

uniformity and that, despite all attempts at homogenization, there are cracks and folds in the space in which 'others' live and are lived 'differently'. And last but not least, the interstitial space is therefore a field of experimentation characterized by a high degree of dynamism and critical potential, where possible alternatives are tried out that would otherwise not find a place, and where new things are created that are not instituted from above, but from below.

2.4.3 Urban Experimental Field

Because where there is experimentation, there is also invention. In the German discourse, as I have already indicated, it is Siebel in particular who, drawing on the joint work with Häußermann and referring to Robert Musil, coined the concept of the space of possibility. They are not only 'Brenngläser' in which social transformations become visible, but also germ cells or 'Kristallisationspunkte' where unplanned and unplannable forms of urban life can emerge, especially in phases of transition.¹¹⁰ For Siebel, it is particularly the productive tension between old purposes and new uses, as well as the historically developed symbolic potential, thanks to which the presence of history in everyday life can be maintained while society simultaneously appropriates the spaces. This holds a unique promise, especially in the case of industrial wastelands, for the return of lost urbanity.

An example given by Doron aptly illustrates the extent to which *terrains vagues* in Siebel's sense are fields of experimentation and emergence that keep alive a utopian perspective of the city insofar as they hold open a better or at least different possibility of urban life: in the 1970s, a community of squatters, artists and dropouts founded the alternative housing estate of 'Free City' Christiania on an abandoned military site adjacent to the remains of the former city wall and built it up over the years according to the principle of architecture without architects. Until recently, Christiania had its own autonomous, grassroots local government, its own laws, no police force and an independent urban planning system. In the meantime, the initial urban and social experiment has not only become a recognized district of Copenhagen, but also one of Denmark's most popular tourist attractions, even though political conflicts and controversies have recently arisen, particularly with regard to Christiania's liberal attitude towards drug dealing and drug consumption.¹¹¹

110 Siebel, 'Urbanität ohne Raum: Der Möglichkeitsraum', p. 40.

111 See Doron, 'Dead Zones, Outdoor Rooms and the Architecture of Transgression', pp. 214–215.

Sometimes, however, there are also informal uses of *terrains vagues* on a very small scale that can nevertheless anticipate official urban development projects on a large scale. Doron also points to the horticultural use of a disused section of the New York elevated railway by local residents, which already existed before the section was converted¹¹² into one of the city's most innovative parks, the High Line, from 2006 and attracted so much attention worldwide¹¹³ that sections of the disused Parisian ring railway, the *Petite Ceinture*, have also been successively opened up for public use since 2007. However, if you examine closely such examples, the utopian view of the *terrain vague* quickly takes on a pale flavour or a dark shadow. Because where young creative people discover underused and devalued spaces in the city, appropriate them and turn them into a space for experimentation and invention in which they can act autonomously and free from the economic pressure of the 'integrated' urban space, those previously devalued spaces all too often and all too quickly become 'truffle pigs' of the property industry. Public and private *developers* will then no longer need to worry about how to attract trade, industry, demand and value back into these areas. They can simply wait until the creative cell has created so much appeal on its own and established itself to such an extent that the capital 'flows in' of its own accord, so to speak.

Those who benefit least from all this, are, of course, the marginalized users mentioned above. Because at the same time as sections of the *Petite Ceinture* are being converted into parks in Paris, the tent camps that the Roma have set up on the derelict railway tracks are also being cleared.¹¹⁴ And at the same time as the *terrain vague* is 'striated' by permanent appropriations and established uses, no matter how alternative and creative, and approaches the *espace majeur* to such an extent that it ceases to be a wasteland, leftover area or interstitial space, the displaced and marginalized move on nomadically in search of the next of the increasingly rare, true *terrains vagues* not yet affected by gentrification.

112 See *ibid.*, p. 215.

113 See above, 'Als die High-Line noch ein surrealer Ort war', in *ZEIT online*, 29 October 2014, <https://www.zeit.de/reisen/2014-10/new-york-high-line-fs> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

114 See above: 'Paris: l'ancienne voie ferrée occupée par un camp de Roms', in *leparisien.fr*, 22/07/2015, www.leparisien.fr/paris-75/paris-75005/paris-l-ancienne-voie-ferree-occupee-par-un-camp-de-roms-22-07-2015-4964653.php (accessed on 27 December 2020).

2.5 ETHNOLOGY

2.5.1 Unofficial Place(less)ness

Similar to the physical and functional emptiness, there is also no clear and obvious answer to the question of the 'placeness' or 'placelessness' of the *terrain vague*. In this case, however, this is less due to context, perspective and expectations than to the fact that, in contrast to the rather uncomplicated concepts of emptiness and function, the concept of place, like that of space, is as controversial and fragmented as it is fundamental. As with space, it would be easy to write a history of ideas on place from the pre-Socratics to the present day, which would bring to light an almost unmanageable wealth of different concepts of place.¹¹⁵ One arrives at a similar picture of conceptual fragmentation if one attempts to analyse linguistic uses of the term *place* in contrast to affine expressions such as *space*, *place*, *spot* or *field*, as Otto Friedrich Bollnow did in a systematic way long before the so-called *spatial turn*.¹¹⁶ In fact, until recently there was a lot of theoretical catching up to do in regard to place. Although the spatial turn was sometimes also referred to as the topological or topographical turn, it generally focussed on questions of space.¹¹⁷ It has been argued that space has been identified as a dimension of reality, a form of knowledge organization, and an analytical paradigm in the social and

115 For a historical view of the concept of space, which inevitably cannot do without the concept of place, see Daniel Ritter, 'Eine Geschichte des Raumdenkens – von der Topologie zur Spatiologie und zurück', 2014: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Geschichte%20des%20Raumdenkens.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

116 See Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum* (1963), Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 112010, pp. 31–44.

117 See Stephan Günzel, *Topologie: Zur Raumbeschreibung in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2007, and Jörg Döring/Tristan Thielmann: *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2008. The *spatial turn* frequently refers back to the tradition of topological understanding of space, which, originating from Aristotle's theory of natural places, was later brought into modern science through Leibniz's mathematical work against Newton's conception of space. In the 20th century, it was further transferred into philosophy through Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. However, since these approaches all have in common that space is conceived from the point of view of place, so that place acquires an ontological and epistemological primordality in relation to space that is not absolute, it is surprising that a *spatial turn* based on topology does not deal with place to the same extent. On topology as a philosophy of space *and* place, see Daniel Ritter, 'Eine Geschichte des Raumdenkens'.

cultural sciences. However, firstly, the conceptual distinction between space and place has rarely been uncovered and made transparent, and instead, heterotopias have been unequivocally referred to as spaces. Secondly, a genuine philosophy of place has been neglected to such an extent that it has only been rediscovered in recent years in Germany.¹¹⁸ Even before the *spatial turn* and the subsequent renaissance of place, there had been robust concepts of place for some time, particularly in cultural anthropological geography and ethnology. I would now like to follow this line in order to ask what kind of place the *terrain vague* is, if it is a place in a particular sense at all.

One of the best-known theories of place in recent decades is certainly that associated with the concept of non-place (*non-lieu*) coined by Marc Augé, which apparently presents itself as the negation of a presupposed, positive, perhaps even normative definition of what is initially a place. The presupposed concept of place in this case is that of the anthropological place, as it is traditionally understood in ethnology and which, interestingly, shows great similarities with that which Lefebvre calls the *espace absolu*, by which he means the property of concrete places to be central points of cultural life for archaic societies.¹¹⁹ The anthropological place can be populated by spirits or be filled with existential meanings and decisively characterizes the order of a society. Modern human geographic place theory also sometimes speaks of the *genius loci*, a *spirit of place* or a *God within*, to indicate that places are individual and meaningful and can have a kind of personality, character or mood that is essential to them.¹²⁰ The anthropological place in this sense, and as Augé understands the term, is a concrete, individual and limited, natural or man-made place in space that is assigned a symbolic meaning and structures human life. This can be a traditional house of certain ethnic groups, in which the living areas are clearly separated according to dualistic structures such as ‘male’ and ‘female’, villages whose architectural order reflects the social hierarchies of a tribe, marketplaces

118 See Annika Schlitte et al. (eds.), *Philosophie des Ortes: Reflexionen zum Spatial Turn in den Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2014, as well as from the English-speaking world much earlier and less chased by the ‘spectre’ of the *spatial turn*: Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993, Jeff Malpas: *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, Cambridge/Oxford: Cambridge University Press 1999 and Tim Cresswell: *Place: A Short Introduction*, Malden (Mass.): Blackwell 2004.

119 On the concept of the anthropological place see again Augé, *Non-lieux*, pp. 57–95.

120 See one of the pioneers of more recent theories of place in human geography of a phenomenological character and his remarks on the ‘essence of place’, Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, London: Pion 1976, pp. 29–43, at p. 31.

that organize trade, sacred places that organize rituals, or venues that organize play. According to Augé, anthropological places also have three general characteristics. Firstly, they create identity: to be born means to be born in a place that henceforth becomes part of one's personal identity; and just as the place of birth is traditionally decisive for the possibilities one has, the rules, regulations and prohibitions one is confronted with, this also applies to other places that create collective identities on a social level, create possibilities and impossibilities, articulate rules and assign a place or a role to the individual. Anthropological places are also relational: they are related to other places within a spatial configuration or a social system, and these relations divide the space into places that receive different allocations. This is where the child lives, this is where the mother lives; this is where we eat, cook, cut up the animal and this is where the waste ends up. Anthropological places are also relational because, in addition to identity, they also create community and sociality, such as the church for the faithful, the clubhouse for members or a town hall as a contact point for residents. And finally, anthropological places are historical: however, Augé understands this characteristic explicitly in contrast to so-called places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) which consciously or unconsciously understand the history of a collective in relation to a different present, as if the difference to the past revealed who one is today; the inhabitants or users of an anthropological place, on the other hand, do not 'make' history, they 'live' in it and are in a relationship to history understood as a continuum.¹²¹

How does the *terrain vague* relate to this very strong, ethnological concept of locality? In order to answer this question, one more difficulty must be pointed out. For although the concept of anthropological place is so specific compared to the everyday concept of place that it places demanding conditions on its fulfilment, it is conspicuously unspecific in terms of its *Skopos*, i.e. the size of its sphere of influence. While some anthropological sites create identities that apply to an entire collective and institute an order that characterizes social life as a whole, such as certain sanctuaries, temples, pilgrimage sites and oracles, others are limited to the life of a family or even just one individual. However, it can be argued that an individual's place of birth, for example, is only so decisive for their identity because its meaning can be 'read' by their social environment and therefore retroactively becomes a social *topos* in the truest sense of the word.

121 Augé is referring here to Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris: Gallimard 1984.

So, let's now compare it with the *terrain vague*.¹²² Cases in which such a place becomes a place of identity are not uncommon in literature. There are gangs of children and young people who appropriate such a place, occupy it, become emotionally attached to it and experience themselves as free and creative through it; they make it their own terrain as opposed to the terrain of adults, from whom they separate themselves in order to form their own identity. However, the *terrain vague* is rarely a real public place or a real institution in the sense that it would structure social life in a transparent and defined way. In most cases, it is rather something like a very private anthropological place, which can be of decisive importance for the self and world relationship of an individual person or a small group. Consider, for example, the protagonist of Marie Chaix's *L'âge du tendre*, who almost equates her happy childhood with the *terrain vague* and experiences the sudden intrusion of the adult world in the form of moral norms relating to the body and sexuality at the same time as her 'expulsion' from the *terrain vague*.¹²³ However, the *terrain vague* is undoubtedly relational. Its essential characteristics have always emerged in relation to the surrounding urban space at all levels of investigation. However, this is because it was described as extraterritorial, as a topological outside. Thus, unlike the anthropological place in Augé's sense, it is not an integral spatial point within a configuration that is functionally determined by its structural relationship to the other places (*à la* 'here are the necessities, there are the provisions'), but an undefined place precisely because it falls out of this configuration or is determined negatively in relation to the functions of the configuration as a whole and its places in particular. The many young lovers who meet there in literature, the children of different social backgrounds who come together there – in Jacques Tati's work, for example – and the various subcultural groups that cultivate their community there prove that the *terrain vague* is nevertheless a place that to the highest degree enables encounters and social relations outside dominant forms of socialization. And yet: it does not have the stable and official character that is indeed characteristic of Anthropological places. The question of whether a *terrain vague* is historical in Augé's sense cannot be answered unambiguously either. On the one hand, the *terrain vague* is certainly the opposite of a place of remembrance, a *lieu de mémoire*, because here history is not actively, officially and publicly staged and interpreted as in the case of a memorial, tomb or monument (even if at least

122 See Jacqueline Maria Broich, 'Non-lieu and *terrain vague*', <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Non-lieu%20and%20Terrain%20vague.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

123 See Marie Chaix, *L'âge du tendre*, Paris: Seuil 1979, pp. 30 and 37–41.

the concept of the *terrain vague* temporarily takes on the character of a linguistic place of remembrance, which stands for a nostalgic view of a modern Paris that has to give way to a late-modern remodelling of the city).¹²⁴ It is not a museumized and preserved product of history, but a 'wild' and 'living' product that changes in unforeseen ways. On the other hand, however, it is always associated with its discontinuities, transformations and ruptures and thus always simultaneously with the loss of history and the imminent arrival of a yet unknown future. And so, I conclude that the *terrain vague*, despite certain affinities, is not able to fulfil the concept of the anthropological place. But does that make it a non-place?

2.5.2 Counter-Momentum to Homogenization

For Marc Augé, non-places are the material cipher of what he calls hypermodernity, which is characterized by the previously discussed overabundance of space, time and meaning.¹²⁵ In concrete terms, the concept of non-places refers to faceless, interchangeable, monofunctional places that increasingly characterize the world we live in today: consumer areas such as shopping centres, supermarkets and amusement parks; means of transport and transport routes such as planes, trains and motorways; waiting areas such as those at railway stations, airports and motorway service stations; hotels and motels; and communication media such as radio and cable networks. What they all have in common is that they are mere transit areas where nobody stays for long periods of time and where there is little social interaction.¹²⁶ For this reason, Augé denies them the central characteristics of an anthropological place: non-places do not create identities, do not establish social relations and are not interwoven with history. Beyond this threefold negation, Augé also characterizes the non-places in a positive way. As places of transit and often silent circulation, which orientate the relationships of individuals to each other and to the non-place itself entirely towards a purpose that defines it, they generate a specifically modern experience of loneliness that is linked to a certain kind of similarity and anonymity. Because the provisional and culturally independent identity that the non-place grants to all entering individuals in terms of equalization equally, namely the temporarily authorized users as customers, consumers, or passengers, replaces any form of personal identity.

124 See Bernard Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville (XIX^e–XX^e siècle)*, Paris: Seuil 1993.

125 See below Augé, *Non-lieux*, pp. 97–144 and again the glossary article I wrote on our website: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Non-lieu%20and%20Terrain%20vague.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 20).

126 The Internet in its current form should be left aside at this point.

This also takes place in a contractual relationship tied to usage modalities, which is certified by ID cards, driving licences and credit cards and contains the implicit imperative that the individual may only enter the place if they do exactly what the place is intended for or what it determines the individual should do. This request is typically communicated in a form of impersonal communication in which technical entities such as text signs or display boards as well as automatic announcements are addressed indiscriminately to the users and specify the circulation conditions. Due to its de-individualizing effect and its inability to create a functioning, organic community, Augé also sees the non-place as the exact opposite of utopia.

The proliferation of non-places goes hand in hand with the significant changes in urban life in the twentieth century. In the second half of the century in particular, the functional separation and homogenization of urban space had such a strong impact that the traditional European city and its urban way of life threatened to disappear completely.¹²⁷ The city centre is being transformed into a financialized district dominated by consumer zones and office space with museum-like historical attractions that merely form the tourist backdrop of a historical city; residential use is drifting into the surrounding area or is being pushed there, huge shopping centres, service towns and leisure parks with a constantly growing catchment area are being established on the outskirts of the city, and urban motorways are being extended everywhere. However, this image of the 'non-city' has not been lamented only since Augé's critique of supermodernity. As early as 1976, as we have seen, Lefebvre interpreted this space of general homogenization, which he described as *espace abstrait*, as an expression and instrument of late capitalist forms of production and power relations. And in 1976, the Canadian geographer Edward Relph also devoted himself to the phenomenon, which he described as placelessness, documenting the increasing loss of places in the anthropological sense two decades before Augé.¹²⁸ For him, this loss is visible in the uniformity of suburbs in modern societies (which he calls *subtopia*), in the proliferation of places of consumption, of kitschy theme parks (in this case he speaks of *disneyfication*) and of artificial places of remembrance (which he calls *museumization*). With regard to oversized transport infrastructures such as multi-lane and multi-storey motorways, he also laments the lack of human scale, which results in a loss of tangible order and orientation. All in all, for him placelessness means the

127 The 'death of the city' has already been proclaimed; see Françoise Choay: 'Le règne de l'urbain et la mort de la ville', in Jean Dethier/Alain Guiheux (eds.), *La Ville, art et architecture en Europe, 1870–1993*, Paris: Centre Pompidou 1994, pp. 26–35.

128 See in the following Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, pp. 79–121.

dominance of non-individual, non-authentic places, to which people find it difficult to establish personal, meaningful, existential relationships in the sense of an anthropological place, but also a changed relationship of people to places, which manifests itself in a non-authentic experience and, above all, construction of places. For him, the causes of this are economic serialization and globalization, mass consumption and mass taste propagated by the mass media, political centralization, which brings with it a standardization of architectural forms, and in particular a general, technicist, non-humanist planning and building practice that is based less on people's needs than on the apparent necessity of efficiency and rationalization in the name of big business. Rem Koolhaas wrote laconically in 1995 about today's 'city without characteristics', the *generic city*:

3.3 The Generic City is fractal, an endless repetition of the same simple structure module.[...] 3.4 Golf courses are all that is left of otherness. [...] 6.1 The roads are only for cars. [...] 6.3 The street is dead. [...] 9.1 There is always a quarter called Lipservice, where a minimum of the past is conserved. [...] 9.2 The Generic City had a past, once. [...] 10.2 The only activity is shopping.¹²⁹

He here formulates his criticism in the key of an already very traditional critique of urban development, which has analysed all forms of alienation of the city dweller from urban space.

Against this background, let us return to the *terrain vague*, whose relationship to the non-place, in contrast to the anthropological place, can be defined very clearly. While all non-places and phenomena of the 'non-city' are characterized by pronounced uniformity, functional overdetermination, and rationalized planning, the opposite is known to apply to the *terrain vague*. Due to its lack of an obvious and official 'why', it not only falls out of the context of use and meaning of the rest of the urban space. What this lack also essentially causes is that this 'why' of the place arises from the free decision of the individual, who is not contractually bound to the place by inherent conditions of use. In this respect, the lack of definition enables and requires an individual approach to the place and a free, individual and fluctuating assignment of meaning. And of course, the user's personal identity does not have to be replaced, nor does it have to remain anonymous or provisional – instead, he or she can invent it themselves and walk the *terrain vague* as a flâneur, wanderer,

129 Koolhaas, 'Generic City', pp. 1242–1260. However, Koolhaas also polemically poses the question at the outset as to whether the insistence on identity, history and centrality is not also a 'mousetrap' that makes the traditional city unfree and immobile, and ultimately destructive.

explorer, collector, artist, activist or whatever. But just as the *terrain vague* does not impose a temporary user identity, it likewise does not create a stable social and cultural identity of its own accord. It is therefore neither a non-place nor an anthropological place. If I now lower the standards of the concept of place and follow Relph in also making individual subject-place relationships the criterion of placeness, so that less pre-given, stable symbolic social orders and more dynamic, individual or collective processes of *place making* are decisive, then the *terrain vague* appears as a kind of *tabula rasa*, which virtually challenges a practical, symbolic or imaginative appropriation and carries a highly 'orthodox' potential. According to Relph, this is how any given spatial location becomes a place in the first place – through a relationship with the place, which can consist of it being experienced as significant for the life of the individual or a group, or of meaning being consciously attributed to it (which is not mutually exclusive)¹³⁰: in the unspecific space of a forest, there is this one tree, this one place where I received my first kiss, buried my cat, recognized my mortality or was enlightened. Relph distinguishes a whole spectrum of subject-place relationships, which vary in their degree of connection with a place between the poles of existential *insideness* (for example, towards the place one calls 'home') and existential *outsideness* (in the case of a place towards which one feels completely alienated or estranged). The forms of *insideness* that we now know from literary examples, as well as from case reports by various urbanists, which deal with groups that have made a *terrain vague* into a real home and refuge, testify to the fact that a *terrain vague* can thus become or be made into the last remaining real 'place' compared to the city, which is increasingly characterized by non-places.

2.5.3 Sacred Transgressions

As diverse and individual as these intimate and meaningful subject-place relationships can be, the status of the *terrain vague* as an undefined interstitial space also repeatedly gives rise to unofficial functions in a spontaneous and unplanned way, which can certainly be compared with a series of functions of

130 Even if more recent authors confront Relph's theory, which is strongly based on Heidegger's phenomenology, with the accusation of being essentialist, this point remains undisputed. Tim Cresswell writes: 'What makes them all places and not simply a room, a garden, a town, a world city, a new nation and an inhabited planet? One answer is that they are all spaces which people have made meaningful. They are all spaces people are attached to in one way or another. This is the most straightforward and common definition of place – a meaningful location'. Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, Malden: Blackwell 2004, p. 7.

'official' anthropological places. This applies in particular to functions associated with various forms of transgression. Let's take another look at a certain form of representation from literature and film: it is mainly young people who have their first experiences of growing up on the *terrain vague*: their first erotic experiences, their first consumption of cigarettes and alcohol, their first petty criminal offences. Or consider Marcel Carné's *TERRAIN VAGUE*, in which a gang of youths from the suburbs perform various rituals such as tests of courage and blood brotherhoods in a derelict factory building. In such cases, we can follow Arnold van Gennep and speak of so-called *rites of passage*, which can be found in virtually all human societies around the world since time immemorial and have the function of accompanying and securing the transition of an individual from one group to another, from one social situation to another or from one state to another through ceremonial sequences.¹³¹ Van Gennep distinguishes three types of corresponding rites for the numerous transitions that physical and cultural life makes necessary: rites of separation accompany the separation of an individual from a group, for example at a funeral. Rites of passage mark an intermediate phase between two physical and social phases, such as engagement or pregnancy. Affiliation rites serve to integrate individuals into another group or status, as is the case with marriage.¹³² All these ritually performed transitions are based on a not only metaphorical, but also actually spatial idea of the crossing of a boundary, which can be realized quite concretely in the performance of the rites – for example, when the corpse is moved from one world to another or the subjects of the rites have to cross a spatial threshold. In this respect, a special place is often required that functions as such a threshold and, due to its existence as a threshold, is not itself part of the worlds between which it mediates. For Foucault, these threshold places are identical with what he calls the *crisis heterotopias* mentioned earlier, i.e. special spaces taken out of the ordinary and everyday social space in which the subject can make the transition before being reintegrated into the given order. When Foucault also speaks of 'sacred' or 'forbidden' places in relation to this type of heterotopia, he is referring directly to van Gennep, who shows that the idea of a spatial transition is always overlaid with magical-religious ideas, which continue to have an effect even in secularized societies and turn the crossing of borders into a sacred event. He refers to the heterotopic threshold, located outside of the 'normal' space, as a 'neutrale Zone' or as a 'Niemandsländ', which is sacralized for two reasons: firstly, because it is a special, exclusive

131 See Arnold van Gennep, *Übergangsriten* (1909, *Les rites de passage*), Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus 1999.

132 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–23.

space that qualitatively differs from the rest of space and establishes the connection between two separate worlds; secondly, because the one 'der sich von der einen Sphäre in die andere begibt, sich eine Zeitlang sowohl räumlich als auch magisch-religiös in einer besonderen Situation [befindet]: er schwebt zwischen zwei Welten'.¹³³

Certainly, the *terrain vague* is not a crisis heterotopia, nor is it a threshold place in Foucault's or van Gennepe's sense, since it was not created by society as such a place for this purpose. And yet: as an interstitial space between the public and the private, the legal and the illegal, the natural and the anthropogenic, as a threshold site between a past and a future use, and as a place that generally seems to fall outside the physical, economic, political and social structures of the city, it can sometimes offer more reason to perceive it as a 'neutral place between worlds' than any official ceremonial site. And therefore, it is no surprise that adolescents on a *terrain vague* actually cross certain boundaries on their way to adulthood, nor that Émile Zola stages the *terrain vague* in *La Fortune des Rougon* as a place of transition and threshold *par excellence*: a former cemetery becomes the setting for a young love affair, and for farewell and death. However, the *terrain vague* can also be interpreted as a sacred place from another understanding of transgression. Namely, if we follow Michel Leiris and his biographically influenced investigation of the sacred in everyday life.¹³⁴ He is less concerned with official, cultural rituals that can be described and analysed in various societies around the world than with surrogates of the sacred in a secularized world, which can appear particularly from the child's perspective and in a very individual way in the form of certain places, things or words, to which something is attached that makes them appear to come from a different world: they are imbued with secret meanings, can frighten and fascinate us and are often taboo.¹³⁵ The places that Leiris interpreted as sacred

133 Ibid., pp. 27–28.

134 See Michel Leiris, 'Le sacré dans la vie quotidienne' (1938), in *La règle du jeu*, ed. by Denis Hollier, Paris: Gallimard 2003 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), pp. 1110–1118 (German: 'Das Sakrale im Alltag' (1938), in Denis Hollier (ed.), *Das Collège de Sociologie 1937–1939*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2012, pp. 98–111).

135 There are unmistakable references to Sigmund Freud's text *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker*, in Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Anna Freud et al., Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 1969 ff., vol. 9, and 'Das Unheimliche', in *ibid.*, vol. 12, pp. 227–278. The co-founder of the *Collège de Sociologie* Roger Caillois published his own work on the double face of the sacred as the repulsive, forbidden and dangerous *tremens* and the simultaneously attractive *fascinans* one year after Leiris' lecture; see Roger Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*, Paris: Leroux 1939.

from his childhood perspective, to which I would like to limit myself here, include the parental bedroom as an area of inviolable authority or, in complete contrast, the toilet as an area of secrecy and conspiracy, where he regularly withdrew with his older brother to tell each other mysterious stories and exchange the most daring fantasies. In addition to places from his own domestic and family sphere, Leiris also reports on places outdoors, such as a bushy 'Niemandsländ' located between the Paris fortifications and the Auteuil racecourse, which forms a 'unscharf definierte[r] Bereich' and at the same time, in opposition to the bourgeois world, a zone of 'seltsame Begegnungen' and 'mythische Abenteuer' that begins 'gleich nach dem Verlassen der geordneten Welt' and is haunted by 'Unholden' and 'Sittenstrolchen', which is why the children were always warned about it.¹³⁶ As an 'außerordentliches, ungewöhnlich stark tabuisiertes Milieu, ein vom Übernatürlichen und Sakralen tief durchdrungener Bereich, so ganz verschieden von den öffentlichen Anlagen, in denen alles vorbedacht, geordnet, mit dem Rechen durchgekämmt ist', the sacrality of this place is not based, as in van Gennepe, on the transgression of a ritualized transition from one state to another, which is part of the 'official' cultural life of a society, but on the entirely 'unofficial', 'indecent' transgression

136 Leiris, 'Das Sakrale im Alltag', pp. 102–103. Here is the passage in the original: 'Pour ce qui concerne les lieux de plein air, j'en retrouve deux qui me paraissent, avec le recul du temps et les notions que j'ai acquises depuis, avoir imprégnés, pour l'enfant par ailleurs pieux que j'étais, d'un caractère sacré: l'espace de brousse, de *no man's land*, qui s'étendait entre la zone des fortifications et le champ de courses d'Auteuil, ainsi que cet hippodrome lui-même. Lorsque notre mère ou notre sœur aînée nous emmenait promener tantôt au bois de Boulogne tantôt dans le jardin public attenant aux serres de la Ville de Paris, il nous arrivait souvent de traverser cet espace mal qualifié (opposé au monde bourgeois des maisons, comme au village – pour ceux qui appartiennent aux sociétés dites 'sauvages' – peut s'opposer la brousse, c'est-à-dire le monde vague, et propre à toutes les aventures mythique et étrange rencontre, qui commence sitôt quitté le monde dûment repéré que constitue le village), cette 'zone' effectivement hantée par les escarpes. L'on nous mettait alors en garde, s'il nous advenait de nous y arrêter pour jouer, contre les inconnus (en fait, je m'en rends compte aujourd'hui: les satyres) qui auraient pu, sous des prétextes fallacieux, essayer de nous entraîner vers les fourrés. Milieu à part, exceptionnellement taboué, zone lourdement touchée par le surnaturel et le sacré, si différent des jardins publics, où totait était prévu, ordonné, ratissé, et que les écriteaux interdisant de fouler l'herbe des pelouses, bien que signes de tabou, ne pouvaient douer que d'un sacré bien refroidi!' Michel Leiris, 'Le sacré dans la vie quotidienne' (1938), in Leiris, *La règle du jeu*, ed. by Denis Hollier, Paris: Gallimard 2003 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), p. 1113.

of bourgeois morality under the sign of eroticism and excess. This is countered by the fact that both eroticism and excess have equally ritualized forms which, under controlled conditions, have always been part of the basic repertoire of religious practices of various origins. And so, in contrast to a society that is becoming increasingly secularized but at the same time clings to religiously motivated moral concepts in the guise of bourgeois order, places like the no man's land described by Leiris have something sacred about them that appears archaic and pagan and seems all the stronger the more it is pushed back by bourgeois society.

As a 'pagan' sacred place of uncontrolled excess in precisely this sense, we encounter the *terrain vague* not only in Leiris, of course. Gil Doron, for example, reports on transgressions that regularly take place in such areas, be it parties with techno fans dancing themselves into a trance on LSD or ecstasy or groups of different sexual orientations and preferences that use remote wastelands as a place for uninhibited erotic activity. Incidentally, the *terrain vague* was already staged as such in 1885 by Émile Zola in *Germinal*, a novel about the proletarian miners' milieu and their political struggle. There we learn of a wasteland where discarded artefacts of industrial production are overgrown by the unleashed power of nature and misappropriated for the purposes of uninhibited love:

C'était le rendez-vous commun, le coin écarté et désert, où les herscheuses venaient faire leur premier enfant, quand elles n'osaient se risquer sur le carin. Les palissades rompues ouvraient à chacun l'ancien carreau, changé en un terrain vague, obstrué par les débris de deux hangars qui s'étaient écroulés, et par les carcasses des grands chevalets restés debout. Des berlines hors d'usage traînaient, d'anciens bois à moitié pourris entassaient des meules; tandis qu'une végétation drue reconqu Coast ce coin de terre, s'étalait en herbe épaisse, jaillissait en jeunes arbres déjà forts. Aussi chaque fille s'y trouvait-elle chez elle, il y avait des trous perdus pour toutes, les galants les culbutaient sur les poutres, derrière les bois, dans les berlines. On se logeait quand même, coudes à coudes, sans s'occuper des voisins. Et il semblait que ce fût, autour de la machine éteinte, près de ce puits las de dégorger de la houille, une revanche de la création, le libre amour qui, sous le coup de fouet de l'instinct, plantait des enfants dans les ventres de ces filles, à peine femmes.¹³⁷

137 Émile Zola, 'Germinal' (1885), in Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Armand Lanoux and Henri Mitterand, Paris: Gallimard 1961–67 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 3 (2nd chapter 4), pp. 1239–1240. And here in German translation: 'Das war der Ort für das allgemeine Stelldichein. Ein öder, abgelegener Winkel, wo sich die Schlepperinnen, wenn sie es nicht auf dem Schuppendach wagten, ihr erstes Kind machen ließen. [...] Außer Gebrauch gesetzte Karren standen umher, und altes, halbverfaultes Grubenholz war zu Stapeln aufgeschichtet. Üppiger Pflanzenwuchs hatte diesen Fleck Erde zurückerobert. [...] So war jedes junge Mädchen hier zu

Compared to the bourgeois urban space, whose efforts to control and regulate are directed both at the material, architectural order and at the behaviour of individuals in public space, such a *terrain vague* looks like a place that radically breaks with the prevailing norms. Society also recognizes places that are deliberately created for the purpose of moral transgression within a certain framework and have their social function within this framework. For Foucault, they also form a subtype of heterotopias, namely that of illusionary heterotopias. They are not 'other' spaces in that they condense a given order like the universalizing heterotopias or compensate for and surpass the deficiencies of a given order, as the compensatory heterotopias do, but in that they consciously suspend the order with regard to certain elements – especially normative morality – or even turn it into its opposite.¹³⁸ Places like the brothel, but also the swingers club, the nudist beach, the sauna or the gambling den, create the illusion of an 'other' reality in which other rules apply and what is actually considered immoral becomes the norm. And again, my conclusion must be: the *terrain vague* cannot be categorized as a heterotopia of illusion because it is not a social, intentionally created institution with a precisely defined, transparent transgressive function within a clearly defined framework in the sense of the examples just mentioned. And yet it is an essential part of the *terrain vague* that it can (and does not have to) repeatedly fulfil such functions unplanned, informally and mostly in secret.

The illusion created by the *terrain vague* of a different order that breaks with the prevailing norm can mainly be traced back to the impression that it is a power-free, anarchic zone, which in many cases is supported solely by the fact that, as Edensor has noted in relation to industrial wastelands, users (especially of remote, hidden and difficult to access *terrains vagues*) can often act undisturbed by the controlling gaze of passers-by or even police officers. Encouraged by this circumstance to break internalized social rules, inhibitions that are part of 'normal' behaviour in the public sphere are dropped, so that 'micro-excesses' or 'micro-transgressions' occur in an almost pre-programmed way: people pee in the bushes, touch things lying around and get their hands

Hause. Für alle fanden sich versteckte Eckchen. Ihre Liebhaber legten sie um auf den Balken, hinter den Holzstapeln, in den Karren. Sie richteten sich ein, wie sie konnten, dicht bei dicht, ohne sich um die Nachbarn zu kümmern. Es schien, als sei dies Treiben rings um die erloschene Maschine, um diesen Schacht, der es müde geworden war, Kohle zu speien, eine Vergeltung der Natur – die freie Liebe, die unter der Geißel des Triebs diesen kaum zu Weibern herangewachsenen Mädchen Kinder in den Bauch pflanzte.' Émile Zola, *Germinal* (1885), transl. by Johannes Schlaf, Munich: Winkler 1976, p. 175.

138 See Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', p. 756 ff.

dirty, throw them through the air or break them, leave their rubbish lying around or even dump it there, meet up to drink, smoke weed, have sex or fight.

On the *terrain vague*, you encounter all kinds of behaviour that is not tolerated or is suppressed in public spaces. Lefebvre writes about the *espace absolu* that it tolerates no contradiction and no difference and therefore suppresses every form of violence.¹³⁹ Doron also reports on official planning strategies in relation to public spaces that follow the idea of a ‘harmonious’ urban space and are accordingly designed to banish all behaviour that is deemed disruptive, inappropriate or indecent.¹⁴⁰ In American cities, *loitering* is explicitly prohibited in many places; in many European cities, a dispute is raging over the consumption of alcohol¹⁴¹ in public spaces; even picnicking in public places is sometimes penalized, and even more so sleeping in parks or begging on the streets. Many of these regulations lead to displacement processes that are rightly seen as discriminatory and are heavily criticized. Those that serve to prevent and control physical and psychological violence and protect property, on the other hand, are based on a broad social consensus. Irrespective of the issue of how far state control is permitted to go and how much public space should be regulated, which I cannot go into at this point, the fact remains that urban space, and in this case, this includes architectural configurations, technical apparatus and human instances in equal measure, acts overall as a dispositive that directly controls and disciplines human behaviour and in particular aims to suppress certain types of behaviour. And obviously the urban

139 Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, p. 69.

140 Doron, ‘Dead Zones, Outdoor Rooms and the Architecture of Transgression’, pp. 221–222.

141 Consider, for example, the discussion in Spain about the phenomenon of the *botellón*, an augmentative of *la botella* (meaning ‘the bottle’) and described by the *Real Academia Española* as a ‘reunión al aire libre de jóvenes, ruidosa y generalmente nocturna, en la que se consumen en abundancia bebidas alcohólicas’, <http://dle.rae.es/?id=5yyclWX> (accessed on 27 December 2020), thus defined as a ‘noisy and usually evening or night-time gathering of young people in the open air, where alcoholic beverages from large bottles are consumed in abundance’. It is a custom that emerged in the 1990s among young Spaniards – even banned in the *Comunidad Valencia, Andalucía, Madrid, Castilla y León, El País Vasco* and on the *Islas Canarias* by a law (*la Ley antibotellón*) in 2006 – who meet to celebrate together, usually in public spaces, to kick off the evening or the weekend. At so-called *macrobotellones*, to which invitations are posted on social networks, thousands of participants come together spontaneously in the Spanish metropolises, but now also in other European cities, see for example the article ‘Unos 70.000 jóvenes sevillanos se congregan mediante SMS para celebrar la Fiesta de la Primavera’, *elmundo.es*, 20 March 2004, www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/03/20/sociedad/1079751674.html (accessed on 27 December 2020).

space tolerates very few and only highly regulated valves through which social or moral 'excess pressure' is permitted or able to escape.

Literature about life in the Parisian *zone* during the first half of the twentieth century in particular provides us with descriptions of a structural inequality that exerts a social pressure that – not infrequently on *terrains vagues* – breaks out in naked violence, bringing to light the abysses of human existence and behaviour in places where people already live in an undignified manner. In bourgeois, 'civilized' homes, there is a German term for a place for the part of vegetative human life that is banished from the perceptible social space: the *Abort* ('privy', lit. 'off-place'). Etymologically derived from a 'secluded' place, the *Abort* is used for the invisible and secret disposal of excrement, which is subject to social taboos and shame. This aura of the forbidden places the toilet even more firmly in the realm of the sacred for Leiris and his childlike *alter ego*, especially as the hole through which the faeces are drawn into unknown depths is to be seen 'in direkter Verbindung mit den chthonischen Gottheiten', which is why the *Abort* resembles a 'Höhle' or an 'Unterwelt, aus der man seine Inspiration bezieht, indem man mit den düstersten und unterirdischsten Mächten in Verbindung tritt'.¹⁴²

What if the *terrain vague* now fulfilled a completely analogous function within the urban world without anyone ever having planned it that way? It would be an inverted compensatory heterotopia insofar as it would not compensate for the deficiencies of an order through an exaggerated order, but would allow that which is repressed, dominated and oppressed by an over-regulated order to break free. It would then be an urban *Ab-Ort* or 'off-place', a place away from the ordinary social space and away from the social concept of decency, which would make the abysmal, strange, aberrant and outlandish of human existence visible. And this can be read both psychologically and sociologically: the reference to the Freudian 'id' and the metaphor of the *terrain vague* as the unconscious structure of the city, guided by instinct and affect, is almost obvious; and the *terrain vague* as a place of the marginalized has already been discussed in detail.

Finally, however sacred the *terrain vague* may be, it can also be traced into less abyssal areas guided by the motif of transgression. To this end, I first refer to Bollnow's characterization of sacred space, in which he draws significantly on Mircea Eliade and Gerardus van der Leeuw.¹⁴³ As a general structure of sacred space, Bollnow works out the qualitative break between a

142 See Leiris, 'Le sacré dans la vie quotidienne', p. 1113 and in the German translation, p. 102.

143 Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum*, pp. 139–148.

‘heiligen, d. h. kraftgeladenen, bedeutungsvollen Raum’¹⁴⁴ and, in contrast, a space experienced as profane and homogeneous. This rupture occurs because ‘innerhalb des großen grenzenlosen Raums ein besonderer Bereich ausbildet, [...] der durch die Wirksamkeit des Numinosen ausgezeichnet ist’¹⁴⁵ and becomes a sacred place because, in van der Leeuw’s words, ‘an ihm die Wirkung der Macht wiederholt oder vom Menschen wiederholt wird’.¹⁴⁶ At this point, Bollnow also refers to the Latin word *templum*, which denotes an archetype of sacred space, so to speak, and literally means ‘das Herausgeschnittene’, which initially referred to the piece of sky chosen for the prophecies from the flight of birds and was later transferred to the erected building of the temple, which stands between the divine and the human world and therefore breaks with the ordinary, profane space.¹⁴⁷

In addition to the sacred spaces built by people, there are of course also those that were created naturally. But while the human act of building (be it temples, but basically also houses and cities, as Bollnow points out, always means the repetition of the original divine act of creation, insofar as humanity – as André Leroi-Gourhan also pointed out – thereby creates a ‘Kosmos in einem Chaos’ in the image of a higher order),¹⁴⁸ natural sacred places have a completely different aura. For in them – at least for those who are receptive – a divinity emerges without any human intervention. In fact, the sacredness of such places virtually prohibits them from being altered, built over or disturbed by humans.

144 Bollnow quotes here from Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane: Vom Wesen des Religiösen*, Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt 1957, p. 13.

145 Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum*, p. 142.

146 Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (1933), Tübingen: Mohr 21955, S. 446.

147 Ibid., p. 144. Bollnow also quotes Ernst Cassirer at this point: ‘Die Heiligung beginnt damit, daß aus dem Ganzen des Raums ein bestimmtes Gebiet herausgelöst, von anderen Gebieten unterschieden und gewissermaßen religiös umfriedet und umhegt wird’; Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II: Das mythische Denken*, Oxford: Cassirer 21954, p. 123.

148 Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum*, S. 144. Bollnow refers to various ethnological examples of houses built according to a cosmological order, as well as to the mythological foundation of Rome as a mirror of divine creation and order.



(Fig. 13)

The *terrain vague* is a place that, in the midst of a human cosmos in which there is nothing that is not willed and controlled by humanity, in the midst of a space that is becoming ever more homogeneous and controlled, looks like an area 'cut out' of this structure, in which creative forces are at work that elude human will and access, that are radically different and literally do what they want: the natural becoming of decay and growth, but also of chance. In this respect, the *terrain vague* itself, even without cases of ritual transitions and excessive transgressions, offers sufficient reason to experience it as a sacred realm that points beyond the human sphere. This is also to be understood in the sense that a city wanderer sensitive to these qualities of the *terrain vague*, such as Jacques Réda, can, thanks to the absence of human activity and exertion (which is all the more powerful as the place was once used by people and then abandoned on a wild wastelands left to nature) encounter the gods of purposelessness and uselessness, driven out from the modern world, in which leisure and the spiritual are assumed to be subordinated to economic optimization. In this encounter, two 'refusals' come together which further emphasize the sacred character of the *terrain vague*. On the one hand, the subject's refusal of time and space in 'contemplative torpor', opening himself sensually and mentally to the sight of the *terrain vague*.¹⁴⁹ Secondly, the time of the *terrain vague*, which is less a non-accelerated time than a time that cannot be accelerated. This difference has been pointed out by Byung-Chul Han, for whom the problem of the modern structure of time lies not only in the general acceleration, but in the fact that more and more forms of time that cannot be

149 See Leroi-Gourhan, *Hand und Wort: Die Evolution von Technik, Sprache und Kunst*, p. 231.

accelerated are disappearing.¹⁵⁰ Because in today's neoliberal world of work, which functions according to the logic of efficiency and capital, leisure time is increasingly becoming working time and can therefore be accelerated and exploited.¹⁵¹ Recreation is thus nothing other than a 'Modus der Arbeit' itself; it serves to regenerate the labour force, which is why it is not 'das Andere der Arbeit', but its very manifestation. Labour is no longer 'sacred', so to speak. In fact, the only 'other' time compared to profane working time is sacred time. It is the time of ritual and celebration, which as such cannot be accelerated and therefore enables a real experience of duration. I am of course immediately thinking of the *terrain vague* as a ritual threshold and place of celebration in the sense of excess. Sacred time, however, also includes a time that is uncontrolled and vegetating, as it only exists outside of human utilization cycles. And here too, in my opinion, the refusal of temporal acceleration is shown by the *terrain vague*, which is characterized precisely by its actual economic non-utilization or non-utilizability. The *terrain vague* can therefore not only be interpreted in various ways as a sacred space, but also as a sacred time.

2.6 ECOLOGY

In various wasteland discourses, the fear of the economic uselessness of urban 'empty spaces' is contrasted with their discovery as natural spaces. Meanwhile, renaturation and revitalization of such wasteland sites have become attractive options. In the following, I would like to explore the question of what exactly happens between the abandonment of previous uses and a targeted conversion, during the time in which humanity hands over these spaces it has created and shaped over to nature and the associated events, i.e. leaves them to their own devices (including all contaminated sites).

2.6.1 Unplanned Nature

Firstly, it's best to outline the initial situation: in contrast to the well-planned nature of urban greenery, the *terrains vagues* offer a non-planned, non-designed and unforeseen nature, created entirely without landscape architectural design. These are therefore spaces where nature is left to its own devices, abandoned areas where human activities have ceased and,

150 See Byung-Chul Han, 'Alles eilt: Wie wir die Zeit erleben', in *Die Zeit*, 25/13, www.zeit.de/2013/25/zeit-logik-effizienz-kapital-gabe (accessed on 27 December 2020).

151 For more on these trends in the new world of work, see the documentary film *WORK HARD, PLAY HARD*, Carmen Losmann, Germany 2012.

consequently, these spaces become reserves or privileged sites of biological diversity that serve as havens for many species. The botanist, landscape gardener and entomologist Gilles Clément, who has also designed various gardens and parks since the 1980s, coined the terms ‘garden of resistance’ (*jardin de résistance*), ‘planetary garden’ (*jardin planétaire*) and ‘garden in motion’ (*jardin en mouvement*), as well as the ‘third landscape’ (*Tiers Paysage*) for patches of land left lying around where flora and fauna sprout undisturbed. With the aim of increasing the ‘Third Landscapes’ and providing a necessary counterpoint to landscape planning, as well as ensuring the protection and reproduction of species and creating areas of biodiverse sustainability, he designed a programme to enhance the *Tiers Paysages*. In this *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage* from 2004, the ‘Third Landscape’ is described as the sum of all spaces in which humanity places the development of flora and fauna entirely in the hands of nature, or has already done so in the more or less distant past.¹⁵² Clément names urban and rural wastelands, transitional spaces, abandoned or neglected places, swamps, heathland and peat bogs, as well as roadsides, riverbanks, embankments and slopes, i.e. so-called residual spaces, as specific locations for ‘third landscapes’.¹⁵³

152 See Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage*, Paris: Sujet-objet 2004. The term *Tiers Paysage* was deliberately chosen by him in reference to the ‘Third Estate’ (French: *Tiers État*) in the Ancien Régime: a massive/powerful estate in terms of numbers, which is actually ‘everything’, but was completely underprivileged in terms of prestige at the time of the French Revolution, i.e. ‘nothing’, but hoped to ‘become something’.

153 Gilles Clément formulates the original as follows: ‘Le Tiers-Paysage – fragment indéfini du Jardin Planétaire – désigne la somme des espaces où l’homme abandonne l’évolution du paysage à la seule nature. Il concerne les délaissés urbains ou ruraux, les espaces de transition, les friches, marais, landes, tourbières, mais aussi les bords de route, rives, talus de voies ferrées.’ This is how he describes the ‘third landscape’ – in French he uses the term sometimes with and sometimes without a hyphen – and gives examples of specific places that are hidden behind the term in the extra-linguistic reality; see his website, which he constantly updates: www.gillesclement.com/cat-tierspaysage (accessed on 27 December 2020).



(Fig. 14)

In this respect, we believe that *terrains vagues*, which in turn always imply an urban context, can of course only be types of *Tiers Paysages* if they also originate from the urban milieu. Conversely, it could be said that *Tiers Paysages*, insofar as they are urban, have *terrain vague*-like traits. The meticulously planned urban greenery, all those manageable pansies that seem lost in a sea of black soil, alternating with counted begonias on traffic islands and in flowerbeds in parks and other public open spaces, is vehemently negated on ecologically-never-quite-empty urban wastelands. Conceptual garden design, geometric pruning of yews and boxwoods, straight lines in plantings, the cultivation of cultivated plants in general and composed colour mixtures are completely absent from the *terrain vague*, and in this sense also from the *Tiers Paysages*. Everything grows here as it pleases, how it pleases; it grows where it pleases and looks as it pleases.

In her article 'Neue Verhaltensregeln für den planetarischen Garten', in which Mădălina Diaconu discusses Clément's *Manifesto of the Third Landscape*, she summarizes that the *Tiers Paysage* represents a refuge for biodiversity (alongside primary ecosystems and reserves, of course) and thus an area that is difficult to delimit and define between resistance to a creative power and submission to it.¹⁵⁴ In this respect, Clément's contribution to biodiversity is also

154 See Mădălina Diaconu: 'Neue Verhaltensregeln für den planetarischen Garten – Zu Gilles Clément: *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*', in *polylog: Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren* 30, 2013, pp. 124–127.

a rebellion against the planetary melting pot.¹⁵⁵ The degree to which rebellious potential is also contained in his manifesto, apart from the fact that it appeals to the courage to leave fallow land lying around and not to intervene actively, is elucidated in the sub-chapter on transgression.

2.6.2 Diffuse Growth

It is not difficult to guess that Clément's concept is in no way fixed: the species must fight their way through, self-seed and circulate. The structural substance or infrastructure on the *terrains vagues* – if present – is never completely intact, but rather partially or completely destroyed, as it is exposed to the weather and decay without protection. It is often no longer possible to say with certainty what type of building it was and what it once looked like in its intact state. The structural boundaries, forms, lines and angles decay, disappear and leave a space of ambiguity and uncertainty. In the cracks in the middle of the crumbling tarmac, out of the holes in the uneven ground, over piles of stones, along walls and between not-so-natural building elements, a diffuse movement takes place, a fine, irregular distribution of new, completely natural greenery through seeds and self-seeding. New types of vegetation sprout from all the crevices: they colonize, perhaps remain, perhaps disappear again.¹⁵⁶ It is not uncommon for plants to be labelled as weeds according to popular opinion.¹⁵⁷

In addition, the polarity between public and private space that characterizes the city becomes blurred on the *terrains vagues*, as has already been shown on another ontological-semantic level. After all, who knows who owns this butterfly bush that has suddenly started to grow on the wasteland?

155 Diaconu refers here to the exact wording of the manifesto in German translation: Gilles Clément, *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*, Berlin Merve 2010, p. 21. She also adds the following relevant quotes from Clément, which help to clarify the concept here: 'Diversität drückt sich in der Anzahl der Arten auf dem Planeten und in der Vielfalt der Verhaltensweisen aus', *ibid.*, p. 27 and '[d]ie Auswirkung des kulturellen Schmelztiegels schlägt sich in der Verminderung der Verhaltensweisen nieder', *ibid.*, pp. 31.

156 See Gilles Clément/François Hallé/François Letourneux, *Espèces vagabondes, menace ou bienfait?*, Toulouse: Plume de Carotte 2014 (Les Engagés).

157 See Gilles Clément/Jean-Paul Ruiz, *Herbes ou ces plantes qu'on dit mauvaises*, Saint-Aulaire: Jean-Paul Ruiz 2003, and Klara Buhl, *Die naturgesunde Kräuter-Küche*, Tübingen: Günter Albert Ulmer 1996, which makes it clear that 'weeds' are only labelled as such by humans because their value is completely unrecognized. Weed vegetation on cultivated land is not taken into account here, as this so-called segetal vegetation is to be distinguished from the ruderal vegetation of interest to me. Just as a scenario, it should be noted that any segetal vegetation will naturally be replaced by ruderal vegetation over time.

Everyone seems to be laying claim to the idyllic flora and fauna, but no-one is looking after it intensively and regularly. Not even if you discover neobiota (neophytes, neozoa and neomycetes)¹⁵⁸, i.e. species that have with or without human help established themselves in a certain space in which they were previously not native, or if you find any rarities, you are allowed to call them your own, even though legal power of disposal and utilization does not necessarily coincide with actual control over something. Sooner or later, nature often takes over to a certain extent: ruderal vegetation spreads across the *terrains vagues*, trees literally break through walls, fungi and moss cover ruins, and abandoned buildings become a biotope for a diverse flora and fauna.

In their *Botanischen Wörterbuch*, Rudolf Schubert and Günther Wagner define the terms *Ruderalflora*, *Ruderalgesellschaften* and *Ruderalpflanzen* (Latin *rudus* for 'piece, stone, ore', and *rudera* for 'rubble') as growths and associated plants that largely occur on nitrogen-rich, consequently nutrient-rich, heavily influenced soils in the immediate vicinity of settlements, on rubble sites and along roadsides. These are often goosefoot (*Chenopodium*) and nettle (*Urtica*) species. Ruderal areas are described as such:

unter dauerndem menschlichen Einfluss stehenden, ursprünglich oder zeitweise pflanzenarmen, meist verhältnismäßig nährstoffreichen Standorte, denen gewöhnlich eine gute Bodenkrume oder echte Horizontbildung des Bodens fehlt. Ihr Untergrund zeichnet sich durch große Schwankungen der Temperatur und Feuchtigkeit aus. Ihre Vegetation hat mit derjenigen von Küstenspülsäumen viel gemeinsam. Zu den Ruderalstellen gehören Müllhalden, Abfallhaufen, Hofplätze und Trümmerstellen. Einige Autoren erweitern den Begriff auf Feldraine, Wegränder und Brachfelder, die jedoch auch andere Bodenbedingungen aufweisen können.¹⁵⁹

158 The specialist literature on ruderal botany agrees that the proportion of newly immigrated species, which is usually less than 5%, can be estimated to be above average at 30% in ruderal meadows. There are many reasons for this: sea fringes, over-fertilization, climate change, but also the after-effects of the Second World War etc. This can be read, for example, in Gerhard Hard, *Ruderalvegetation: Ökologie und Ethnoökologie, Ästhetik und 'Schutz'*, Kassel: Notizbuch 49 der Kasseler Schule 1998; and in Gerhard Hard, *Vegetationsentwicklung auf Brachflächen*, Darmstadt-Kranichstein KTBL 1976; and in Klaus-Jürgen Evert (ed.), *Lexikon Landschafts- und Stadtplanung: Mehrsprachiges Wörterbuch über Planung, Gestaltung und Schutz der Umwelt*, Berlin: Springer 2001.

159 Rudolf Schubert/Günther Wagner, *Botanisches Wörterbuch*, Stuttgart: Ulmer 122000, p. 477.

Similarly, Rita Lüder mentions the cruciferous plants (*Brassicaceae*) – herbs, perennials and semi-shrubs – whose species can often be categorized as ruderal plants:

Ruderalpflanzen leben meist als Einjährige auf häufig gestörten und oft mit Nährstoffen belasteten Standorten wie Abbauflächen, Bauplätzen und Wegrändern. [...] Sie lieben immer wieder neu entstehende Freiflächen. Ihre ursprünglichen Standorte sind die Schotterbänke und Abrisskanten der Gewässerufer.¹⁶⁰

In Lüder's opinion, the generally short lives and self-pollination typical of such sites, which are often left fallow, is particularly common among crucifers and other ruderal plants. The nutrient or nitrogen indicators are primarily large-growing species that build up a lot of plant mass very quickly and thus curb the growth of other species. To name just a few: stinging nettle, meadow chervil, dandelion, blunt-leaved and curly dock, mugwort, burdock ragwort, goutweed, greater knapweed, humpbacked duckweed, white deadnettle, chickweed, garlic rocket, meadow hogweed and thistle. Among other species, St John's wort, hare's clover, silver thistle and small meadow knapweed are considered drought indicators. Indicator plants for compacted soil and those favoured by mechanical stress include ribwort plantain, daisies, coltsfoot, goosegrass, quackgrass, knotweed, and creeping buttercup. Finally, the following should be mentioned as indicators of leanness: sorrel, bedstraw, eyebright, broom and marguerite.¹⁶¹ Tansy, narrow-leaved willowherb, glandular/Indian balsam, small-flowered/Siberian balsam and, at a later stage, elder, various birches, salvias, locust trees and, in recent decades, butterfly or summer lilacs often establish themselves quite quickly on an urban wasteland. In his work, ecologist John Philip Grime identifies three strategic adaptation types in the plant world: C (*competitive*), S (*stress tolerant*), R (*ruderal/rapid propagation*), which lead to his CSR theory.¹⁶² The last type of strategy or adaptation, which is highly relevant for me, for us, can be defined as short-lived, but strong in dispersal; in addition, the ruderal strategists are seed-rich and persistent, so that they can

160 Rita Lüder, *Grundkurs Pflanzenbestimmung*, Wiebelsheim: Quelle & Meyer ³2006, p. 203 f.

161 Ibid., pp. 35–55.

162 See John Philip Grime, 'Vegetation Classification by Reference to Strategies', in *Nature* 250, 1974, pp. 26–31, and *Plant Strategies, Vegetation Processes, and Ecosystem Properties*, Hoboken/New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons ²2001. This is the second, greatly expanded edition of the classic *Plant Strategies and Vegetation Processes* from 1979.

regenerate and revitalize themselves quickly, even after a long time, under favourable conditions.

To summarize a little, I would like to point out that the constellation of flora and fauna on a *terrain vague* or other human-influenced sites is generally not intended by humans but germinates by chance – sometimes even against human will¹⁶³ – on these overused or underused or even devastated areas. Ruderal species are always the first colonizers. However, diversity and heterogeneity flourish in all meadows, regardless of whether flora and fauna thrive in short-lived or perennial ruderal meadows, whether in woody or woodland communities during later successional sequences up to climax stages.¹⁶⁴ To the now justified question of whether eventually all *terrain vagues* will look similar, as they gradually transform into a fairly uniform climax society (monoclimax theory), Hermann Remmert and Wolfgang Scherzinger respond with their mosaic-cycle concept from the 1990s, stating that successions of ecosystems proceed in phases shifted and asynchronously. The ecological appearance of an urban wasteland site thus remains undefined and completely open in terms of future developments. According to Remmert and Scherzinger, an ecosystem is developing that is made up of a dynamic mosaic of plant communities of different ages, both native and exotic.¹⁶⁵

However, the nature that is usually found in the city is often only a cultural product in certain respects. ‘Wild’ parks in the style of English landscape gardens, however much they imitate ‘natural’ conditions and deliberately seek to distinguish themselves from French Baroque gardens, are part of urban planning and are therefore designed, laid out and controlled. The *terrains vagues*, on the other hand, are not planned, continuously maintained or kept in good condition – in fact, the exact opposite happens to them. And that way,

163 In keeping with Maarten ‘t Hart, *Die grüne Hölle*, München/Berlin Piper 2016, see pp. 49–52. At the end of the chapter entitled ‘Die grüne Übermacht’, the reader is left wondering whether we will have to capitulate to green supremacy at some point.

164 The concept of the final stage of the ‘climax society’ caused by the climate goes back to Frederic Edward Clements, who also sheds light on the succession of plant communities: Clements, ‘Nature and Structure of the Climax’, in *The Journal of Ecology* 24, 1936, pp. 252–284.

165 See Hermann Remmert, ‘Das Mosaik-Zyklus-Konzept und seine Bedeutung für den Naturschutz: Eine Übersicht’, in Bayerische Akademie für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege (ed.), *Das Mosaik-Zyklus-Konzept und seine Bedeutung für den Naturschutz*, Laufen: Laufener Seminarbeiträge 5/1991, pp. 5–15, Wolfgang Scherzinger, ‘Das Mosaik-Zyklus-Konzept aus der Sicht des zoologischen Artenschutzes’, in *ibid.*, pp. 30–42, and *Naturschutz im Wald: Qualitätsziele einer dynamischen Waldentwicklung*, Stuttgart: Ulmer 1996.

nature can develop freely on some of them without human intervention. The *terrains vagues* therefore refuse clear categorization in the 'culture vs. nature' dichotomy, because on the one hand they are products or by-products of cultural interventions and on the other hand, because they are uncultivated, they can become veritable nature reserves.¹⁶⁶ What gives them a special effect is, according to Doron, 'an eccentric and charming, entertaining combination of a ruined or a derelict city and wild nature. It is a space that opened in the dichotomy of what we perceive as city and nature'.¹⁶⁷ Nature and culture meet and unite on the *terrains vagues*: The ruderal vegetation growing on them is spontaneous and wild, more 'original' and 'natural' than the man-made urban landscape and yet still anthropogenic. In the case of ruderal vegetation, being created by humanity and at the same time untouched by humans is not a contradiction, but the reason for its existence: 'Auch wenn Spontanvegetation nicht beabsichtigte Vegetation ist, ist sie dennoch eine vollständig anthropogene Vegetation und zwar in dem Sinne, daß sie auf vom Menschen gemachten Standorten wächst und ohne diese gar nicht existieren könnte.'¹⁶⁸ The *terrains vagues* are a hybrid result of anthropogenic and natural development, thus neither a purely cultivated nor a purely natural landscape, in the sense of a kind of 'third landscape' whose most prominent characteristic is that it is ecologically highly heterogeneous and dynamic:

Gegen den allgemeinen Prozess der Anthropogenisierung, der primäre Ökosysteme in sekundäre Lebensräume verwandelt, stehen die sich selbst überlassenen Gelände für die Regenerierungskraft der Natur. Nichtsdestoweniger befürwortet Clément nicht die Konservierung dieser Räume, was sie zur Stagnation verurteilen würde, sondern plädiert für ihr Seinlassen (was wiederum gerade nicht mit Vernachlässigung verwechselt werden darf); erst dadurch entwickelt das Brachland von selbst eine starke Dynamik.¹⁶⁹

166 Industrial ruins, disused railway lines and other large-scale *terrains vagues* often offer protected space for nature, where a high level of biodiversity can develop by urban standards. See the article by Juliane Mathey/Dieter Rink, 'Urban Wastelands: A Chance for Biodiversity in Cities?', in Norbert Müller et al. (eds.), *Urban Diversity and Design*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2010, pp. 406–424.

167 Doron, 'The Dead Zone and the Architecture of Transgression', p. 255.

168 Per Gerhard Hard, 'Die spontane Vegetation der Wohn- und Gewerbequartiere von Osnabrück (1)', in *Osnabrücker naturwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen* 9, 1982, pp. 151–203, at p. 152.

169 See Diaconu, 'Neue Verhaltensregeln für den planetarischen Garten – Zu Gilles Clément: *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*', p. 125.

To cite another literary example that testifies to Julien Gracq's deep attachment to such wastelands overgrown by nature, I quote the poem 'Pour galvaniser l'urbanisme' from his collection of prose poems *Liberté grande* (1946), in which it becomes clear how much the poetic I is taken with the beauty of the ruderal vegetation between skyscrapers on the outskirts of the city, here in a free translation: 'At the edges of the city, where it would indeed be pure temptation for us, for example, to see the beautiful couch grass growing right at the foot of extravagant skyscraper orgies.'¹⁷⁰

The perception of time is similarly indeterminate, diffuse and open in a *Tiers Paysage*, the observation of which modifies the relationship to time insofar as unpredictability, spontaneity and contingency are reinterpreted positively in the truest sense: 'Ebenso zwingt uns die *Dritte Landschaft*, Abschied zu nehmen von der abendländischen Auffassung der Landschaft und diese 'mit anderen Kulturen der Erde [zu] konfrontieren', insbesondere mit jenen, die die Symbiose zwischen Mensch und Natur in den Vordergrund stellen.'¹⁷¹ In the next section, we will find out to what extent Gilles Clément's *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft* is a reaction to diverse processes of globalization which simply cannot be stopped, any more than can be stopped the winds of pastel shades blossoming incessantly over the building fences, and which contribute significantly to the reduction of endemic species and thus to homogenization on *terrains vagues*.

2.6.3 Incessant Genesis and Invention

It is no exaggeration to say that most urban wastelands become ecological refuges for a constantly expanding heterogeneous flora and fauna. These areas, where nature not only takes over but literally reclaims them, are regarded as the *enfant terrible* of all ecological open spaces within the city and are of course in the truest sense a thorn in the side of landscape planning. Perhaps because the *terrain vague* as a *lieu fatal* (as a place that embarrasses the subject in a positive or negative way) simply cannot be properly grasped: it slips away,

170 See Julien Gracq, 'Pour galvaniser l'urbanisme', from 'Liberté grande' (1946), in Gracq, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Bernhild Boie, Paris: Gallimard 1989–1995 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 1, p. 267. In the original French, the quote reads: '[S]ur les lisières d'une ville où cependant il serait pour nous d'une telle séduction de voir par exemple les beaux chiendents des steppes au pied même de l'extravagante priapée des gratte-ciel'.

171 Diaconu, 'Neue Verhaltensregeln für den planetarischen Garten – Zu Gilles Clément: *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*', p. 126. Diaconu in turn refers directly to Gilles Clément's manifesto.

because it is ambivalent in character, both attractive-cum-seductive and with magical-cum-demonic traits, itself more or less perfect, it secretly promises maximum fulfilment of one's own dreams and desires, it comes across as self-determined and harbours (sometimes destructive) transgressions of norms and laws, it is even capable of manipulating by encouraging subjects to serve certain roles or freeing them from having to assume them.

Even if they are not conventional gardens on urban wasteland, the wild growth on the *terrain vague* composes a rather unusual garden concept in some respects. Michel Foucault described the garden as a heterotopia *par excellence*, because anyone who creates a garden designs their ideal image of the world, a microcosm, a genuinely realized utopia. If the *terrain vague* is also described as 'different', it is not because it creates a perfect order that reflects a greater order, but insofar as it negates the structures of the city itself and completely breaks through the human-made order.



(Fig. 15)

As genetic reservoirs of our planet, urban wastelands are also spaces that point to the future and as such are compared by Philippe Vasset in *Un livre blanc* to Noah's ark, for example:

Lapins, canards, grenouilles dans les mares entre le périphérique et le bassin d'Aubervilliers, rats le long des voies ferrées, chats et chiens errants, hirondelles, pigeons, et même renards – on retrouve de semblables arches de Noé, sur les plates-bandes qui cernent les aires de repos des autoroutes.¹⁷²

172 Again Vasset, *Un livre blanc*, p. 98. My translation: 'Kaninchen, Enten, Frösche in den Tümpeln zwischen dem *Boulevard périphérique* und dem Kanal von Auber-

In this sense, the *terrain vague* can become a site of biological preservation and invention, in that it protects and thus preserves living beings on the one hand, and on the other hand constantly replays the empty space and thus achieves a dynamic-creative performance, which, however, cannot be patented, even if Jacques Réda tries to do so in an ironically broken way with his manifesto of the 'Union pour la Préservation des Terrains Vagues'.¹⁷³ Réda also expresses himself with regard to the flora and fauna on Parisian *terrains vagues*, for example in his collection of prose poems *Les terminus* – thematized here to illustrate the transgressive character on the level of ecology as representative of all *terrains vagues* that form a 'third landscape' – in which the eight Parisian terminus stations are portrayed individually. He concludes with his text about the disused Paris light rail ring.¹⁷⁴ When it was decommissioned, the *Petite Ceinture* line became a narrow strip of wasteland, a *terrain vague* belt that still partially surrounds the centre of Paris today and has been filled with lush vegetation undisturbed during the decades of no or only minimal use. And so Rédas' text begins with the speaker describing the railway facilities of the *Petite Ceinture* as '[I]un des plus vastes et plus secrets jardins de Paris'¹⁷⁵ ('one of the largest and most secret gardens in Paris'). A 'gros bouillonnement d'acacias frais et vertigineux' ('a fierce, fresh and vertiginous wall of acacias') gives this 'garden', whose fauna includes whole packs of neglected domestic cats and a few birds, an exotic and wild flavour. Much more than a garden or park spanning Paris, for the speaker it is therefore 'une petite forêt vierge, présente sur tous nos horizons' ('a small primeval forest, present in our field of vision'). The extraterritoriality of such a 'primeval forest', located in the centre of urban Paris, is reinforced by a fence that isolates it and prevents access to it. Much is demanded of the curious city walker keen to see the beauty of this secret biotope up close: such a person must prove agile enough to negotiate the bars

villiers, Ratten entlang der Gleise, streunende Katzen und Hunde, Schwalben, Tauben und sogar Füchse – man findet vergleichbare Archen Noahs auf den Grünstreifen, die Autobahnraststätten umgeben.'

- 173 See the untitled copy of the *poèmes en prose*, which can be found in the following anthology: Jacques Réda, *Les Ruines de Paris* (1977)/*Die Ruinen von Paris*, p. 56.
- 174 Once used to connect the eight *terminus*, passenger trains on the *Petite Ceinture* line were abandoned as early as 1934 and until the late 1970s it was only used occasionally for freight transport, including to serve the Citroën factories in Grenelle, which after their closure became the setting for Réda's prose poem 'Je veux que ces bons matins de dimanche ...' from his *Les Ruines de Paris*.
- 175 Jacques Réda, 'La Petite Ceinture', in Réda, *Châteaux des courants d'air*, Paris: Gallimard 1986, pp. 140–144. All of Réda's quotations on this and the following page refer to this text.

of the fence and must not shy away from the risk of accidents or possible criminal prosecution when attempting to cross this boundary. Risk and danger make the crossing of the threshold to this very oasis in the middle of the city, the transgression, an intense physical and psychological experience. The crossing of the border is ultimately rewarded with a fascinating view at Réda. Consisting of the interpenetration of decaying remnants of culture that point to the past and a restless, unstoppable nature, the *Petite Ceinture* stands between the two spheres.



(Fig. 16)

This aesthetic event of a ‘reconquête accomplie par l’exubérance végétale sur un tracé colonisateur’ (‘a reconquest carried out by plant luxuriance on a colonizing route’), or at least a hybridization of culture and nature, is experienced through several sensory channels. The visual image of the recapture of the railway system by nature is not only reminiscent of the beauty of an overgrown locomotive proclaimed by André Breton¹⁷⁶ and ‘deutlich surrealistischen Regressionsfantasien verpflichtet’¹⁷⁷: it also gains in impressiveness insofar as the railway in the nineteenth century (from which the *Petite Ceinture* originates)

176 In ‘Nadja’, André Breton describes the *Place Dauphine* (which Gérard de Nerval once claimed had even been built on a *terrain vague*, but which in 1928 was a completely normal square on the *île de la Cité*) as ‘un des pires terrains vagues qui soient à Paris’. Breton, ‘Nadja’ (1928), in Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Marguerite Bonnet, Paris: Gallimard 1988–2008 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 1, pp. 695–697.

177 Wolfram Nitsch, ‘Paris ohne Gesicht: Städtische Nicht-Orte in der französischen Prosa der Gegenwart’, in Andreas Mahler (ed.), *Stadt-Bilder: Allegory – Mimesis – Imagination*, Heidelberg: Winter 1999, pp. 305–321, at p. 314.

was an important instrument for the colonization of 'wild space'. The mingling of the plant scent with 'les relents d'une crémation complexe interminable: haillons, cartons, plastiques, vieux pneus' ('the stink of a complex, never-ending burning of rags, cartons, plastic and old tyres'), which can only be an indication of illegal waste disposal on the *terrain vague*, becomes a less appealing but nonetheless intense olfactory experience. The almost paradisiacal space at the beginning of the text, which contains some of the constitutive elements of a *locus amoenus* – the greenery, the flowers, the birds, all nature of the first kind – is brutally contaminated by cultural waste products. The impression of the *terrain vague* as the Garden of Eden, as paradise, Elysium or part of the heavenly realms of the blessed, is usually counterbalanced by a counterweight that should not be ignored.

While new things are constantly being created in such 'nature reserves' in the metropolises, there is neither reactionary rebellion against globalization nor romantic mourning for it; rather, they function – in the spirit of Clément – as humming engines of evolution:

Der ökonomischen Akkumulation wird somit die biologische Evolution im Sinne von Transformation und Invention gegenübergestellt – und dem Monopol der Planbarkeit die ‚Nicht-Planung als vitales Prinzip‘. Dadurch wird die Unproduktivität rebellisch in den Rang einer politischen Praxis erhoben und was unter Schutz gestellt werden soll, ist gerade die ‚moralische, gesellschaftliche und politische Deregulierung der Dritten Landschaft‘.¹⁷⁸

For Gilles Clément, this results in various synergy effects, for example the cross-national¹⁷⁹ cooperation to be sought to protect the *Tiers Paysages* or the absolutely necessary citizen participation, which is defined by ethical rules of conduct for 'world citizens'. This includes daily stocktaking instead of unnecessary waiting for politicians to realize long-term plans, collective responsibility for the *Tiers Paysages*, a change in mentality by valuing non-productivity and the practice of non-intervention or letting things lie, because 'die 'Realität der Dritten Landschaft ist eine geistige', sei es, dass die Evolution auf Lamarcksche Art statt darwinistisch verstanden wird, sei es, dass in ihr ein

178 Diaconu, 'Neue Verhaltensregeln für den planetarischen Garten – Zu Gilles Clément: *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*', p. 125. Diaconu's quotes again refer to the German edition of the manifesto: Gilles Clément, *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*, p. 56, 59, 61.

179 See, for example, Thomas Wrbka/Katharina Zmelik/Franz Michael Grünweis (eds.), *Das Grüne Band Europas: Grenze. Wildnis. Zukunft*, exh. cat., Weitra: Bibliothek der Provinz 2009.

‘privilegierter Ort der biologischen Intelligenz’ gefunden wird dank ihrer ‘Fähigkeit, sich ständig neu zu erfinden’.¹⁸⁰

Even though Clément usually discusses a supposedly peaceful and idyllic subject in his works, namely that of nature and gardens, we have seen that he delivers enough explosives at the same time.¹⁸¹

In addition to the thrill of planning something interesting, new, exciting, and forbidden, to the sense of adventure that arises when one feels free and unconstrained, forgets about daily life, feels comfortable, and believes one can do anything one desires, in the twilight under the open sky, whether it’s launching rockets or blowing up homemade bombs, to the longing, the wanderlust, and the happiness, further experiences can arise for the individual on the *terrain vague* that I would like to examine in the final section of the systematic analysis (on aesthetics), on the semantic and ontological levels of physics, economics, politics, sociology, ethnology and ecology.

2.7 AESTHETICS

The following explanations are based on Daniel Ritter’s text ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’,¹⁸² which I will refer to from now on. Instead of continuing to consider the urban wasteland as an objectively describable object after its treatment in the history of concepts, discourse and literature, in this chapter I will conceptualize it as a ‘phenomenon’ that appears to a subject – in the phenomenological sense – in a certain way, is sensually perceived, emotionally experienced or mentally understood.¹⁸³ I therefore focus more on the subjective in the three categories of meaning and direct my attention to the qualities of experienced *terrains vagues*, to the aesthetics, for example of the vague, the ruin etc. The fact that a clearly defined purpose is often not

180 Diaconu, ‘Neue Verhaltensregeln für den planetarischen Garten – Zu Gilles Clément: *Manifest der Dritten Landschaft*’, p. 126. Diaconu’s quotations again refer to the German edition of the manifesto, *ibid.*, pp. 25 and 64.

181 See Alexander Kluy, ‘Gilles Clément – Der Garten ist im Gärtner: Ein Plädoyer für Gärten als antiökonomische Paradiese’, in *derstandard.at*, 25 September 2015, derstandard.at/2000022789141/Gilles-Clement-Der-Garten-ist-im-Gaertner (accessed on 27 December 2020). Here, Kluy discusses the publication of the German edition of Gilles Clément’s, *Gärten, Landschaft und das Genie der Natur: Vom ökologischen Denken*, Berlin Matthes & Seitz 2015.

182 See Daniel Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, in Jacqueline Maria Broich/Daniel Ritter, *Die Stadtbrache als ‘terrain vague’*, pp. 241–277.

183 According to Bernhard Waldenfels, ‘Seinsgehalt und Zugangsart der Erfahrung unzertrennlich zusammen’, see Bernhard Waldenfels: *Topographie des Fremden: Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden I*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1997, p. 66.

apparent in these empty, unused urban spaces makes them seem predestined for aesthetic observation – ‘ähnlich wie die ‘Landschaft’, die überhaupt erst dadurch zu einem ästhetischen Konzept werden konnte, dass sie, in den Worten Kants, ‘interesselos’ und ohne Zweckvorstellungen in einen Blick geriet, der in ihr nicht den Schweiß der Feldarbeit sah’.¹⁸⁴

2.7.1 Aesthetic Paradigms of Emptiness, Absence and Negation

Particularly with regard to aesthetics, time and space can hardly be separated from each other: ‘Jede Hierarchisierung von Zeit und Raum, die ein einseitiges Gefälle herstellt, würde erfordern, daß man letzten Endes die Räumlichkeit aus der Zeitlichkeit oder die Zeitlichkeit aus der Räumlichkeit herleitet’.¹⁸⁵ Thinking figuratively, Daniel Ritter connects the adjective *vacuus* as the centre of a celestial body with five rays that spread brightness in different directions from the star centre of emptiness/absence/negation.

(1) Like two sides of the same coin, the experience of *terrain vague* initially involves two complementary phenomena that are primarily based on spatial emptiness: a *horror vacui* (agoraphobia, claustrophobia, excess of openness, an outside without inside, space without place, lostness, lack of support and orientation) can arise in the subject just as much as a contrary *amor vacui* (claustrophobia, excess of closedness, constriction and fullness, an inside without outside, place without space, lack of space).¹⁸⁶ Either the subject on a *terrain vague* senses a kind of *tremendum*, an unease, a moment of perplexity or fear due to this terrifying, demonic reflection of the city with no recognizable value, or he perceives a *fascinosum* that attracts immensely, stimulates his own imagination, offers a wealth of possibilities and stimulates individual interpretations.¹⁸⁷

(2) The second aesthetic ray refers to the ‘aesthetics of the ruin’, which encompass a temporal no-longer of the past (conditioned and motivated by disuse, destruction, natural decay etc.) and the inevitably associated traces (ruderal vegetation, facades with crumbling plaster, graffiti on facades, dis-

184 Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, p. 241. According to Ritter, Kant defines *beauty* as the object of ‘disinterested pleasure’ and makes the absence of a purpose for this object and a desire for it a precondition of aesthetic judgement; see Immanuel Kant: *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. by Karl Vorländer, Hamburg: Meiner 1974, pp. 37–58.

185 Bernhard Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2009, p. 238.

186 See *ibid.*, p. 56.

187 See Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, p. 243 f.

carded objects, contamination, pollutants etc.), as well as the present as a point from which the subject looks back on the past, and also the future, more precisely, an interplay of these three times:

Die Ruine ist Zeichen dessen, was sie einmal als intakter Bau war, doch wächst ihr eine Schönheit zu, ein *Surplus* von Bedeutung, die in der Semantik der Gewesenheit nicht aufgeht. Die Ruine zeigt eine prekäre Balance von erhaltener Form und Verfall, von Natur und Geschichte, Gewalt und Frieden, Erinnerung und Gegenwart, Trauer und Erlösungssehnsucht, wie sie von keinem intakten Bauwerk oder Kunstobjekt erreicht wird.¹⁸⁸

The existence of the *terrain vague* as a ruin and the general fondness for ruins can already be found in Romanticism, because they combine essential characteristics of Romantic aesthetics: on the one hand, they offer the subject an imagined escape from the present and a melancholic, nostalgic clinging to an idealized past in the face of advancing industrialization and, on the other hand, the hand-in-hand culture and nature, the harmony and empathy of humanity with precisely this nature and the romantic 'Sinn für gleitende Übergänge, für Kontinuität, für Verbindung aller Erscheinungen untereinander'¹⁸⁹ coincide there. Human escapism into an alternative now and the longing for redemption in a better future are also motivated on a *terrain vague* by the fact that it makes the subject aware of its otherness as a quieter, oasis-like alternative place in comparison to the purposefulness, the efficiency imperatives and the oppressive labour and power relations of the surrounding city.¹⁹⁰ It is thus predestined for the subject's raptures, whose impulse is the *idea of vanitas*, transience or the mutual reference of different times to one another. In this sense, the ruin can be read as an allegory of human transience. In this context, Jean-François Raffaëlli draws our attention to his painting entitled 'Le terrain vague' (1882),

188 Hartmut Böhme, 'Die Ästhetik der Ruinen', in Dietmar Kamper/Christoph Wulf (eds.), *Der Schein des Schönen*, Göttingen: Steidl 1989, pp. 287–304, at p. 287.

189 Johannes Jahn, *Wörterbuch der Kunst* (1939), continued by Wolfgang Haubenreißer, Stuttgart: Kröner ¹¹1989, pp. 724–725.

190 See Häußermann/Siebel, 'Stadt und Urbanität', p. 306: 'Nicht die Ästhetik des baulichen Verfalls ist entscheidend für die Stimulanz von Kreativität, die in vielen leergewordenen Fabrikhallen, Schlachthäusern oder alten Gefängnissen anzutreffen ist, sondern der Verfall der Herrschaft dessen, dem diese Gehäuse einmal gedient hatten. Er hinterlässt leere Hüllen, die noch von Macht und Herrlichkeit erzählen oder von Lärm, Ausbeutung und Maloche. Aber die neuen Nutzer sind all dem nicht mehr unterworfen, sie können, was der Machtentfaltung oder der Kontrolle menschlicher Arbeit diente, als ihre Freiräume erfahren.'

das eine Szene aus der Pariser Peripherie zeigt, in welcher sowohl der Körper des ausgemergelten Pferdes als leibhaftige Ruine die Sicht auf das Urbane am Horizont verstellt als auch der streunende Hund, der sich von der erloschenen Feuerstelle und dem übriggebliebenen und diese umgebenden Unrat abwendet: Wer das Feuer vergangener Zeiten sucht, der findet es eben in der Asche.¹⁹¹



(Fig. 17)

(3) A frequent motif for experiencing *terrains vagues* is the subject's 'desire for the other', be it as a negation of the ever-same (the monotonous, faceless, functional urban architecture), as an escape from everyday life (rebellion against consumption) or simply as an adventure and voyage of discovery to counteract boredom. Daniel Ritter cites the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, to whom the following quote is wrongly attributed: 'La vraie vie est ailleurs.'¹⁹² Accordingly, Rimbaud's lyrical I rebels against the familiar, rebels against its predictable reality and destroys everything established, with the 'ailleurs' emerging as a paradisiacal place of longing, as a gateway to a free world that

191 Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 247.

192 This verse is attributed to Rimbaud, although only 'La vraie vie est absente' can be found in his nine-part prose poem *Une saison en enfer* (1873), see Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by André Guyaux, Paris: Gallimard 2009 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), p. 260.

must have nothing to do with the familiar 'ici'.¹⁹³ There is no doubt that the *terrain vague* can be understood in this sense as a *locus amoenus*, inviting quiet contemplation and lingering in solitude, holding one or two mysteries in store and still capable of surprising as an *arcanum*, quite the opposite of the other urban *loci terribiles*.¹⁹⁴

(4) This beam of light radiates from *vacuus* in the direction of the ugly and disorderly, the imperfect and the neglected. We are no strangers to the fact that, since ancient times, beauty has long been equated with truth and goodness. Following this logic, the ugly was considered the opposite of the beautiful, also part of creation. But can't the dark side of beauty,¹⁹⁵ which at first seems different and strange, perhaps disorganized and chaotic, then unsettling and possibly repulsive to us, also have an aesthetic appeal? However, just because something like this attracts us – out of curiosity or interest – does not mean that it has aesthetic value or is 'beautiful'.¹⁹⁶ In *Poétique de la ville* (1973) by Pierre Sansot, it becomes clear that the *terrain vague* can be dirty, disgusting and degrading due to its rubbish, shards, worn-out car tyres and broken furniture:

Mais le malaise que nous ressentons face au terrain vague vient de plus loin encore. [...] Or, ce terrain vague détruit cette illusion vitale. Le fond est donc, lui aussi, sale, plus sale s'il se peut, plus dégénéré. [...] D'autre part, il s'agit d'une matière avilie qu'on ne s'attend pas à rencontrer sur un trottoir mais plutôt sur un terrain vague en même temps que des meubles défoncés, des vaisselles ébréchées, des pneus usagés.¹⁹⁷

193 See Jean-Hugues Berrou et al., *Rimbaud ailleurs*, Paris: Fayard 2004, and Patrick Née, 'L'ailleurs maritime chez Rimbaud', in *Littérature*, 147/3, Paris: Armand Colin 2007, p. 3–20.

194 See Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', pp. 248–249.

195 See, for example, Umberto Eco, *Die Geschichte der Häßlichkeit (= Storia della bruttezza)*, Munich: Hanser 2007.

196 See the 'paradox of the ugly' according to Nelson Goodman, *Sprachen der Kunst – Entwurf einer Symboltheorie*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1995, p. 235.

197 Pierre Sansot, *Poétique de la ville*, Paris: Klincksieck 1973, pp. 312–313, 406.



(Fig. 18)

Daniel Ritter points out that the *terrain vague* therefore presents us with a counter-reality, as the rest of the city should always appear neat and clean, competitive and attractive to tourists, i.e. shown in the best possible light. Polishing up the image of the *terrain vague* in a similar direction, for example through a thorough cleaning, would be unrealistic, simply unrealizable and counterproductive.¹⁹⁸

(5) It is obvious that the final aesthetic beam of light must be the openness of individual design – the *terrain vague* is thus experienced by the subject as a *tabula rasa*, as a ‘blank page’ that can be rewritten again and again. Sometimes a certain emptiness is creatively filled, sometimes everything is wiped out and sometimes different layers are superimposed (graffiti, contaminated sites etc.).¹⁹⁹

2.7.2 The Vague and the *Étrange*

The ‘aesthetics of the vague’ is initially evident in the fact that it seems almost impossible to name the urban wastelands (space of indeterminacy/uncertainty, nameless space) or to define them precisely, as there are not only a multitude

198 See Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, p. 251.

199 See *ibid.* The *tabula rasa* metaphor can already be found in Aeschylus, Plato, Aristotle, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. In this sense, the open space could also be called the ‘soul of the city’, which, like a stage, has to constantly have new performances staged on it.

of designations, but some names make the very difficulty of clear categorization the basis of their concept.²⁰⁰ The characteristics associated with the etymological line *vagus*, which give the *friche urbaine* a perspective through its indeterminacy, play a role that should not be underestimated in the dissolution of fixed forms within the history of aesthetics. At this point, I would just like to mention a few milestones in the 'aesthetics of the vague': according to Remo Bodei, since ancient times (and unchallenged until the Renaissance), beauty has been characterized by measure, harmony and order – as in Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle – and is equated with truth and goodness.²⁰¹ Conversely, the asymmetrical, disproportionate and irregular, the disordered, the random and the indeterminate, are therefore ugly. Even the vague is therefore dismissed as 'unattractive'. It was not until the Baroque period that this way of thinking was replaced by an 'art of disorder', which can be identified as *vagari/vâgr*: 'Der Barock gibt nirgends das Fertige und Befriedigte, nicht die Ruhe des Seins, sondern die Unruhe des Werdens, die Spannung eines veränderlichen Zustandes.'²⁰² The recurring motifs of the Baroque are therefore blurred perception and sensory illusion as a separation from the truth or a rejection of mimesis.²⁰³ As Daniel Ritter puts it: 'In dem Moment also, in dem sich das Schöne vom Wahren ablöst, hält die Vagheit, gepaart mit dem Subjektiven, Einzug in die Kunst. Somit wird die Vagheit zur maßgeblichen Mitspielerin im großen Projekt der Moderne'²⁰⁴, schlussfolgert Remo Bodei.'²⁰⁵ This change is also significant in garden and park design: the geometric topiary of boxwood and yew trees in cones, pyramids and cuboids in the French Baroque gardens does not glide over gently, but contrasts sharply with the English landscape gardens' imitation of wild nature. Focussing on the vague as a characteristic of the individual also has political consequences:

Der durch die Französische Revolution provozierte Umbruch vom Absolutismus zur Republik verändert den Status des Individuums grundlegend, da dessen Individualität zum ersten Mal in Form des *Code Civil* von 1804 ihr (Bürger-)Recht

200 Doron, "... those marvellous empty zones at the edge of cities': Heterotopia and the 'dead zone'", p. 203: 'The multiplicity of names, and some of their meanings, show the difficulty in defining those spaces'.

201 See henceforth Bodei, 'Vage/unbestimmt', pp. 312–330.

202 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock: Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien* (1888), Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe 81986, p. 68.

203 The drama *La vida es sueño* (1636) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca is considered an emblematic work of the Baroque period and its title alludes to a mixture of dream and reality.

204 See Bodei, 'Vage/unbestimmt', p. 319.

205 Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 253.

zugesprochen bekommt. Vor dem Hintergrund dieses zugleich ästhetischen wie politischen Umbruchs verstehen wir nun auch, warum Chateaubriand in seinen Memoiren einen auf dem Pariser *terrain vague* gewachsenen, verwilderten Garten als Keimzelle der Revolution ausweist.²⁰⁶

Je ne sais quoi – this refers to that certain something, the inexpressible, the vaguely indefinable, which as a concept of the vague has spread reliably across the arts since the nineteenth century. In painting, for example, William Turner could be described as a ‘painter of the vague’; a pioneer of impressionism and a contemporary of Chateaubriand. His paintings *Ship on Fire* (1830) and *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844) show the viewer a blur of shapes and colours, a lack of differentiation and contours, dynamism and fleetingness, particularly through the element of water in the form of the wave (*vâgr*).²⁰⁷ Romanticism represents the culmination of the departure from the Pythagorean-Aristotelian order in favour of the ego by glorifying the subject in its individuality. At the end of the nineteenth century, the French Symbolists (Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud) continued Novalis’s Romantic ethos ‘the world becomes dream, the dream becomes world’, be it through hallucinogenic means that lead to changes in perception and realities constructed in perspective, through *rêveries*/dreaming or the subconscious.²⁰⁸ After all, surrealism is ‘die letzte künstlerische Bewegung, die sich ausdrücklich auf das Vage beruft’.²⁰⁹ It is no secret that the Surrealists felt enormously attracted to certain places and objects (‘extraterritorial’, falling out of reality) because of their otherness:

[L’]objet extérieur avait rompu avec son champ habituel, ses parties constituantes s’étaient en quelque sorte émancipées de lui-même, de manière à entretenir avec d’autres éléments des rapports entièrement nouveaux, échappent au principe de réalité, mais n’en tirant pas moins à conséquence sur le plan réel (bouversement de la notion de relation)²¹⁰

206 Ibid., p. 254.

207 Analogous to this in music, see *La mer* (1905) by Claude Debussy, who favours pentatonicism, whole-tone scales and dissonances instead of classical functional harmony.

208 See both Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (1900), Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer¹⁵1991, and Arthur Schnitzler, *Traumnovelle* (1926), Cologne: Anaconda 2005, p. 94 f.

209 Bodei, ‘Vage/unbestimmt’, p. 314.

210 André Breton, ‘Genèse et perspective artistique du surréalisme’ (1941), in Breton, *Le surréalisme et la peinture*, Paris: Gallimard 1979, pp. 49–82, at p. 64.

According to Daniel Ritter, however, this extraterritoriality is not only the aesthetic potential of the *objet trouvé* and the *rencontre fortuite* – ‘beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d’une machine à coudre et d’un parapluie’²¹¹ – but also the centrepiece of surrealist aesthetics of the vague and equally symbolic of the human *conditio* at the time of modernity.²¹² Perhaps this is another reason why *terrains vagues* have always been subject to aesthetic scrutiny.

When I ultimately examine the urban wasteland in terms of its phenomenal structure, this inevitably leads me back to the *strangeness* of Solà-Morales and from there to the difference between *foreignness* and *otherness*, which Bernhard Waldenfels explains as follows in his *Topographie des Fremden*:

Die Adjektive *anders* und *fremd* sind zunächst beide zweistellige Prädikate, die ein Verhältnis zwischen zwei Elementen bezeichnen und assoziativ eng miteinander verknüpft sind. Ihr Unterschied ist jedoch von sehr grundsätzlicher Natur. *Anders* (oder das altgriechische ἕτερος in *Heterotopie*) drückt die logische Relation der Nicht-Identität zwischen zwei Dingen („A ≠ B“) aus, und zwar ohne vom Aussagegehalt her eine subjektive Perspektive zu implizieren. Ganz im Gegenteil sogar: Die Nicht-Identität wird im Medium des Allgemeinen in objektiver Weise bestimmt. [...] Insofern ist die Aussage „A ≠ B“ auch ohne Veränderung des Gehalts verkehrbar in „B ≠ A“. *Fremd* (das altgriechische Pendant dazu wäre ξένος) hingegen drückt eine Relation aus, die sich auf ein subjektives Verhältnis bezieht, welches wesentlich in der raumzeitlich-personalen Perspektive verankert ist, aus der jemand etwas erlebt. Fremdheit besagt stets, dass ‚etwas jemandem fremd‘ ist oder erscheint, weshalb diese Relation auch nicht reversibel ist. [...] ‚Fremd‘ bezeichnet somit auch keine intrinsische Eigenschaft einer Sache: Nichts ist für sich genommen ‚fremd‘. Gleichzeitig aber ist die Fremdheit nicht einfach bloß die subjektive Seite der Andersheit. Denn nicht jede Andersheit impliziert im Erleben eine Fremdheit. [...] Impliziert aber umgekehrt die Fremdheit die Andersheit? In gewisser Weise ja: Denn wenn ich mir selbst ‚fremd‘ werde, stehe ich mir selbst in einer Distanz gegenüber, die einen Ausspruch wie den des Rimbaud ‚Je est un autre‘²¹³ (‚Ich ist ein anderer‘) motiviert. Und dennoch: Eine solche Andersheit ist nichts anderes als eine prinzipielle Form der Andersheit zwischen mir und dem, was ich erlebe, während der Fremdheit nichts Prinzipielles anhaftet: Etwas kann mir fremd

211 Comte de Lautréamont, *Œuvres complètes: Les Chants de Maldoror. Lettres Poésies I et II*, ed. by Hubert Juin, Paris: Gallimard 1973, p. 234. This is a quotation from the sixth canto of the *Chants de Maldoror* by the avant-gardist who, as early as 1874, defined ‘the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table’ as the benchmark of beauty.

212 See Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, p. 256.

213 From Arthur Rimbaud’s letter to Georges Izambard dated 13 May 1871: ‘Correspondance’, in Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Antoine Adam, Paris: Gallimard 1972 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), pp. 234–816, at p. 249.

werden, das mir eben noch vertraut war. Fremdheit ist insofern etwas Okkasionelles.²¹⁴

Now to the core of the *étrange*: the subject experiences it precisely *because* it is inaccessible and unavailable. The strange, the foreign, the *étrange* thus reveals itself *by* eluding access and availability. With reference to Merleau-Ponty, Waldenfels calls this mode of inaccessibility or unavailability 'leibhaftige Abwesenheit'.²¹⁵ He also criticizes definitions of foreignness that understand the foreign as a 'deficit' or 'flaw', as that which has not yet been understood, such as in Julia Kristeva's theory of the *étrange*.²¹⁶

The strange is the extraordinary, which emerges in the cracks and gaps in the orders and is neither identical with the ordinary nor simply different from it; it 'begleitet die Ordnungen wie ein Schatten'.²¹⁷ Moreover, according to Waldenfels, there are as many strangenesses as there are orders, so that one can easily speak of a pluralization of strangeness. Waldenfels distinguishes between 'everyday', 'normal' and 'structural' degrees of foreignness; for him, the directions or 'vectors of becoming foreign' also vary.²¹⁸

So far, I have described the *terrain vague* as something unusual on all levels. With regard to the given order, it in this sense shares a certain otherness with Foucault's heterotopia, although its function – in contrast to that of the urban wasteland – is crystal clear. The heterotopia is different, but not alien. The *terrain vague*, on the other hand, breaks with the order of its urban reference system: although it is compensatory, negative-universalizing and temporally heterochronic, it is not analogous to the homotopic order – it is rather a microchaos. According to Ritter, the *terrain vague* is not created for a specific purpose, but rather arises from the loss of a clear purpose, from a loss of function, leaving behind a void of purpose or a wasteland of meaning.²¹⁹ Lucius Burckhardt writes: 'Die Brache schafft Erklärungsbedarf'²²⁰ and thus confirms that the wasteland is a place that seems opaque to us and usually

214 Bernhard Waldenfels' remarks on the subject are explained here in crystal clarity in Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 258. Ritter again refers to his *Topographie des Fremden*, pp. 20–23.

215 Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, p. 27.

216 See Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, Paris: Fayard 1988.

217 Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, p. 33.

218 See *ibid.*, p. 34 f.

219 See Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', pp. 263–264.

220 Lucius Burckhardt, 'Brache als Kontext', in Burckhardt, *Warum ist Landschaft schön? Die Spaziergangswissenschaft*, ed. by Markus Ritter and Martin Schmitz, Berlin: Schmitz 2011, pp. 97–113, here pp. 105–106.

leaves us in the lurch when it comes to interpretation. Daniel Ritter concludes that the essential difference between the heterotopia and the *terrain vague* only becomes apparent in the above phenomenological observation, namely when it is experienced as incomprehensible or illogical, disorderly or inappropriate, and therefore refers to it as *xenotopia*, 'place of the strange', 'place of the *étrange*' or 'foreign place'.²²¹

Which users are likely to be attracted to a *terrain vague* that harbours something so *étrange*? First of all, marginalized, displaced and nomadic people who are on the margins of society due to their socio-economic or political situation, for example, and need a place outside the urban system. It is therefore not surprising that Roma and Sinti families (*gens du voyage*) sometimes set up their wagons and dwellings on a Parisian *terrain vague* until someone stops them by deliberately placing blocks of stone, as seen here in Saint-Denis:



(Fig. 19)

The Paris city council is clearly resisting the 'intrusion of foreign lifestyles' into the public space.

Denn fremde Lebensweisen, das heißt solche, die wir nicht die ‚eigenen‘ nennen, die uns unbekannt und ungewohnt sind, die wir nicht verstehen, obwohl wir wollen, oder die wir bewusst als ‚abweichend‘ gegenüber dem kennzeichnen, was

221 See Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 264, and 'Le terrain vague comme *xénotopie*', in Jacqueline Maria Broich/Wolfram Nitsch/Daniel Ritter (eds.), *Terrains vagues: Les friches urbaines dans la littérature, la photographie et le cinéma français*, Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal 2019 (Littératures), pp. 21–38.

für uns als ‚richtig‘ gilt, werden oft als ‚Bedrohung‘ und ‚Störung‘ des ‚Eigenen‘ und somit als ‚Gefahr‘ wahrgenommen. Das daraus entstehende Phänomen der Xenophobie ist leider nur allzu bekannt.²²²

However, contrary, exotic reactions to the *étrange* are not uncommon. It is therefore not surprising that Émile Zola's 'happy bohemian life' (*la vie des bohémiens heureux*) on an urban wasteland becomes the subject of his early work *Madeleine Férat*, even becoming the paradisiacal place of longing of the young protagonist, who was mocked by everyone at school and dreams of a better, fairer *ailleurs* with those strangers:

Tu parles des bohémiens, ce sont des gens heureux qui vivent au soleil, et que j'ai enviés plus d'une fois, quand j'étais au collège. Les jours de sortie, j'en voyais presque toujours des bandes à la porte de la ville, campées dans un terrain vague où les charrons du voisinage tenaient leurs chantiers de bois. Je m'amusais à courir sur les longues poutres étendues sur le sol, en regardant les bohémiens qui faisaient bouillir leur marmite. Les enfants se roulaient à terre, les hommes et les femmes avaient des figures étranges, l'intérieur des voitures, que je cherchais à apercevoir, m'apparaissait comme un monde d'objets bizarres. Et je restais là, tournant autour de ces gens, ouvrant des yeux curieux et effrayés. Je sentais encore sur mes épaules les meurtrissures des coups de poing que mes camarades m'avaient données la veille, je rêvais parfois de m'en aller bien loin, dans une de ces maisons roulantes. Je me disais: 'Si l'on me bat encore cette semaine, je m'en irai dimanche prochain avec les bohémiens, je les supplierai de m'emmener au fond de quelque pays où l'on ne me frappera pas.' Mon imagination d'enfant se plaisait au rêve de cet éternel voyage en plein air. Mais je n'ai jamais osé... Ne te moque pas, Madeleine.²²³

222 Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 266.

223 Émile Zola, 'Madeleine Férat', in Zola, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, Paris: Hachette 1962, p. 824. My translation: 'Du sprichst von den ‚Zigeunern‘, das sind glückliche Leute, die unter der Sonne leben und die ich mehr als einmal beneidet habe, als ich aufs Collège ging. An Tagen, an denen ich frei hatte, sah ich fast immer Gruppen von ihnen vor den Toren der Stadt auf einer leeren Fläche [*terrain vague*] kampieren, wo die Wagner der Nachbarschaft ihre Holzwerkstätten hatten. Es bereitete mir Freude, über die langen Balken zu rennen, die auf dem Erdboden lagen, und dabei den ‚Zigeunern‘ zuzusehen, wie sie ihren Kessel anheizten. Die Kinder rollten sich auf dem Boden, die Männer und Frauen hatten fremdartige Gesichter und das Innere ihrer Wagen, in das ich immer hineinzublicken versuchte, erschien mir wie eine Welt sonderbarer Gegenstände. Dort blieb ich, schlich um diese Leute herum und machte neugierige und erschrockene Augen. Ich spürte auf meinen Schultern noch die blauen Flecken von den Schlägen, die ich von meinen Schulkameraden am Vortag bekommen hatte. Manches Mal träumte ich davon, weit weg zu gehen, in einem dieser fahrenden Häuser. Ich sagte mir: ‚Wenn ich diese Woche noch einmal geschlagen werde, werde ich am Sonntag mit den

In this scene, on the one hand, the portrayal of the *bohémiens* is adorned with common stereotypes in an exotic, longing manner, while on the other hand, the *gens du voyage* represent the foreign or the familiar in a rather simplified way, with the signs reversed, thus becoming a projection surface for the protagonist's desires. Daniel Ritter points out that people sometimes turn *terrains vagues* into 'Petrischalen eines kreativen oder alternativen Lebens [...]: Hippies, Squatter*innen, Künstler*innen, Aussteiger*innen, die aus der Sicht des gesellschaftlichen 'Establishments' außerhalb der dominierenden Ordnung stehen.'²²⁴ These people are looking for diverse forms of social interaction completely outside of conformist society, proving that true (social) change, which is directed against mere affirmation of the *status quo*, usually germinates in the unknown. However, beware of drawing from this a false conclusion: just as not every *xenotopia* is a *terrain vague*, not every *terrain vague* is necessarily a *xenotopia* – for this to be the case, the place must first appear or be 'foreign' to a subject.²²⁵

Christine Dissmann diagnoses that wasteland sites are omnipresent in every city. Nevertheless, they often indicated a state that was 'not really fitting', that was 'not acceptable' to many, that was 'disturbing'. This negative side of the *terrains vagues* manifests itself, for example, in the following terms: 'Abwärtsspirale der Problemquartiere' ('downward spiral of problem neighbourhoods'), 'kumulative Leerstandeffekte' ('cumulative vacancy effects'), 'A-Gruppen' ('Ausländer*innen, Arme, Alte, Alkoholiker*innen, Alleinerziehende') ('foreigners, the poor, the elderly, alcoholics, single parents') and the feeling of neglect and of being part of the city's decline or decay.²²⁶ Often, people perceive it as a painful 'expropriation of lived life' when in their living environment (through demolition, restructuring etc.), places are destroyed to which they have become accustomed and emotionally attached over decades, and from which they may have even been enchanted in unfathomable ways.²²⁷

,Zigeunern' abhauen, ich werde sie anflehen, mich bis ans Ende irgendeines Landes mitzunehmen, wo man mich nicht mehr schlägt.' Meine kindliche Vorstellung fand Gefallen am Traum dieser ewigen Reise unter freiem Himmel. Aber ich habe mich nie getraut... Mach' dich nicht über mich lustig, Madeleine.'

224 Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 267.

225 See *ibid.*, p. 268.

226 See Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere*, pp. 98–100.

227 See Wolfgang Kil, *Luxus der Leere: Eine Streitschrift*, Wuppertal: Müller + Busmann 2004, p. 116.

2.7.3 Epiphanic Transgressions

All that ‘was außerhalb jeder Ordnung bleibt’ and ‘nicht nur eine bestimmte Interpretation, sondern die bloße ‘Interpretationsmöglichkeit’ in Frage [stellt]’ Waldenfels refers to as the hyper phenomenon of ‘das radikal Fremde’,²²⁸ such as ecstasy or a revolution, but also eros or death. Closely related to astonishment and fear, which disappear immediately as soon as the questions of *what is it about* (‘what do we marvel at?’) and the *what do we stand before* (‘what are we afraid of?’) are clarified, the experience of foreignness is not a subjective act, but something that comes to us and happens to us;²²⁹ it comes to us from elsewhere (*ailleurs*). Ritter cites the following responses to the strange, for example efforts

[um] das Fremde ‚in den Griff‘ zu bekommen, sei dies ganz praktisch gemeint als ein tatkräftiges Ergreifen oder geistig als ein intellektuelles Begreifen. Im ersten Fall wird versucht, das Fremde machtvoll zu überwinden, indem es vereinnahmt, gezähmt, kontrolliert, bekämpft oder gar vernichtet wird. Wo immer das Fremde auftritt, setzt es sich dieser Gefahr aus. Im zweiten Fall geht es nicht um eine gewalt-same Machtausübung, sondern um eine epistemische Aneignung, welche ebenso den Status der Fremdheit zugunsten eines intellektuellen Sich-zu-eigen-Machens überwinden möchte.²³⁰

The ‘sting of the foreign’ cannot therefore be so easily exorcized or torn out, because that which is one’s own and that which is foreign are cogenital – the one non-existent without the other, the foreign being the flip side produced by the urban order itself, that is, the shadow of that order.²³¹ Everything foreign to the system is therefore neatly hidden, supposedly made invisible or even segregated – as if the ‘shame of the city’ belonged behind privacy fences!

An aesthetic approach to the *étrange*, which resembles a kind of *laisser-faire*, reveals itself in a twofold manner: on the one hand, in the form of letting be, where one refrains from trying to appropriate the *étrange*; on the other hand, in an engagement or allowing oneself to be affected by the *étrange*, both sensually and emotionally, as well as intellectually or imaginatively.²³²

228 Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, pp. 36–37.

229 See *ibid.*, p. 51.

230 Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, p. 271.

231 The reflection of our own foreignness takes place in a system which, like ‘auto-poiesis’, tends to (re)produce itself. For this system-theoretical term, see Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1984, p. 60 ff.

232 See Ritter, ‘Phänomenologie und Ästhetik’, p. 273.

Potentially aesthetic experiences of presence, in which the encounter with the foreign has an effect on the experience itself, also by transgressing ordinary boundaries, are aesthetically transgressive experiences, so-called *epiphanies* (ἐπιφάνεια²³³). Rainer Warning writes that religious and aesthetic experiences are clearly distinct from one another:

Erstere führt allemal bis hin zur Anschaulichkeit des ‚anderen Raums‘, wo nicht in seiner Totalität, so doch zu seiner partiellen Beglaubigung. Die ästhetische Offenbarung bleibt, in ihrem Passagen-Charakter anfangsmarkiert, sie bleibt im liminalen Bereich. J. L. Borges hat das sehr schön gefasst mit seiner Bestimmung des Ästhetischen als einer sich ankündigenden Offenbarung, die dann aber doch nicht statt-hat²³⁴ [...] – eine Formel, die in den Grundbestand moderner Ästhetik-Definitionen eingegangen ist.²³⁵

Daniel Ritter, for his part, differentiates between three types of epiphanies, depending on the level on which the ‘apparition’ occurs: aesthetic, epistemic or metaphysical. In the case of the first type, the epiphany refers to the presence of a reality that is hidden in everyday life and, as a theophany, to the appearance of God, which is why the term is also used in Christianity for the Epiphany on 6 January, the day on which Christ’s birth was originally also celebrated. In the second case, it is a ‘profane enlightenment’, by which Walter Benjamin means ‘die schöpferische Überwindung religiöser Erleuchtung’, the cause of which does not lie in the consumption of stimulants, but in ‘einer materialistischen [...] Inspiration’.²³⁶ Ritter clarifies:

‚Profan‘ ist diese Erleuchtung aber weniger aufgrund ihres materiellen Auslösers, als aufgrund des Umstands, dass damit die Erkenntnis eines Geheimnisses im Alltäglichen und eben nicht eines Transzendenten einhergeht. Und ‚schöpferisch‘ ist sie, weil sie nicht in einem Exzess der Sinne geschieht, sondern in einem Exzess der

233 From the verb ἐπιφάνω, meaning ‘to become visible, to show oneself, to appear’ (often with reference to dreams, visions or divine manifestations); see Henry George Liddell/Robert Scott: *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968, vol. 1, pp. 669–670.

234 Jorge Luis Borges, ‘La muralla y los libros’, in Borges, *Obras completas*, ed. by C. V. Frías, Barcelona: Emecé 1989, vol. 2, p. 13: ‘la inminencia de una revelación que no se produce’.

235 Warning, *Heterotopien als Räume ästhetischer Erfahrung*, p. 23.

236 Walter Benjamin, ‘Der Surrealismus: Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz’ (1929), in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, with the assistance of Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1977, vol. 2, pp. 295–310, at p. 297.

Imagination, weshalb Benjamin als mögliche Subjekte einer solchen Erfahrung die Lesenden, die Denkenden und die Flanierenden nennt.²³⁷

It is therefore only logical that Julien Gracq and Jacques Réda, who read, think, write and stroll around with Surrealist glasses on their noses, should be regarded as followers and admirers of the *terrains vagues*, as if they found there their longed-for revolving doors into another space or another time. Ritter continues:

Zwischen einer materialistisch-ästhetischen und einer genuin theologischen Epiphanie liegt diejenige, die nicht zwangsläufig eine religiöse Erleuchtung ist, weil sie nicht auf eine jenseitige Gottheit, sondern auf die Immanenz des diesseits Seienden bezogen ist, und zugleich aber auch keine profane, weil sie ihren Grund in der Erkenntnis einer höheren Wahrheit über die Wirklichkeit oder einer tieferen Einsicht in die Dinge hat. Wir nennen eine solche Epiphanie ‚epistemisch‘, weil sich in ihr ein privilegiertes Wissen über die Welt kundtut.²³⁸

The Buddha's enlightenment is the cultural-historical archetype of such an epistemic revelation, in which the realization of the 'noble truths' is achieved.²³⁹ In view of the continuous movement in which a *terrain vague* usually finds itself, Philippe Vasset describes being overwhelmed by a moment of *satori* at the sight of an urban wasteland: 'j'étais chaque fois saisi par le *satori* du transit qui dérobe le monde'.²⁴⁰ Even if the *terrain vague* is all too often presented in literature and film as a dark and dirty place, this does not alter the fact that it can equally develop into a 'medium of a higher realization of the nature of things':

Schließlich gibt es die metaphysische Epiphanie im religiösen Sinne einer Erscheinung Gottes oder einer mystischen Einheitserfahrung (*unio mystica*), in der eine Begegnung und Vereinigung mit einem Göttlichen und folglich eine Auflösung der Grenzen des Selbst stattfindet. Derartige Transzendenzerfahrungen, die über einen Exzess der Sinnlichkeit oder der Imagination und über die Erkenntnis einer höheren

237 Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 275.

238 See *ibid.*, p. 276.

239 For example, on the origin of suffering its alleviation or remedy thereof, see Nyānatiloka, *Buddhistisches Wörterbuch: Kurzgefasstes Handbuch der buddhistischen Lehren und Begriffe in alphabetischer Anordnung* (1952), Stammbach-Herrnschrot: Beyerlein & Steinschulte 1999, p. 186–189.

240 Vasset, *Un livre blanc*, p. 61. It is a moment of *satori* (= intuitive, sudden enlightenment in Zen Buddhism) in which a 'world-devouring transit' reveals itself. The translation is by Wolfram Nitsch, '*Terrain vague: Zur Poetik des städtischen Zwischenraums in der französischen Moderne*', p. 3.

Wahrheit insofern hinausgehen, als sie das Subjekt in Verbindung mit einem Jenseitigen, die Sphäre des Menschlichen und Immanenten Überschreitenden setzen, müssen aber nicht an eine Gottheit einer bestimmten Religion gebunden sein und können ferner auch im Modus des Entzugs geschehen, in dem eine materielle Spur die Ahnung eines Transzendenten stiftet.²⁴¹

From an aesthetic perspective, the forces of chance (in the form of the random arrangement of objects), nature and decay operate on a *terrain vague* and thus elude the sphere of human influence, whereby the divine symbolizes an imagined world beyond the everyday and the useless can be read as a sign of purposeless beauty in poetry, photography and film (or their representations). In any case, the *terrain vague* is associated with a radical strangeness that transcends time, space and self,²⁴² which we cannot cope with ('bewältigen'), but which can sometimes overwhelm us ('überwältigen') as subjects. The extent to which the (hypo)theses in this chapter on aesthetics can be applied to the specific aesthetics of urban interspaces in French cinema will be explored in Chapters III and IV, and subjected to a comparative reading in the Final Considerations and Outlook.

241 Ritter, 'Phänomenologie und Ästhetik', p. 277.

242 See *ibid.*

3. Consolidation

How can we now consolidate the various characteristics of the *terrain vague* as I have enumerated them from the exploration of the history of the term an enumeration of literary and cinematic exemplars on one hand, and from the empirically oriented scientific examination of the phenomenon on the other hand, then further elaborated through confrontation with various reference theories? The aim of such a consolidation is to find fundamental aspects of the subject that – at least in part – run through the various levels structurally, overlap, link and differentiate differently at the respective systematic points without losing their character as a ‘basic feature’. I believe I have found such basic features in the following three facets of *terrain vague*.

(1) The *terrain vague* is the object, but also the medium of a particular urban realization: as both a symptom and a cause of urban change, the ‘prismatic space’ of the *terrain vague* reveals the current state of the urban spatial structure. This is because the lines of urban development, which become just as visible in it as the relationship of the space to its sociality and historicity, are broken and consolidated within that urban structure. In terms of historicity, the *terrain vague*, as a ruin, ensures the presence of the past in the present, but without being appropriated by it (as in the case of official places of remembrance). The resulting – and indeed not intentionally created – tension between the temporal dimensions is intensified by the impression that the *terrain vague* exists outside of everyday time, in a parallel time in which the usual course of events is suspended. Time does not immediately turn into the past, it accumulates; it not only accumulates traces, but also possibilities for future realities in the in-between space of the *terrain vague*. In this way, it keeps alive memories of the lifeworlds and symbols of yesterday and indicates their loss in the course of social upheaval, but at the same time also marks the transition to something new that still lies dormant in potentiality. Regarding its societal dimension, the ‘density’ of the social space of the city becomes visible through the *terrain vague*, as it acts as a fracture, a crack, or a gap within it, providing an external view and thus a critical or liberating distance from the

internal power dynamics of the urban system with all its constraints, displacements, exclusions, norms, and impossibilities. The space of the *terrain vague*, in which this external perspective is located, is itself an 'outcast', the 'other' space *par excellence*, but at the same time itself a product of the internal relationships that are present in their absence in the interstitial space of the *terrain vague* or only become completely visible there in contrast.

(2) The *terrain vague* is the material of a particular urban experience: it is the strangeness of the city that appears in the gaps and at the edges of the order. As such, it provokes a broad spectrum of experiences ranging from repulsion, irritation and fear to curiosity and fascination, in which the subject's relationship to the lifeworld space of the city manifests itself. This includes the entire spectrum of aesthetic experiences of the *terrain vague*, from the oppressive or liberating emptiness and the stimulating or perplexing vagueness through the physically experienced roughness and disorder to the encounters with a concealing, dimly visible or obvious past, an uninfluenceable power of chance, nature and decay or an unknown, uncanny or inaccessible thing that eludes our grasp and comprehension. In this way, the *terrain vague* as a specific 'experiential space' not only transcends the given order(s), but is also able to question and change previous structures of meaning, habits, perceptions and practices. In addition, it confronts the concept of the urban, but also ourselves, with an *étrange* that breaks up the supposed density, unity and uniqueness – the identity.

(3) The *terrain vague* is the medium and material of a particular practice: It is an open 'space of play and possibility' for imaginary and practical appropriations of space, in which the extent to which the freedom of the subject in urban space is surrounded by regulating and alienating power structures is revealed. For as much as this space is permeated and interwoven by these structures, it is not entirely dominated by them. Gil Doron's statement about the various practices made possible by industrial wastelands, which reveal 'how the public space is restricted to a very small spectrum of activities',¹ can be read in two directions. On the one hand, it shows the structural connection between the *terrain vague* as an outdoor space and the urban interior space: both illuminate each other and are related to each other in their perception and meaning. Even if, on the other hand, this primarily articulates a structural distance or extra-territoriality: the *terrain vague* proves to be a peripheral space of freedom that opens up to various social groups and needs as a refuge, whether it offers certain marginalized fringe groups room for action, serves certain age groups as a threshold place for emancipatory experiences, provides a space for the

1 Doron, 'The Dead Zone and the Architecture of Transgression', p. 254.

repressed and oppressed as a place of refuge, gives the urge for creative and innovative lifestyles or political protest and resistance a field of action, or binds to itself utopian hopes and visions of a different, better city. Paradoxically, it is precisely the absence of certain urban qualities that makes the *terrain vague* the nucleus of new forms of urbanity – like the ‘weeds’ that can sprout free of design pressure and purpose.

This last facet of the *terrain vague* in particular points to the potential of what Yuri Lotman describes as the peripheral boundaries of a cultural space organized and determined from a centre. In my opinion, Lotman’s object of investigation of so-called *semiospheres*,² i.e. cultural ‘sign spaces’ that are spanned by various communication processes and mechanisms of meaning between the centre and the periphery, but have open boundaries and are multi-layered and diverse in themselves, can be transferred to the semiotic, social and political – and in this global sense ‘cultural’ – spatial system of the urban. Here, the *terrain vague* proves to be a ‘buffer zone of the cultural periphery’, in which the order that dominates the centre becomes ‘fluid and changeable’³ and opens up to semiotic and functional ambiguity and social, political and cultural foreignness. In the course of my research, the *terrain vague* as a place where such processes take place has in fact repeatedly demonstrated the many ways in which indeterminacy and the extraordinary become motors for the dynamics and resources for the development potential of the urban system. In this cybernetic understanding of culture coined by Lotman as a living organism that regulates, changes and adapts itself, the eradication or disciplining of the deviations and indeterminacies that arise in the periphery would therefore be tantamount to the end of its viability: the system would become static and rigid, no longer alive but dead.

In Lotman’s communication theory, however, indeterminacy is more than just a necessary side effect or disturbance that could be absent in a system if said system were sufficiently complete. Rather, ambiguities and indeterminacies are a functional component of communication in general and are mutually dependent on clarity and certainty. This is another reason why Lotman assumes

2 See Juri Lotman, ‘Über die Semiosphäre’ (1984), transl. by Wolfgang Eisermann and Roland Posner, in *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, vol. 4, 1990, pp. 287–305.

3 This is how Albrecht Koschorke characterizes the function of the border area of a semiosphere in Lotman; see ‘Zur Funktionsweise kultureller Peripherie’, in Susi Frank/Cornelia Ruhe/Alexander Schmitz (eds.), *Explosion und Peripherie: Juri Lotmans Semiotik der kulturellen Dynamik* revisited, Bielefeld: Transcript 2012, pp. 27–39, at p. 31.

‘dass jede Kultur innere Mechanismen zur *Erzeugung von Unbestimmtheit* besitzt’.⁴

When, in this context, we speak of ‘dynamic stability’ or ‘orders of indeterminacy’ with regard to Lotman’s cultural model, for example, the structure of these composites articulates a possible (mis)understanding of his theory that suggests a certain ends-means relationship: order needs disorder. This alone would suffice for a plea for the preservation of undefined interstitial spaces, be it in the cultural space of a semiosphere or in the urban space of a city. But precisely because of the asserted mutual conditionality of determinacy and indeterminacy or their cosubstantiality, caution is required not to force disorder under the yoke of order and place it in its service. The same applies to Albrecht Koschorke, who after all refers to Lotman as a ‘Theoretiker der Unordnung’⁵, stating that ‘das Überborden der Unordnung über die Ordnung’ is, in terms of societal systems, what ensures ‘kulturelle Elastizität und damit sozialen Fortbestand’.⁶

In the face of such a conception, it seems necessary to see that which emerges from the interstitial space, from the marginal zones, gaps and cracks of an order, i.e. that which Michael Mann calls ‘interstitial emergence’⁷ in the context of his theory of power, even more strongly as something that possesses an intrinsic value that cannot be ignored.

In the case of *terrain vague*, this ultimately means using it not only for appropriation purposes or for the revitalization and recycling of areas and for the optimization of urban development. After all, it would no longer be the ‘other’ of the city, but merely an instrument of it, albeit a vital one – entirely in the spirit of Lefebvre, who does not consider the *terrain vague* to be revolutionary, but nevertheless vital.

Daniel Ritter’s thoughts on the *terrain vague* as *xenotopia* have put me on a path where I can ask for an ‘other’ that is precisely not absorbed into the logic of the system and resists appropriation; these have also pointed in the direction of the difference that opens up between the indeterminacy and disorder within any kind of system theory and the phenomenology of a radical stranger.

For this is, to come back to Waldenfels one last time, an event that we cannot resist, that comes towards us, that precedes us, is not brought about by

4 Juri Lotman, ‘Zum kybernetischen Aspekt der Kultur’, in Lotman, *Aufsätze zur Theorie und Methodologie der Literatur und Kultur*, ed. by Karl Eimermacher, Kronberg: Scriptor 1974, pp. 417–442, at p. 418 (italics in original).

5 Koschorke, ‘Zur Funktionsweise kultureller Peripherien’, p. 33.

6 Ibid., p. 35.

7 Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power I: A History of Power from the Beginning to A. D. 1760*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986, p. 16.

us, but speaks to us and demands a response from us. In Waldenfels' response logic, it is this prior strangeness that sets a response process in motion in the first place, and thus ultimately the emergence of meaning. Because the response only makes sense with regard to what we are responding to. Our response is interwoven with the foreign, which appears as that 'worauf wir antworten und zu antworten haben, was immer wir sagen und tun.'⁸ What is our own – and this is the actual consequence of Waldenfels' thinking – owes itself to the foreign, but not in its functioning, but rather in what it is itself. In contrast to systemic autopoiesis or autogenesis, the self does not emerge from within itself (not even with the help of an appropriated other), but has its centre of gravity outside itself. And so it is for the individual: 'Wer glaubt, bei sich selbst anfangen zu können, wiederholt nur, was schon ist; er fängt also gerade nicht an.'⁹ And the delusion of 'einer reinen Eigenkultur' means that 'sie keine Antworten mehr gibt, sondern nur noch vorhandene Antworten repetiert oder variiert'.¹⁰

What if this also applies to the urban? In this perspective, the *terrain vague* as the *étrange* of the urban can no longer be spoken of as a means or an inner mechanism that belongs to a larger one and works towards it. The *terrain vague* is thus not to be reduced entirely to a rejuvenation cure for urban culture, to an instrument for flexibilizing the urban order, to a survival guarantor or an internal corrective to the system, to a dialectical counterpart to determination or a functional component of it, nor to an outlet for social energy, unbridled creativity, repressed urges or resistant diversity. Yes, the *terrain vague* is all this! Or can be all this. And more. But not in the final analysis. Not in its root. This is because *terrains vagues* that remain open and undefined and are thus at least temporary sites of the radically different can be the 'sting of the foreign' that stirs, provokes and demands answers that do not reproduce the familiar or produce the expected. Without the possibility of places, spaces or zones that have their own logic and dynamics, as well as their own dignity in their otherness and strangeness, every system would turn out to be totalitarian, because it appropriates everything and declares it to be functional elements that ultimately obey internal rules and imperatives.

8 Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, p. 51.

9 Ibid., p. 126.

10 Ibid.

The two-hundred-year history of the *terrain vague* in French culture, which has accompanied an equally long and eventful history of European urban development, does not, however, suggest that the otherness and strangeness of the *terrain vague* and the fascination it exerted would allow itself to wear off so quickly or be so easily appropriated.

III. Media Representations of Urban Wastelands

1. *Terrains vagues* in Visual Media

Having dealt with the above questions from a cultural studies' perspective, with the primary aim of creating a systematic descriptive model for the (topological) characteristics of the *terrain vague*, taking into account the perspectives of various related disciplines on the subject, I will now turn my attention to various media studies issues. The aim is to conduct (historical/genre-specific/thematically oriented) investigations into the media representation and processing of the *terrain vague* in French/Francophone cinema. With regard to the following media studies-oriented analysis, this systematically results in three perspectives¹ for visualizing the respective aesthetic (and poetic) handling of the urban wasteland: (1) the *terrain vague* as a 'prism space' or *chronotopos*, where developmental trajectories of urban space converge and diverge, allowing for the interpretation of its current state in terms of historicity and sociality; (2) the *terrain vague* as an 'experiential space', which, at the edges and in the gaps of urban order, triggers specific experiences of otherness, threshold, and transgression in the subject; (3) the *terrain vague* as a 'space of play, possibility, and potential' which, due to the absence of designated uses and determined meanings, can be used as its own field of action or projection through action and/or imagination. In the next stage, we will explore image media. According to Friedrich Kittler, media are initially to be described as such:

Speicherung, Übertragung und Verarbeitung von Information [...]. Unter sie fallen so altmodische Dinge wie Bücher, so vertraute wie die Stadt und so neue wie Computer. [...] Die Entwicklung technischer Medien, wie sie vom digitalen Übertragungsmedium Telegraphie über die analogen Speichermedien Schallplatte und Film zu ihren Übertragungsmedien Radio und Fernsehen führte, kommt an ein logisch

1 See the exposé (cf. p. 17) of my dissertation project, available on the website of our project group: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

perfektes Ende. Alle anderen Medien sind in die Diskrete Universale Maschine grundsätzlich überführbar.²

At this point, we need to narrow down the scope as follows: Konrad Umlauf defines image media as ‘information in the form of static images’ and includes, for example, banners, illustrated books, picture books, picture postcards, comics, leaflets, slides, photographic prints, photo negatives, illustrated magazines, art prints, posters and advertising displays, while he admits that moving images and films can also be considered image media in some cases; painting, on the other hand, is not generally classified as an image medium.³ Other definitions state that image media include all cultural techniques that are created and captured visually, whereby photography, television and film are described as modern image media that require specific visual and perceptual processes.⁴ A distinction is made, for example, between reception and production characteristics, semantic and material, syntactic aspects and finally pragmatic, i.e. different types of image utilization.⁵ In the following, I will limit my analyses to the representation of urban wastelands in the visual media of photography, comics and film.

As far as the image itself is concerned, be it a photographic print, a panel in a comic, a still from a documentary or feature film showing a *terrain vague*, I will focus on various aspects in the spirit of Rudolf Arnheim: balance (structure,

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- 2 Friedrich A. Kittler, ‘Die Stadt ist ein Medium’, in Kittler, *Die Wahrheit der technischen Welt: Essays zur Genealogie der Gegenwart*, ed. and with an epilogue by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Berlin Suhrkamp 2013, pp. 181–197, here pp. 188–190. And with regard to Marshall McLuhan, he commented as follows in 1999: ‘The medium is the message’ bzw., wie er selbst in den letzten Jahren gespottet hat, ‘The medium is the massage’ – diese Formel braucht man nur mit ihrer weniger bekannten Explikation zu verbinden, derzufolge der Inhalt eines Mediums stets ein anderes Medium ist, um der Medienwissenschaft konkrete Arbeitsfelder aufzuschließen. So liegt es, um das nächstbeste Beispiel zu nehmen, im Verhältnis zwischen Spielfilm und Fernsehen auf der Hand, daß der populärste Inhalt von Fernsehsendungen der Spielfilm ist, der Inhalt dieses Spielfilms natürlich ein Roman, der Inhalt dieses Romans natürlich ein Typoskript usw., bis man irgendwann wieder beim babylonischen Turm der Alltagssprachen anlangt.’ Friedrich A. Kittler, *Optische Medien: Berliner Vorlesung 1999*, Berlin Merve ²2011, p. 28.
 - 3 Konrad Umlauf, ‘Bildmedien’, lecture notes, Humboldt University Berlin, available at: http://www.ib.hu-berlin.de/%7Ekumlauf/handreichungen/h184/V-Medien_18.pdf (accessed on 27 December 2020).
 - 4 See <https://www.uni-weimar.de/medien/bildmedien/forschung/forschung.htm> (accessed on 27 December 2020).
 - 5 See <http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/netzwerk/glossar/index.php?title=Bildmedien> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

weight and directions), form (essentials, wholeness and parts), shape (spatial position, views, surfaces and depths, realism and representationalism), space (lines and outlines, figures and ground, depth planes and multidimensionality), light (brightness and shadow, illumination and symbolism), colour (primary and complementary colours, harmonies, scaling, interactions, warm and cold colours, reactions), movement (events, simultaneity and sequence, directions and speed, motor forces and kinaesthetic body images, difficulties in film editing), dynamics (tension, obliqueness and deformation, stroboscopic effect) and expression.⁶

I pay particular attention to space and its composition: through contrasts and chiaroscuro (which are primarily used by crime-film directors) through the staggering of different levels, which in turn are created in the foreground, centre and background of the image, as well as through the alternation between horizontal and vertical, through overlaps and certain perspectives (for example, the character's connection to the edge of the image), space is created and thus becomes an experience.⁷

This experience can be quite ambivalent, analogous to the experiences that can be had on a *terrain vague* and which oscillate between fascination and *tremendum*. Just like the images in William J. T. Mitchell's image theory⁸ should speak for themselves – that is, their genuine desire should also speak for itself, not that of the artists, photographers or directors – so too should the urban wasteland now speak for itself in its representation in the visual media. Mitchell assumes a 'life' of images, and his theory is based on a dialectical model of the attribution of agency:

Die Macht, die Bilder haben, entspringt einer Zuschreibung, die einen kulturellen und religiös tradierten Doppelimpuls von Ikonophilie und Ikonophobie aktualisiert. Bilderangst und die Liebe zu Bildern beschreiben zwei Seiten einer Medaille, als die sich die Beziehung von Bildern und Menschen historisch und aktuell beschreiben lässt. Bilder werden zugleich gefürchtet und sie üben eine davon nicht zu trennen-

6 See Rudolf Arnheim, *Kunst und Sehen: Eine Psychologie des schöpferischen Auges*, transl. by Hans Hermann, Berlin Walter De Gruyter ³2000, pp. XX–XXIV.

7 See the chapter on 'Raum' in Béatrice Cron/Karen Betty Tobias, *Faszination Komposition: Grundelemente der Komposition im bildnerischen Bereich – Ein Werkbuch*, Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang ²2016 (Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge der Alanus Hochschule für Kunst und Gesellschaft), pp. 90–99.

8 See William J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Live and Love of Images*, Chicago/London: Chicago UP 2005.

de Faszination aus. Ihr Status changiert damit einhergehend zwischen Kraft, Macht und Verachtung, sogar Abjektion.⁹

Wassily Kandinsky articulated the pictorial aesthetic of the unpainted, blank, white sheet much more neutrally and yet quite provocatively: 'Wunderbar ist die leere Leinwand – schöner als manche Bilder.'¹⁰ In the chapter on aesthetics, I also established the connection between the *terrain vague* as an urban *tabula rasa* and free design by the individual (following Daniel Ritter's argument). Because where there is nothing, everything is possible! Let us now look at various motifs taken in the neglected corners of the city.

1.1 ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIAL EDGE OF THE CITY: *TERRAINS VAGUES* IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Around the turn of the century and during the avant-garde period, the aspect of the *terrain vague* as an imaginative projection surface became particularly important. This is the case, for example, when the exotic fantasies of someone like Loti¹¹ make the *terrains vagues* of the Middle East an indicator of cultural otherness or when the *terrain vague*, as in symbolism and surrealism, is stylized as a freely playable surface of the imagination and metaphorically brought close to the longing spaces of the sea, the desert or even the unconscious.

In the post-war period, on the other hand, the empirical side of the *terrain vague* emerged again with renewed force when it was discovered by a series of urban wanderers writing or photographing (Atget, Clébert, Cendrars, Doisneau, Molinard) as a sociographic field for the examination of living conditions on the urban and social margins in poverty-stricken Parisian neighbourhoods.

From the late 1950s and early 1960s, the previous lines of tradition finally came together and combined in a new way. During this time, the term and phenomenon also increasingly found its way into cinema and chanson, and at

9 Julia Bee, *Gefüge des Zuschauens: Begehren, Macht und Differenz in Film- und Fernseh-wahrnehmung*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2018, p. 83. Regarding abjection, see Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York: Columbia UP 1982.

10 Wassily Kandinsky, *Essays über Kunst und Künstler*, Salenstein: Benteli 1986, p. 167.

11 See the following examples of *terrain vague descriptions* in various exotic, orientalist travel novels by this French naval officer: Pierre Loti, *Aziyadé* (1879), Paris: Calmann-Lévy 1987, pp. 119–120; *Japoneries d'automne* (1889), Paris: Calmann-Lévy 1892, p. 35 and pp. 278–279; *Les derniers jours de Pékin* (1902), Paris: Calmann-Lévy 1902, p. 134; *La mort de Philæ* (1909), Puiseaux: Pardès 1990, p. 94 and p. 222; and 'Jérusalem' (1895), in Loti, *Jérusalem, suivi de pages inédites du Journal intime*, ed. by Pierre P. Loti-Viaud and Michel Desbruères, Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: Piro 1989, p. 104.

the same time became more widely known. Particularly in view of the renewed modernization and restructuring of urban space that began in the 1960s (especially through the segregating and de-densifying processes of suburbanization and functional separation), and the concomitant disappearance of the wasteland associated with the old, industrial city, the *terrain vague* becomes a *topos* charged with nostalgia and a place of social memory.

The political and utopian dimension is always retained. For example, when the *terrain vague* increasingly becomes a space of emancipation for adolescents, be it as a guideline-free play area for bourgeois children who utilize its indeterminacy as a space for pretending, or as a meeting place for children and young people from underprivileged milieus who assert themselves there against the violence of social conditions.



(Fig. 20)

Harald Kirschner explains in 2014 in the foreword to his illustrated book *Vom Heimischwerden: Leipzig-Grünau 1981–1991*, that his particular interest was and still is in the children and young people who individually, imaginatively, creatively and impartially appropriated the urban wasteland of their new living space. At the time, Grünau was a huge adventure playground.¹² After school,

12 See Kirschner, *Vom Heimischwerden: Leipzig-Grünau 1981–1991*, p. 6. Kirschner continues: 'Leipzig-Grünau, eine auf dem Reißbrett entstandene Trabantenstadt im Westen von Leipzig, war mit fast 90.000 Einwohnern zu DDR-Zeiten neben Berlin-Marzahn und Halle-Neustadt eines der größten Neubaugebiete. Mitte der Siebzigerjahre hatten 30.000 Familien in Leipzig keine eigene Wohnung – wohnten in Teilhauptide, lebten bei den Eltern. Provisorien oder beengte, desolate Wohnverhältnisse waren für viele Normalität. Dieser Wohnungsnotstand, die nicht

which is also the title of the following photograph by Erich Grisar¹³, the rascals were unstoppable ...



(Fig. 21)

The images of sensitively photographed children in particular can be counted among the masterpieces of the time:

Tatendrang und die große Ernsthaftigkeit kindlichen Handelns, die von Erwachsenen häufig unbeachtet bleibt, versteht Grisar wie kaum ein anderer mit der Kamera einzufangen. Gleichgültig, ob frisch aus Lehm angerührter Kaffee aus-
geschenkt wird oder auf Fluggeräten aus Bauschutt und alten Bettfedern Angriffe
auf einen fiktiven Gegner geflogen werden oder aber ob man kollektiv aus
,gefundenen' Ziegeln Häuser baut oder Löcher in die unbefestigte Straße gräbt –
stets zeigt Grisar seine jungen Protagonisten in völligem Einklang mit ihrem Tun.¹⁴

bewältigte Sanierung der Altbausubstanz wie auch der Bevölkerungszuwachs sollten bis 1990 mit dem von der SED beschlossenen Wohnungsbauprogramm als soziales Problem gelöst werden. [...] Bis zum Ende des Wohnungsbaus 1988 wurden in industrieller Montagebauweise mit vorgefertigten Plattenelementen 36.000 Wohnungen in den acht Wohnkomplexen, WKs genannt, errichtet.', *ibid.*, p. 5.

13 Erich Grisar, also known as a socially critical lyricist, worked from 1924 mainly as a photo reporter and journalist for various (national) newspapers (and in Dortmund), and wrote several novels (including some about work), short stories and essays on the history of the city and the region. See Andrea Zupancic (ed.), *Mit Kamera und Schreibmaschine durch Europa: Bilder und Berichte von Erich Grisar* (1932), Essen: Klartext 2016, p. 220 and 179.

14 Zupancic (ed.), *Mit Kamera und Schreibmaschine durch Europa: Bilder und Berichte von Erich Grisar* (1932), p. 183.

In keeping with Grisar's photograph 'Nach der Schule', let us now focus on a very specific period of time: because various photographers and authors from the 1930s to 1950s offer a depiction of *terrains vagues* based on Émile Zola's sociology of marginal urban areas. Her focus is on the Parisian *banlieue* that emerged from the former *zone* – i.e., the strip of shanty towns that had surrounded Paris since the end of the nineteenth century in the area immediately in front of the fortifications. The name *zon* – incidentally also the title of a work¹⁵ by Jean Rolin – comes from the fact that at some point non-permanent development was tolerated on the glacis of the fortifications, which had already become militarily inoperable only a few years after their construction – on an area that for defence purposes had to remain free as a 'zone non aedificandi'. Around the turn of the century, the Parisian 'Lumpenproletariat' settled there, mainly rural refugees in search of work in industry and inner-city refugees who could no longer afford the rents in the centre. We have Eugène Atget, one of the fathers of modern photography in France, to thank for capturing the *zone des fortifications* on camera just a few years before the fortifications were finally demolished after the First World War.¹⁶ Inspired by his deserted, ghostly photographs of the outskirts of the city, which resemble images of a crime scene¹⁷ and are also reminiscent of Man Ray's *Terrain vague* (Fig. 3), and his reportage-like milieu photographs of the 'zone population', the so-called *zoniers*, this social and geographical edge of the city centre has been the focus of literary and photographic exploration since the 1930s. 'La poterne des peupliers' is the title of the following photograph by Robert Doisneau from 1934, which also reminds us of Man Ray in terms of motif and composition:

15 Here, but this time in the plural: Jean Rolin, *Zones*, Paris: Gallimard 1995.

16 See Berenice Abbott, *Atget, photographe de Paris*, Paris: Jonquières 1930 (n°57–59). The *zone* had already attracted literary interest earlier, for example in Guillaume Apollinaire's poem of the same name from his anthology *Alcools*, published in 1913, in which the intoxicating experience of a flâneur moving aimlessly through Paris is also ignited by the shantytowns in front of the Parisian fortifications; see Guillaume Apollinaire: 'Zone' (1913), in Apollinaire, *Alcools: Choix de poèmes*, Paris: Larousse 1965, p. 35–43.

17 This comparison comes from Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie' (1931), in Benjamin, *Medienästhetische Schriften*, ed. by Detlev Schöttker, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2002, p. 300–324, at p. 309, 315.



(Fig. 22)

At this time, however, the *zone* was already gradually disappearing, as the space freed up by the removal of the fortifications was being redesigned in terms of urban planning and there were strong endeavours, particularly under the *Vichy* regime, to eliminate the Parisian ‘slum belt’. Despite the construction of a number of new residential neighbourhoods and the creation of urban green spaces, remnants of the *zone* and large *terrains vagues* around practically the whole of Paris remained until the construction of the *Boulevard Périphérique* in this very area in 1954 erased the last traces of the *zone*.¹⁸ Among the texts that describe this part of Paris in the 1930s in detail, and thus the humanitarian and social misery that characterized life in the *zone*, is Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* from 1932, whose protagonist ekes out a living as a doctor for the poor before becoming the director of a psychiatric clinic on the outskirts of the city.¹⁹ In Raymond Queneau’s experimental first work *Le chiendent* from 1933, *terrains vagues* also regularly appear as essential components of the *zone*’s milieu – characterized by

18 On this chapter of Parisian urban history, see Jean-Louis Cohen/André Lortie, *Des fortifs au périf: Paris, les seuils de la ville*, Paris: Picard/Édition du Pavillon de l’Arsenal 1994, and Jean-Robert Pitte, *Paris: Histoire d’une ville*, Paris: Hachette 1993, especially pp. 128–147.

19 See Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932), Paris: Gallimard 1981 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), vol. 1, especially p. 333.

factories, workers' housing estates and poverty-stricken huts – which forms the background to the slightly abstruse plot.²⁰

This milieu – and the sociographic interest in it – came to the fore in various photo books²¹ about Paris, which were produced in increasing numbers from the 1930s onwards. These include *La Banlieue de Paris*, a joint work by photographer Robert Doisneau and author Blaise Cendrars from 1949.²² In this book, Cendrars's gloomy texts, which were written on the basis of long walks through the outskirts of the city and depict the *banlieue* as a place that has lost its humanity due to the social misery found there, are juxtaposed with Doisneau's photographs, which tend to appear in a brighter, more optimistic light. A familiar element of the *terrain vague*, here turned positive or even utopian, is updated in the process: children who, in their symbolic play, revive discarded artifacts and fill the emptiness of a useless space with their imagination.

20 See Raymond Queneau, 'Le Chiendent' (1933), in Queneau, *Romans I: Œuvres complètes II* ed. by Henri Godard, Paris: Gallimard 2002 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), pp. 27–28, 75, 98–99 and 186.

21 The multifaceted image of Paris has been significantly shaped since the beginning of the 20th century by photobooks, often involving renowned photographers, artists, and writers such as Brassai, Lucien Hervé, Marc Riboud, Germaine Krull, Dora Maar, André Kertész, Eugène Atget, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Michel Sima, Wols, Blaise Cendrars/Robert Doisneau, Willy Ronis/Pierre Mac Orlan, Michel Butor/Bernard Plossu, Jacques Prévert/Izis, Jean-Paul Clébert/Patrice Molinard etc. For more on this, see Christian Bouqueret, *Paris: Les livres de photographie des années 1920 aux années 1950*, Paris: Gründ 2012; Nguyen Trong Binh, *Paris au cinéma: La vie rêvée de la Capitale de Méliès à Amélie Poulain*, together with Franck Garbarz, Paris: Parigramme/Compagnie parisienne du livre 2005; Quentin Bajac/Clément Chéroux (eds.), *Voici Paris: Modernités photographiques 1920–1950*, Paris: Centre Pompidou 2012, and Hans-Michael Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris: Paris im Fotobuch 1890 bis heute*, Munich: Hirmer 2011.

22 See Blaise Cendrars, *La Banlieue de Paris* (1949), with photographs by Robert Doisneau, Paris: Denoël 1983.



(Fig. 23)

What really interests Robert Doisneau can be broken down into an easy-to-grasp theme: Paris! But not just the Paris associated with ‘la ville lumière’, but its *banlieues*, which he explores and photographs as a ‘photographe humaniste’ and ‘philanthrope’.²³ Wolfram Nitsch describes the above picture as follows: ‘Sur l’image légendée ‘À la limite de l’ancienne zone’, cinq garçons jouent dans une carcasse de voiture échouée sur l’emplacement des fortifications démolies. Hommage est rendu à la créativité des enfants de la zone qui savent déjouer les contraintes sociales.’²⁴ Although Doisneau recognizes that few people truly like the *banlieue*, he justifies his photography (work and pleasure) time and again. He also faces accusations of ‘misérabilisme pittoresque’.²⁵

In Wirklichkeit folgt das Buch einem ausgesprochen differenzierten Blick, zeigt Vorstadt weder als Idyll noch als Slum, auch wenn die Bescheidenheit der Lebensumstände nicht zu übersehen ist. Nicht wenige Aufnahmen erinnern an die Bildfindungen der italienischen Neorealisten. [...] Häufig operiert er [Doisneau] aus der Distanz, spielt mit einer gewissen Leere oder gestattet sich einen visuellen Minima-

23 See Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris: Paris im Fotobuch 1890 bis heute*, p. 202.

24 Wolfram Nitsch, ‘Terrains vagues en noir et blanc: La banlieue de Paris dans les albums photographiques d’après-guerre’, in Philippe Antoine/Danièle Méaux/Jean-Pierre Montier (eds.), *La France en albums (XIX^e–XXI^e siècles)*, Paris: Hermann 2017 (Colloque de Cerisy), pp. 203–216, at p. 208.

25 Peter Hamilton, *Robert Doisneau: La vie d’un photographe*, Paris: Hoëbeke 1995, p. 178.

lismus. Im Buch folgen Close-ups auf Panoramen, ereignishafte Szenen auf Detailansichten, Intérieurs auf Stadtlandschaften.²⁶

While Cendrars, with his texts, emphasizes the unsettling, wild, debauched²⁷, even obscene side of urban wastelands, Nitsch provides reasons for Doisneau's opposing, perhaps complementary, perspective and compares:

Tandis que Doisneau voit la banlieue avec les yeux d'un jeune père de famille pour qui le 'pittoresque fugitif' est à la fois la traduction d'une vision optimiste du monde et le moyen de se faire une situation professionnelle, lui-même la parcourt en 'vieux bourlingueur solitaire' et la regarde en voyageur désabusé que ses expériences 'poussent au noir pour ne pas dire à un pessimiste systématique'^{28, 29}

In Erich Grisar's 1932 photograph entitled 'Kampfflugzeugbesatzung',³⁰ whose motif can be categorized almost analogously to Doisneau's 'À la limite de l'ancienne zone' (1944), we also undoubtedly perceive that this photographed wasteland is in any case a 'zone vouée à la pure potentialité'.³¹



(Fig. 24)

26 Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris: Paris im Fotobuch 1890 bis heute*, p. 203.

27 See Louis Calaferte, *Requiem des innocents* (1952), Paris: Gallimard 2001, p. 16.

28 Cendrars/Doisneau, *La Banlieue de Paris*, pp. 16–17.

29 Nitsch, 'Terrains vagues en noir et blanc', p. 209.

30 See Zupancic (ed.), *Mit Kamera und Schreibmaschine durch Europa: Bilder und Berichte von Erich Grisar*, p. 181.

31 Vasset, *Un livre blanc*, p. 61.

At other times, Doisneau literally documents and tells a story, namely that of two opposing camps that simply do not want to agree on whose area is *de facto* at stake here. The ownership situation must therefore be clarified immediately. Someone is even taken prisoner to perform ‘forced labour’, and of course also for the purpose of demonstrating power. The ‘prisoner’ is kept in check with a pistol to ensure that he performs his labour properly. There is no extradiegetic framework preceding this scene. In the sense of Gérard Genette, the ‘gosses’ command, act and obey purely on the intradiegetic narrative level. Doisneau does not appear to be a secondary character in the story and even less its protagonist, so that his position can be seen as heterodiegetically photographic.³²



(Fig. 25)

At this point, we can only hope that the story of ‘Le Prisonnier’ near the ‘Barricades et HLM’³³ at the *Porte de Vanves* will come to a peaceful ending:

32 See Gérard Genette, *Figures III*, Paris: Seuil 1972 (Poétique).

33 The two photographs are taken from Jean-Claude Gautrand, *Robert Doisneau: 1912–1994*, Cologne: Taschen 2003, p. 128 f.

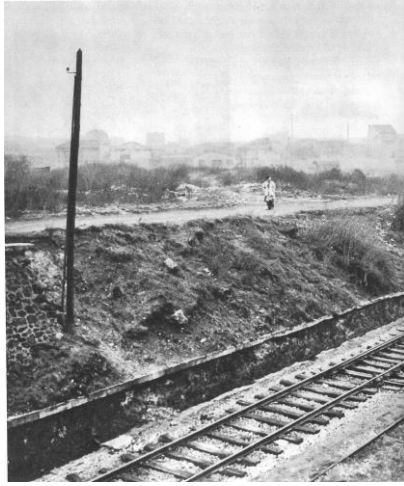


(Fig. 26)

But now to another photo book, a report on vagabondage through the outskirts of Paris by Jean-Paul Clébert, *Paris insolite* from 1952, which itself has been illustrated with photos by Patrice Molinard since the new edition of 1954 (originally Doisneau was intended for this).³⁴ The narrator, who, as in Hugo's *Les misérables*, presents himself as a 'rôdeur de barrières' and reports on his wanderings along the territory of the former *fortifications*, is not only continuing an existing Romantic line with regard to his self-designation. In view of the 'waste of a stillborn civilization' that the narrator finds on the overgrown strip around Paris, he indulges not in apocalyptic visions or moral accusations, but in a reflection on the advantages of wastelands as places of retreat and on the changeability and transience of urban forms that become visible within them. In concrete terms, the *terrains vagues* seem to him to be not only ideal hiding places where the urban vagabond can camp out in the shadow of police control, but also something like an architectural-ontological *degré zéro*, to which the short-lived products of the modern, industrial city – factories, 'apartment blocks' and stadiums that quickly 'blossom' only to 'wither' again – sooner or later fall back: everything eventually becomes fallow land again and thus part of the ineradicable 'domain of the weed'.³⁵ Clébert is thus not the last to place the essentially ephemeral and transitory phenomenon of *terrains vagues* in a *sub specie aeternitatis* perspective and, in this light, to bring to light the metaphysical and poetic qualities of wastelands.

34 See Jean-Paul Clébert, *Paris insolite* (1952), authentifié par 115 photographies de Patrice Molinard, Paris: Attila 2009. For the history of the edition, see Luc Sante, 'On *Paris Vagabond*', in *The New York Review of Books* 63, vol. 7, 2016, p. 30 f.

35 Clébert, *Paris insolite* pp. 81–82 and 212–213.



(Fig. 27)

This book of photographs thus shows us secret foreign places or places of the foreign in a capital that, according to Clébert, is a ‘cité interdite au public, réservée aux initiés, aux très rares poètes, aux très nombreux vagabonds’,³⁶ while shortly afterwards he dubbed himself a ‘vagabond-poète ou poète-vagabond’. Nitsch’s assessment is as follows: ‘Les terrains vagues de Clébert et Molinard sont des lieux hautement ambigus, ambivalents et fugitifs. Leur ambiguïté provient de ce qu’ils paraissent fermés et ouverts, interdits et pourtant accessibles.’³⁷ In the vicinity of such ‘friches ferroviaires’ (as shown above in Fig. 27), vagabonds roam; some seek shelter, hide from the ‘flics’ or engage in a fling:

Il y a comme ça dans Paris quelques tronçons abandonnés, où depuis une éternité les trains ne passent plus, [...] tranchées caillouteuses et herbues où l’on est à l’aise pour marcher, faire un camp, cuire la popote sur un feu discret et dormir des deux yeux. Évidemment le difficile est d’y pénétrer, car des grilles les protègent, mais il y a des trous, des barreaux tordus, brisés, relevés à certains endroits qu’il faut connaître, suffisants pour le passage d’un homme. J’y ai fait l’amour, un soir d’été, avec une greluce des immeubles modernes. Je ne me souviens pas de son visage, mais de l’odeur de la terre, de la texture des branches et de feuilles, de l’inclinaison de la pente qui m’obligeait à certaines précautions pour ne pas bouler à deux sur les rails ...³⁸

36 Ibid., p. 65.

37 Nitsch, ‘Terrains vagues en noir et blanc’, p. 210.

38 Clébert, *Paris insolite*, pp. 284–287.

Apart from the dangers just described, which the rails inevitably entailed on some ‘friches ferroviaires’, Molinard says that people in Paris at that time were confronted with various difficulties that had to be captured photographically, such as hunger and thirst, cold in harsh winters, long nights, wandering, the forbidding city, hope and fear. In this sense, he banishes all picturesque moments from his works, which are therefore true, genuine and authentic. Molinard has a horror of cheap photos and the romance of the homeless, comments Hans-Michael Koetzle.³⁹ And again with regard to the rails (both fascinating and *tremendum*), Nitsch emphasizes: ‘Une friche ferroviaire peut inspirer le sentiment d’un danger mortel – fréquemment associé au chemin de fer.’⁴⁰

But where does this fear of death come from? Isn’t it really a sense of amazement, a kind of marvelling at the speed at which the world vibrates and flies by? Think of the terrifying *L’ARRIVÉE D’UN TRAIN EN GARE DE LA CIOTAT* by Louis Lumière or *LA BÊTE HUMAINE* by Jean Renoir with Jean Gabin and Simone Simon: ‘Paris, was gern vergessen wird, ist auch eine Stadt der Gleise und Trassen, Viadukte und Brücken, Signale und Weichen – und der Bahnhöfe natürlich.’⁴¹ Acceleration and speed, fleetingness and transience can be observed not only in the aforementioned paintings by William Turner, but also in the photographs *Paris – Londres – Paris*⁴² by Bernard Plossu:

39 See Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris: Paris im Fotobuch 1890 bis heute*, p. 260 f.

40 Nitsch, ‘Terrains vagues en noir et blanc’, p. 214.

41 Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris: Paris im Fotobuch 1890 bis heute*, p. 207. He also points out the following: ‘1827 wurde in Frankreich die erste Eisenbahnlinie in Betrieb genommen. Im selben Jahr gelang Nicéphore Niépce eine erste fotografische Aufnahme. Fotografie wie Eisenbahn sind als Erfindung Kinder des positivistischen 19. Jahrhunderts. Beide nehmen sie – mit Licht oder Dampf – etwas ausgesprochen Flüchtliges in die Pflicht. Beide haben sie unser Leben revolutioniert. Sie haben es entschieden beschleunigt – und unsere Wahrnehmung verändert.’ In this context, see also René Groebli, *Magie der Schiene*, Zurich: Cube 1949.

42 Bernard Plossu/Michel Butor, *Paris – Londres – Paris*, Mission photographique transmanche, Éditions de la Différence/Centre régional de la photographie Nord-Pas-de-Calais 1988 (book I).



(Fig. 28)

This is Philippe Antoine Plossu's view of urban wasteland (based on his collaboration with Michel Butor):

Les vues de Plossu relèvent [...] d'une esthétique pauvre qui est à tout prendre une forme d'équivalent de la note prise sur le vif. Depuis le compartiment du wagon adviennent des images qu'on ne choisit pas, qui défilent et disent la simple présence des choses et peut-être les impressions qu'elles produisent sur qui les accueille. Dans de tels voyages, on ne sait jamais vraiment ce qui va arriver ni quelle émotion sera procurée par l'irruption dans le champ visuel d'un détail non prévu, en un sens illisible et pourtant capital.⁴³

Similarly, now for another expedition by train to a different Paris. François Maspero's research trip through the Parisian *banlieue*, accompanied by the photographer Anaïk Frantz, whose travelogue was published in 1990 under the title *Les passagers du Roissy-Express*, is fuelled by a diagnosis that many contemporaries would have shared: the centre of Paris has become a 'Disneyland of culture', while the surroundings form an unknown, amorphous, grey mass consisting of residential silos, transport infrastructure, consumer zones and logistics centres – inside the museumized, commercialized city, outside mono-functional, incoherent pieces of space that have lost all human scale and are inhabited by seemingly uprooted masses of people.⁴⁴

43 Philippe Antoine, 'Voyages excentriques: La France dans ses marges', in Philippe Antoine/Danièle Méaux/Jean-Pierre Montier (eds.), *La France en albums (XIX^e–XXI^e siècles)*, Paris: Hermann 2017 (Colloque de Cerisy), pp. 217–229, at p. 221.

44 See François Maspero, *Les passagers du Roissy-Express*. Photographies d'Anaïk Frantz, Paris: Seuil 1990.

Maspero and Frantz, however, develop their own strategies for discovering a different Paris, each in the form of playful, quasi- or pseudo-scientific projects that follow a more or less systematic set of rules and are reminiscent both of the *dérives* of the *Situationist International* and of the self-imposed constraints, the *contraintes* of the writers' circle of the *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle* (Oulipo). Maspero crosses the entire Paris metropolitan area from north-east to south-west on the suburban train and makes it his mission to get off at every station (except the stops in the city centre), to explore the surrounding area and look for a place to stay overnight at every second station. Along the way, he traces the multi-layered but mostly underexposed social history of the suburbs and attempts to bring the life of these places back onto the map in a form of *réécriture géographique* using quasi-ethnological methods (close observation, dense description, participant observation, interviews).



(Fig. 29)

For Maspero and Frantz, the *terrains vagues* they encounter during their travels each have a different meaning, but these meanings seem to converge at a common point: they are seen as the last refuge of an urbanity that has been lost or is believed to have been lost. Or as Henri Lefebvre put it back in 1974: 'Le terrain vague serait l'ultime recours de la vitalité irréductible'.⁴⁵ The result of Maspero's 'field study' is the discovery of a social life in the suburbs that, according to him, is much richer and more liveable in many places than a first glance at the prefabricated buildings would suggest. In contrast to Paris's now sterile city centre, from which life has been driven to the outskirts, it is that it is out there, in this very place, that 'real' life takes place; the *terrain vague*, which often stands metonymically for the *banlieue*, is actually 'full' rather than

45 Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, p. 64.

'empty': 'Le 'tout autour' ne pouvait donc pas être un terrain vague, mais un terrain plein: plein de monde et de vie.'⁴⁶

In the spirit of Maspero, Rolin and Vasset, Daniel Ritter and I also carried out several expeditions to the outskirts of the city between 2014 and 2017, 'des voyages à la ville autre', and took, among others, the previous photograph (Fig. 29: 'Paris: l'ancienne ligne de la Petite Ceinture') and the three following pictures:



(Fig. 30)



(Fig. 31)

46 Maspero, *Les passagers du Roissy-Express*, p. 25.



(Fig. 32)

In addition to common attributes such as building fences, discarded electrical appliances, parked and supposedly abandoned lorry semi-trailers (here *Chapeau Claque*), foil blowing around in the air, plastic cups, pieces of wood and ashes from a recent spontaneous barbecue, advertising posters and graffiti, the urban system through which we have roamed can always be recognized in these photographs, as in Saint-Denis (fig. 32). A certain emptiness and the open-endedness of the *terrains vagues* inevitably open up individual spaces of imagination for the subject who strolls across the terrain, if at all possible, or aesthetically absorbs and ‘measures’ it. We seem to like the abandoned, useless and random. This is part of a surrealist aesthetic in search of the ‘everyday marvellous’, which discovers not only beauty but also hidden, unconscious layers of reality in objects that have been removed from their original context of use.⁴⁷ As we already know, the concept of *terrain vague* rarely appears in surrealist literature, despite the affinities just described. André Breton, author not only of the *Surrealist Manifesto* but also of the novel *Nadja* (1928), and

47 For a classic aesthetics of surrealism, see André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme* (1924/1930), Paris: Pauvert 1962, and Walter Benjamin, ‘Der Sürrealismus: Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz’ (1929), in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, with contributions by Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1977, vol. 2, pp. 295–310.

Louis Aragon, a close companion and author of *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926), rarely used it in their writings, and if at all, then in a metaphorical sense. It is all the more surprising that the following *poème-objet* comes to light in one of Breton's manuscripts: 'Ces terrains vagues / où j'erre / vaincu par l'ombre / et la lune / accrochée à la maison de mon cœur.'⁴⁸

The following recording by Robert Doisneau, which he entitled 'Premières amours (Alfortville)',⁴⁹ offers a view of the *délaissés urbains* as places of first and perhaps initially secret love:



(Fig. 33)

1.2 TERRAINS DE JEUX ET DE L'ÂME IN COMICS

In September 2018, the ComFor, the *German Society for Comics Studies*, held an event titled 'Interspaces – Gender, Diversity, and Identity in Comics'. It was its 13th academic conference and took place in Cologne.⁵⁰ ComFor describes the

48 I was alerted to Breton's manuscript by Wolfram Nitsch: André Breton, 'Sur le poème-objet 'Ces terrains vagues': Textes retrouvés', 1938–1948, in Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 4 (Écrits sur l'art et autres textes), Paris: Gallimard 2008 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), pp. 1188–1189. Available at: <https://www.andre-breton.fr/work/56600100040890> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

49 Cendrars/Doisneau, *La Banlieue de Paris*, p. 72.

50 See ComFor, *Zwischenräume – Geschlecht, Diversität und Identität im Comic*, 13th academic conference, University of Cologne, 17–19 September 2019, available at:

comic medium itself as a pictorial, visual and sequential art, which includes the static sequence of images, as well as the empty spaces and gaps between the panels. Such interstitial spaces can be interpreted as references to ‘what is not shown’, which renounce a clear, final and universally valid truth and offer alternatives that can be located beyond the regulated social circumstances, the social *status quo*. As a popular cultural form that is however an often marginalized and transgressive medium between image and text, comics possess a sociopolitical dimension that challenges and potentially undermines hierarchical or hegemonic norms and structures related to age, class, gender, nationality, religion, or ethnicity. The medium seems to vehemently resist the exclusion of various groups:

So gehört etwa das Bild des besonders hilflosen, passiven, dafür aber umso attraktiveren weiblichen Opfers genauso zum Repertoire des Darstellungskanons wie die Repräsentation eines strahlenden, weißen, heterosexuellen, muskulösen Helden, dessen Hauptaufgabe darin besteht, die Welt und ihre Bewohner*innen vor unsäglichem Unheil zu bewahren. In diesem Sinne scheint sich der Comic also nicht zwingend von anderen (massenmedialen) Formen zu unterscheiden, die im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit eine Tendenz zur Verallgemeinerung und zum Klischee aufweisen. Auch die Reaktionen auf die weltweiten Anti-Comic-Kampagnen der 1950er Jahre und die damit einhergehende Selbstzensur vieler Comicverlage verweisen aus historischer Perspektive exemplarisch auf heteronormative und oftmals xenophobe Tendenzen der massenmedialen Comic-Kultur.⁵¹

Thus, according to ComFor, the medium of comics succeeds in bursting conventional oppositions such as ‘good vs. bad’, ‘real vs. fake’, ‘subject vs. object’, ‘male vs. female’, ‘nature vs. culture’, ‘black vs. white’, ‘normal vs. abnormal’, and so on. Comics have the productive potential to soften such rigid dichotomies and to track down the interstitial spaces and tones and bring them to light for reception and reproduction by others.⁵²

There is, for example, the comic series *Totoche*, penned by the writer and illustrator Jean Tabary (surnamed Ribata *en verlan*), which was published from 1959 in the weekly comic magazine *Vaillant* (1945–1969), associated with the ‘French Communist Party’, and continued there from its renaming as *Pif gadget* in 1969 (now with a gimmick in the magazine) until 1982.⁵³ The hero of the

<https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/02/28/cfp-zwischenraeume-geschlecht-diversitaet-und-identitaet-im-comic/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

51 See *ibid.*

52 See *ibid.*

53 See the website of Jean Tabary: www.jeantabary.fr (accessed on 27 December 2020).

comic stories is Totoche, the likeable leader of a cheerful gang of children from Belleville, the 19th arrondissement, which was still a working-class neighbourhood⁵⁴ at the time. They have made an old hut on a *terrain vague* in their neighbourhood their meeting place and regularly play pranks on the adults. By deliberately presenting Totoche and his comrades, who self-organize as a gang against their adult guardians, as role models for the young working-class generation, a distinctly socialist interest in the wasteland as a utopian, occupiable free space is established in this genre of children's and youth literature.

Between June 1966 and March 1976, 40 of Totoche's adventures were also edited in the *Totoche Poche* paperback format, the first 24 titles of which were written by Jean Tabary, while the last 16 were written by his brother Jacques. In the following panel, which is taken from the comic story 'Pour une cabane et un arbre',⁵⁵ Totoche and his friends are playing football on the slightly littered *terrain vague* behind the palisade fence – with an entrance and exit hole, of course – and very close to 'their' hut:

Bonne humeur et bons sentiments rythment la vie de cette ribambelle de copains qui se retrouvent chaque jeudi au cœur d'un terrain vague, bien à l'abri d'une palissade dans leur cabane. Elle est lieu de tous les secrets, de tous les gags aussi, mais surtout, elle est souvent le point de départ de toutes leurs histoires.⁵⁶

54 'In Pierre Christins und Enki Bilals Comic *La ville qui n'existait pas* [...] plant Madeleine, eine philanthropische Erbin, eine Idealstadt, um das Los der verelendeten Arbeiter zu erleichtern. Die perfekte Stadt findet schließlich in drei käseglockenartigen Glasstürzen Platz, wo alle Tage Sonntag ist. [...] Doch die Utopie lebt aus der Negation, und wie so oft lassen uns die Comics mit einer Störung beziehungsweise Verstörung zurück, die immer dann entsteht, wenn die mythische Struktur uns zeigt, was es (noch) nicht gibt. So gestalten die Comics die Doppelgesichtigkeit der vertikalen Stadt – ihr Faszinosum und ihren Schrecken – zum unauflösbaren formalen Prinzip.' Johann N. Schmidt, 'Comic und Architektur: Faszination und Alptraum der vertikalen Stadt', in Barbara Eder/Elisabeth Klar/Ramón Reichert (eds.), *Theorien des Comics: Ein Reader*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2011, pp. 89–107, at p. 104. See Enki Bilal/Pierre Christin, *La ville qui n'existait pas*, Genève: Les humanoides associés 1996.

55 Jean Tabary, 'Pour une cabane et un arbre' (1960), in Tabary, *Totoche Poche: Portrait robot, Le meilleur ami de l'homme*, n°14, Paris: Vaillant 1969 (V 800–809).

56 <http://editions-tabary.fr/totoche> (accessed on 27 December 2020).



(Fig. 34)

Totoche and his gang call the *terrain vague*, the hut and the tree, their own until the owner wants to evict them:

Le propriétaire a décidé d'y faire construire un immeuble et les enfants apprennent la mauvaise nouvelle. Totoche ne veut pas se laisser faire. Les enfants se concertent et rassemblent leurs économies pour acheter leur terrain. Ils réunissent ainsi '942 francs, 2 tablettes de chocolat, 6 timbres oblitérés et 1 paquet de bonbons', mais cette fortune n'impressionne pas les ouvriers qui rigolent et commencent leurs travaux.⁵⁷



(Fig. 35)

57 <http://lecturederaymond.over-blog.com/article-28503735.html> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

The two panels above (*cases/vignettes*) show us very clearly how serious the threat to Totoche and his friends is. They fight⁵⁸ to the death for their 'play-ground' (the place where they can express themselves creatively) by deciding to surround their *cabane* with an electric fence. The power is immediately and furiously switched off by the construction workers after some of them receive electric shocks. When the architect finally wants to personally drive a bulldozer over the *terrain vague* in order to ruthlessly demolish the hut, Totoche courageously prevents him from doing so by standing in his way. The gang of children parry every single attempt by the intruders; nothing and nobody seems to be able to displace them, while the workers' motivation and interest in the construction progress steadily wane.

Als Erzählung ist der Comic geprägt von Selektion, kann er doch nur einen kleinen Teil der Informationen, die für das Verständnis der Geschichte notwendig sind, durch (bildliche oder sprachliche) Zeichen repräsentieren – den Rest ergänzt der Leser im Rahmen der Lektüre. Leerstellen zählen aber auch ganz konkret zu den konstitutiven Merkmalen von Comics, denn bekanntermaßen finden sich auf den Seiten des Comics nicht nur einzelne Panels, sondern zwischen ihnen auch immer Zwischenräume, meist schmale weiße Streifen, [...] mit dem Begriff ‚gutter‘ bezeichnet [...], eines der wichtigsten Elemente des Comics, denn hier kombiniere der Leser zwei Einzelbilder zu einem einzigen Gedanken.⁵⁹

Scott McCloud refers to this kind of reception-aesthetic reader performance, this essential element, as 'closure'.⁶⁰ In the *Totoche comics*, Tabary usually links the individual panels in the following way: 'action-to-action', 'subject-to-

58 Jacques Réda also struggles in a similar way, although he is all too aware of the paradox of preserving an essentially transitory interstitial space: Nevertheless, he wanted to found the 'Union pour la Préservation des Terrains Vagues', an association for the preservation of Parisian wasteland, and dissolve it again in the same prose poem that was its founding manifesto. Despite the irony behind the idea of an organization like the UPTV, Réda's *terrain vague* always has a certain 'holy seriousness' about it. In contrast to his predecessors, it is neither charged with utopian-revolutionary ideas nor is it staged as a place of transgression of social norms. Nor does it appear as an alternative space for spending one's free time. As such, it would only be the other side of human busyness. It is therefore not merely a heterotopia made by people to organize or compensate for human conditions. See Jacques Réda, 'Appuyé dans cette attitude pensive', in Réda, *Les Ruines de Paris/Die Ruinen von Paris*, pp. 56–59.

59 Julia Abel/Christian Klein (eds.), *Comics und Graphic Novels: Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler 2016, p. 84.

60 Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, New York: William Morrow 1994, p. 63.

subject' or 'aspect-to-aspect'.⁶¹ Either the individual actions and steps taken by the children's gang are shown one after the other, or the depicted scenes remain at least within the same conceptual context, or Tabary makes the gang's *terrain vague* in Belleville visible by gradually highlighting various aspects of this place. Figure 34 above even resembles an establishing shot (an introductory image at the beginning of a sequence). With the help of 'action lines' or 'speed-lines',⁶² Tabary traces the trajectory of the football or even a can that the boys shoot at each other on their wasteland. Julia Abel and Christian Klein add that movement is often marked in such a way that the comic artists depict their figures immediately before a change of pose in order to emphasize these particular moments of movement and the sequence of events in rigid images.⁶³ Transferred to figure 34, this means that Totoche is shown with his leg outstretched in a dynamic figure position even before his foot even hits the ball. Tabary chooses conventional page architecture, format, page and panel frames, as well as size, colour and shape: frame lines are thin, simple and regular, the panels are mostly rectangular, sometimes black and white and in greyscale, sometimes in limited colour or in four-colour print.⁶⁴ Succession, but also simultaneity, characterize a perception of time in comics, which is always closely interwoven with the presentation of space: using textual references, graphic cues, everyday knowledge and time-stretching or time-accelerating narration, the authors direct the recipients' perception by rhythmizing the narrative tempo in this way ('pacing').⁶⁵ Comic readers often know from experience how long the conversation between Totoche and the construction worker will last.

Der diegetische Raum [...] wird vom Leser als Kombination aus ‚gezeigten‘ und ‚nichtgezeigten‘ Raumbestandteilen gestiftet. [...] So können etwa bestimmte Elemente in einem Panel auf den Raum jenseits des Rahmens verweisen, der vom Leser ergänzt wird. Andererseits kann in einem Panel selbst auch ‚nichtgezeigter‘ Raum präsent sein, weil z. B. eine Figur Raumbestandteile [...] mit ihrem Körper verdeckt. Gerade das Zusammenspiel [...] kann etwa als Mittel genutzt werden, um Verblüffung oder Spannung zu erzeugen.⁶⁶

The speech bubbles (including the thorn) in the dialogue between Totoche and the worker interested in the progress of the construction work conceal the

61 Ibid., pp. 70–74 (overview of the linking of the panels).

62 Ibid., p. 119.

63 See Abel/Klein (eds.), *Comics und Graphic Novels*, p. 88.

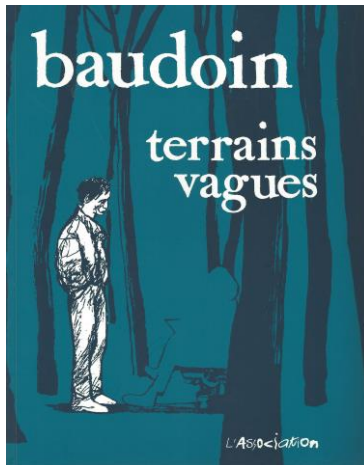
64 See *ibid.*, pp. 89–93.

65 See *ibid.*, p. 94.

66 Ibid., p. 95 f.

Parisian cityscape indicated in the panel background (fig. 35). As a rule, Tabary uses a central perspective, rarely from below (through children's eyes), to subjectivize the space and uses the (half) long shot for orientation on the urban wasteland depicted, semi-close-ups and American shots as well as close-ups to suggest closeness to Totoche and his friends.⁶⁷ When Tabary switches from the overview function of space to the context of action, he modifies the spatial representation of the panels depending on the action, whereby the image-text combination is mostly correlative, because neither image nor text in isolation would be able to express what they communicate in such a combination.⁶⁸

'[L]es réflexions sur la vie et sur notre monde, la difficulté à y communiquer [...] à travers l'amour'⁶⁹ – this is described by the comic book publisher 'L'Association' as the subject of the work *terrains vagues* (by the artist and writer Edmond Baudoin⁷⁰). It is therefore more a question of 'terrains vagues du personnage'



(Fig. 36)

67 See *ibid.*, p. 97. Abel and Klein also point out that in narrative theory and film studies, such aspects of subjectivity and the subjective camera are discussed under the term *focalization*, which, however, cannot be transferred to comics without hesitation. Kai Mikkonen distinguishes this from something like *ocularization*.

68 See *ibid.*, p. 99.

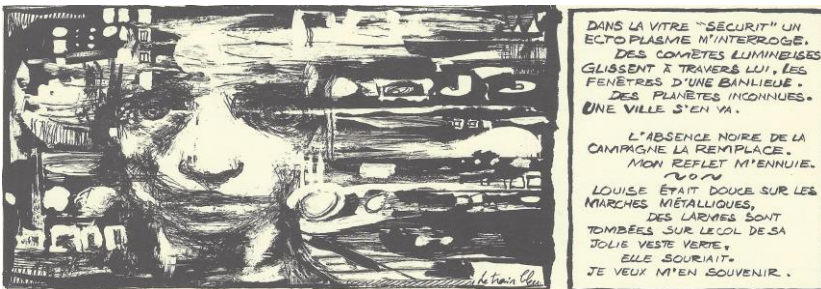
69 https://www.lassociation.fr/fr_FR/#!search (accessed on 27 December 2020).

70 See Edmond Baudoin *terrains vagues* (1996), Paris: L'Association 2003 (Éperluette); no page number.



(Fig. 37)

In the form of an analepsis, or more precisely, a resolving retrospective, the experiencing self recounts how it came about that he almost fell out with his girlfriend Louise very close to the flea market at the *Porte de Saint-Ouen*. The experiencing and narrating self creates a mysterious, gloomy *terrain vague* setting, visible in the above vignette, which in combination with the following *classeme* undoubtedly forms an isotopia: 'après-midi raté', 'endroit mouillé de gris', 'air sale' and 'ils écrasaient nos paroles'. In this uninviting empty space, Louise presses our autodiegetic narrator for an answer; urban elements are visible in the form of street lamps, electricity pylons and fences, the noise of the lorries' engines makes it almost impossible to hear your own words, and fleetingness is symbolized by the blue plastic bag, which is carried away by the wind and the lorries that drive by from time to time. She also introduces the protagonist's journey, which he is about to embark on, but whose exact timing he wants to keep secret from Louise.



(Fig. 38)

They finally say goodbye to each other, and the protagonist gets on the train: images that emerge during the journey through the Parisian *banlieue* towards

the surrounding countryside mingle in the train window with her own reflection and the memories of Louise's tears and smiles as she says goodbye.



(Fig. 39)

Before falling asleep on the train, the experiencing self feels a discomfort that results from a generally perceived difficulty or heaviness of existence, in particular from the lack of presence in the 'hic et nunc'. Why are people constantly fleeing? Why this carelessness, distraction, dissipation? It is obvious that the qualities of the *terrains vagues* in this comic are completely different from those of Totoche. Jacques Réda is probably able to clarify a little:

[J']essaierai d'émouvoir l'attention générale sur la nécessité de défendre le rêve garant de l'indépendance, mais en quoi consiste aussi le rêve, comment l'escamoter? Terrain vague de l'âme et Dieu sait ce qui peut s'y produire, s'y glisser en fait d'ingénus poètes et criminels. Ainsi travestir le terrain vague en cours de pouponnière, c'est risquer d'offusquer dans l'être la liberté du Dieu, négligeant qu'il enseigne, autant qu'une obscure espérance, la solitude et l'effroi de la mort. Point.⁷¹

Réda's 'terrain vague de l'âme' is congruent with the *terrains vagues* in Baudoin's comic, firstly because their style is similar:

Le dessin reste dans son habituel noir et blanc avec un trait épais, plein d'aspérité, marqué par le coup du pinceau. C'est avec une grande liberté qu'Edmond Baudoin mêle la peinture au 9ème art.⁷² Pas de crayonné avant d'entamer ses planches, il laisse son pinceau aller avec légèreté, sincérité et spontanéité, quitte à refaire plusieurs fois la case pour changer l'éclairage ou la prise de vu.⁷³

71 Réda, 'Appuyé dans cette attitude pensive', p. 56.

72 See Francis Lacassin, *Pour un neuvième art: La bande dessinée*, Paris: 10/18 (UGE) 1971.

73 https://www.senscritique.com/bd/Terrains_vagues/critique/15725262 (accessed on 27 December 2020).

On the other hand, both the lyrical ego of Réda's *poèmes en prose* and the experiencing, personal narrative ego of Baudoin's *planches* spend their time strolling across *terrains vagues*, or at least thinking about them and life, finding answers and philosophizing. Furthermore, both love their freedom, first in the extra-linguistic reality, then in a narrative, literary, poetic way. Réda is less interested in specific urban forms of socialization than in the individual freedoms of the lonely city drifter, who appears against this historical background as a notable lover of empty wasteland. As someone who combs all sides of the capital on foot or with his Vélosolex, he repeatedly seeks out the remains of the old, industrial and modern Paris and accompanies their disappearance with prose poems ranging from the ironic to the profound. With Réda you enjoy the *terrains vagues* on the carrier of the Vélosolex, with Baudoin you stroll and roam from shack to shack in the vagabond rhythm of his reflections.

Eine weitere Möglichkeit, Rede im Comic zu präsentieren, ist der Blocktext (auch Blockkommentar), ein Textkasten, der in der Regel ohne grafischen Verweis auf eine einzelne Figur an das Panel ober- oder unterhalb angrenzt. Der hier präsentierte Text wird gewöhnlich dazu genutzt, um explizite Erzähleräußerungen unterzubringen, kann aber auch für Figurenrede genutzt werden.⁷⁴

Baudoin uses expressive block texts in his *terrains vagues comic*, which contain references to localization in time and space, can be off-screen commentaries or allow the experiencing self to narrate. The frame lines of the individual panels are often blurred or dissolve, whereby wavy or jagged frames can, for example, indicate the panel content of a dream, memories or full of emotions.⁷⁵ The variations of the standard panels, which are visible in figures 38 and 39, present the recipients with significant mood elements of the protagonists, the last figure even as a 'landscape panel' that takes up the entire row of the grid.⁷⁶ Baudoin thus changes the rhythm of the narrative by slowing it down, allowing it to philosophize, and consequently slowing down the pace of reading, even though the experiencing and narrating self is on an express train. The form chosen here is diametrically opposed to the panel content.

Darüber hinaus können Seiten- oder Panelhintergründe figurenbezogene Informationen vermitteln. Zum anderen können Panelhintergründe in der Art von ‚Seelenlandschaften‘ gehalten sein und räumliche Entsprechungen zu seelischen

74 Abel/Klein (eds.), *Comics und Graphic Novels*, p. 101.

75 See *ibid.*, p. 91.

76 See *ibid.*

Zuständen liefern, weil sie Korrespondenzen auf inhaltlicher oder formaler Ebene aufweisen: Ein dunkler Hintergrund oder zerklüftete Landschaften im Hintergrund können auf die melancholische Stimmung einer Figur oder eine verzerrte Perspektive auf deren Wahnsinn verweisen.⁷⁷

Entirely in black and white (more precisely, painted and inked in black), Baudoin's work almost evokes those landscapes of the soul, as his style in the above panels appears dark, he experiments with shapes, lines, frames, style and lettering and the protagonists explicitly thematize their moods, feelings and thoughts. Rolf Lohse also mentions another aspect with regard to Baudoin, namely the trend towards medial self-reflexivity with the aim of refining narrative and representation, since the individual image in the *roman graphique* or *visuel* has a central narrative significance.⁷⁸ Lohse fans out recurring elements in Baudoin's works that clearly have media-reflexive potential, even if they are not explicitly designed as such.⁷⁹ Rather, they often coincide in a single panel:

Die Zeitachse wird gleichsam aus der Horizontalen in die Vertikale geklappt. Dabei ist die Chronologie auf der Seite durch die sukzessiven Veränderungen des Gesichtsausdrucks [...] gewahrt. [...] [S]o suggeriert die Folge der notierten Gesichtsausdrücke, die auf den Ausdruck der Augen reduziert werden, die zeitliche Abfolge [...], [d]ie Augen als 'Türen zur Seele'.⁸⁰

Thus, it is not only a highly advanced, experimental⁸¹ drawing technique but also an efficient narrative representation of a certain time span on a narratological level, resulting in compression and condensation:

77 Ibid., p. 104.

78 See Rolf Lohse, 'Acquiefacques, Oubapo & Co. Medienreflexive Strategien in der aktuellen französischen *bande dessinée*', in Stephan Ditschke/Katerina Kroucheva/Daniel Stein (eds.), *Comics: Zur Geschichte und Theorie eines populärkulturellen Mediums*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, pp. 309–334, at p. 310 f.

79 See *ibid.*, p. 312.

80 *Ibid.*

81 Lukas Werner presents further experimental processes in comics: 'Die Gruppe *Oubapo* (*Ouvroir de la bande dessinée potentielle*, 'Atelier für den potentiellen Comic'), die in der Tradition der literarischen Gruppe *Oulipo* steht, will die konventionellen 'Regeln [des Comics] sichtbar und produktiv für die Gestaltung' von Comics machen (Lohse 2009, 319). Mit dem Konzept der 'contraintes' ('Zwänge') schließen die Gruppenmitglieder an ihre literarischen Vorbilder an und arbeiten mit zwei Ansätzen: Zum einen versuchen sie aus der Geschichte des Comics Vorbilder für 'Formexperimente' zu finden und zum anderen arbeiten sie zugleich 'an der Neuschaffung von formalen Einschränkungen für den Comic'

Das Einzelbild ist zugleich ärmer und reicher als die Bilderfolge. Es ist ärmer, weil ihm weniger Raum zur Verfügung steht. Dies führt zu einer Reduktion der dargestellten Inhalte und der Darstellungsweise. [...] Gleichzeitig ist das Bild reicher als so manches Einzelbild in einer BD: Es enthält eine bemerkenswerte Darstellung von Chronologie und stellt sehr suggestiv die Veränderung dar, die in der Psyche [...] einsetzt. Die in die Simultaneität projizierte Chronologie wirkt beschleunigend, weil nun die Inhalte potentiell mehrerer Bilder in einem Bild zusammengefasst sind, sie bietet aber auch die Möglichkeit der Verlangsamung bei der Lektüre, da nun das Augenmerk auf die Analyse der Durch- und Übergänge zwischen dem Start- und dem Zielpunkt gelegt werden kann. [...] Hier nutzt Baudoin diesen Charakter des Unfertigen, der Skizze, um eine ganze Handlungssequenz in einem Bild zu konzentrieren. [...] Die narrativ funktionale Inszenierung des Zeichnerischen kann gleichzeitig als Inszenierung des Mediums gelesen werden.⁸²

Figure 38 also shows a similar focus on the protagonist's eyes, which undoubtedly reflect his current state of mind, an emotional state that can hardly be described in words, as he is sitting in the train, gazing blankly through the window and slightly diffuse, vague images of the city, wasteland and *banlieue* rushing past him. Now let's get some movement into the game.

1.3 INTERSTICES IN VIDEO GAMES

Espen Aarseth, in his seminal essay 'Allegories of Space: The Question of Spatiality in Computer Games', defines spatiality as a crucial category in video-game analysis: 'Computer games are essentially concerned with spatial representation and negotiation, and therefore a classification of computer games can be based on how they represent – or, perhaps, implement – space.'⁸³ The aesthetic experience of space and atmosphere (created through an update of Walter Benjamin's concept of 'Aura', affective impact during spatial perception, corporeality and reality of images, and generated mood) takes centre stage in video games, in stark contrast to board games. Andreas Rauscher writes:

(Engelmann 2013, 56).⁸² Lukas Werner: 'Metacomics', in Abel/Klein (eds.), *Comics and Graphic Novels*, pp. 304–315, at p. 313. See also Jonas Engelmann, *Gerahmter Diskurs: Gesellschaftsbilder im Independent-Comic*, Mainz: Valve 2013.

82 Lohse, 'Acquiefacques, Oubapo & Co. Medienreflexive Strategien in der aktuellen französischen *bande dessinée*', p. 313 f.

83 Espen Aarseth, 'Allegories of Spatiality in Computer Games', in F. Borries/S. P. Walz/M. Böttger, *Space Time Play*, Basel: Birkhäuser 1998, pp. 152–171, at p. 154.

Rollenspiele und Simulationen ermöglichen es, den Aufbruch ins Abenteuer ohne schlechtes Gewissen auf einen anderen Tag zu verschieben und stattdessen auf Erkundungstour zu gehen. Je nach Vorgehensweise lässt sich der gleiche Raum als Bühne, als Abenteuer-Spielplatz, als geheimnisvolle Narration oder als fantastische Form des Alltags wahrnehmen. [...] Entsprechend vielseitig gestalten sich die Anknüpfungspunkte für bildwissenschaftliche Fragestellungen. Die Interaktionsbilder des Videospiele lassen sich sowohl als Fortsetzung prägender Bildtraditionen der Kunstgeschichte, wie auch, vergleichbar mit der filmischen Stilgeschichte, als eigenständige Tradition verstehen.⁸⁴

A key difference between the in-game interaction image and the cinematic moving image is that, according to Michael Nitsche, the former is a hybrid form: 'a hybrid between architectural navigable and cinematically represented space'.⁸⁵ Referring to Kevin Lynch's sociological study *The Image of the City* and his definition of the *imageability, legibility or visibility*⁸⁶ of urban space, Michael Nitsche formulates the idea of navigating through the space by being guided by architectural landmarks that function as patterns: tracks and rails, labyrinths and mazes, arenas.⁸⁷ And it is precisely these that can also be found on the *terrains vagues* in various video games, although I will only go into three examples in more detail here:

The first-person shooter CRYISIS III⁸⁸, developed by Crytek⁸⁹ and published by Electronic Arts⁹⁰ in 2013, depicts New York in the year 2047. The Manhattan neighbourhood lies in ruins under a dome and represents a quarantine zone set up by the 'C.E.L.L. Corporation', a subsidiary of the Hargreave-Rasch energy company, under the pretext of protecting people from a virus. Aliens (the Ceph) live both inside and under the city, whose alpha is even used by C.E.L.L. to generate energy, thus securing the monopoly position in the sector in question – a monopoly that the corporation uses to exploit the population. In this sci-fi first-person shooter, you play the protagonist Prophet, who wears a

84 Andreas Rauscher, 'Raum', in Benjamin Beil/Thomas Hensel/Andreas Rauscher, (eds.), *Game Studies*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2018, pp. 3–26, at p. 8.

85 Michael Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces: Image, Play and Structure in 3D Worlds*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2008, p. 85.

86 See Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1960, p. 10.

87 See Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces*, pp. 172–187.

88 See <https://www.crytek.com/games/crysis3> (accessed on 27 December 2020). I would like to thank Martin Gäbel for sharing his knowledge on urban wastelands in video games.

89 See <https://www.crytek.com/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

90 See <https://www.ea.com/de-de> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

‘nanosuit’. Based on Ceph technology and DNA and manufactured by C.E.L.L., it gives the wearer superhuman abilities and can switch them into speed, strength or stealth mode as required. The wearer merges with the suit or is assimilated by it, so that removing the nanosuit can be lethal because to do so would require cutting oneself out of it. The character and consciousness of the original wearer continue to exist in the suit and unite with the new wearer, implying a certain interchangeability. Prophet is freed by a resistance movement and sent to the dome, the so-called *Liberty Dome*, to fight both C.E.L.L. and the Ceph, who are planning an invasion of Earth.



(Fig. 40)

The *Liberty Dome* has a tropical climate, similar to a jungle, which favours floral growth. Since its construction, the dome has resembled an urban war zone⁹¹ and even now there are repeated battles against the Ceph, who are trying to escape from the glass dome. Buildings are destroyed, overgrown by plants and thus reclaimed by nature. What is special is not only that the protagonist finds a microcosm beneath the glass-roofed Manhattan – it is therefore not a single urban wasteland within the city – but that the action takes place in a neighbourhood that has been completely transformed into a *terrain vague* which differs significantly from the rest of New York’s urban system.

91 On the phenomenology of landscape, see Kurt Lewin, ‘Kriegslandschaft’ (1917), in Jörg Dünne/Stephan Günzel (eds.), *Raumtheorie: Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaft*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2006, pp. 129–140.



(Fig. 41)

The third-person action-adventure and survival horror game THE LAST OF US⁹², developed by Naughty Dog⁹³ and published by Sony Interactive Entertainment⁹⁴ in 2013, is set in the post-apocalyptic United States in the year 2033. At this point in time, around two thirds of the world's population have been infected with the *cordyceps fungus* (the mutated *ophiocordyceps unilateralis*) for 20 years, which affects the brain and causes physical deterioration. Infected people behave extremely violently, surround and kill their victims and act cannibalistically until their state of transformation is so advanced that they cover both floors and walls – like a mould – and spread their spores in the process. If healthy people inhale these spores or allow them to bite them, they also mutate. Firstly, we identify with the protagonist Joel, who is supposed to escort the young Ellie from Boston to the hospital in Salt Lake City, despite having been bitten, as she is believed to be immune and co-operating in the production of a fungicidal antidote. During the game, you also take on the role of Ellie for a short period of time when Joel is seriously injured during a fight. After finding medicine, administering it to Joel and fending off enemies, you look over Joel's shoulder again. The modelled world is neglected and dilapidated across the board, houses and buildings are damaged, entire towns destroyed. Nature, for its part, has taken over the cities and is continually reclaiming them.

92 See <https://www.thelastofus.playstation.com/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

93 See <https://www.naughtydog.com/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

94 See <https://www.sie.com/en/index.html> (accessed on 27 December 2020).



(Fig. 42)

As the protagonist Joel, you defend yourself on the wastelands against both infected people and gangs of healthy people who attack, raid and rob in order to gain advantages for themselves and ensure their own survival. The threat posed by the non-infected in the fictional open world is almost greater than that posed by the fairly predictable cannibals and walking mutants. Felix Schröter notes in his essay 'Figur' that the artificial intelligence (AI) of a character is determined on the one hand by movement and on the other by decision-making: 'So sind die meisten Gegner im *Action Adventure THE LAST OF US* beispielsweise mit einem Sichtfeld ausgestattet, das ihnen erlaubt, mit dem Verhalten 'Angriff' zu reagieren, sobald der *player character* in ihr Sichtfeld eintritt.'⁹⁵ Both movements and decisions play a significant role for every *terrain vague* user, in non-linguistic reality just as in a medially depicted or simulated game situation. In the following *terrain vague* screenshot, the corpse of a non-infected person lies prone on the ground, having previously been shot by the main character. Whether it is a crime is a moot point and will not be discussed here. In any case, the urban wasteland symbolizes a crime scene, as someone has just been killed here, even though it was in self-defence. However, no one is likely to be interested in this because social structures seem to have dissolved in the scenario depicted.

95 Felix Schröter, 'Figure', in Benjamin Beil/Thomas Hensel/Andreas Rauscher (eds.), *Game Studies*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2018, pp. 109–128, at p. 119.



(Fig. 43)

With regard to urban wastelands, we therefore realize that the relationship between the structured urban system and its gaps, cracks and holes has been completely reversed in this game, as the represented world is a single *terrain vague*, in whose cracks, for example, non-infected people flock together with the intention of protecting themselves from fungal infection and violence. Such gaps in the *terrain vague* city, even in the *terrain vague* world, have the function of a refuge and are therefore the only places where order exists.

QUANTUM BREAK⁹⁶, a third-person action-adventure game, was developed by Remedy Entertainment⁹⁷ and published by Microsoft Studios in 2016. The story is set in the fictional US East Coast town of Riverport. You take on the role of Jack Joyce, who, through his friend Paul Serene and his brother Bill, both presumably quantum physicists, gets caught up in an unsuccessful time travel attempt and thereby gains time manipulation powers. This failed experiment causes ever-growing cracks in the space-time continuum and leads to a global threat: time is broken and the universe is in danger of disintegrating or falling into eternal rigidity. The aim of the game is to rebalance or repair the space-time continuum using an object similar to a 12-sided cube which was developed by his brother Bill (who was killed by Paul Serene) and which can be used to close anomalies and correct errors. Travelling through the city, they search for this cube and the records of the late Bill's research in order to save the

96 See <https://www.remedygames.com/games/quantumbreak/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

97 See <https://www.remedygames.com/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

universe. Against Bill's will, Paul starts the time travel experiment in the research department on the university campus and sends himself through time, including duplicating himself in the past. Jack, who is present when the experiment fails, is altered by the radiation and from then on also has the ability to manipulate time by stopping it, rewinding it, speeding it up or slowing it down. While travelling into the future, Paul sees that the world can no longer be saved and founds the 'Monarch Solutions' high-tech corporation in the past, with the aim of building a kind of ark (the lifeboat protocol) to save its occupants from the time anomalies that will engulf the universe. 'Monarch Solutions' has its own security service with military features, which Jack Joyce must defend himself against during the course of the game as he is moving across the *terrain vague* of the industrial estate towards the docks:



(Fig. 44)

In order to cross the wasteland, Jack has to use his time-manipulating abilities to send corrugated iron roof panels, which fall down when he steps on them, back in time so that they return to their original position, and he can walk on them in order to have a clear path into the building. Immediately after the passing process, the objects detach themselves again and fall down, as the effect is only short-lived. At this point, the video game also reveals the no-longer and not-yet of the gaps in urban space:

[Jack] baut per Rückspulfunktion eine eingestürzte Mauer wieder auf, die dann als Brücke zu höheren Plattformen dient. [...] Der Riss im Raum-Zeit-Kontinuum verursacht immer wieder Anomalien und lässt das Geschehen einfrieren. Jack bewegt sich dann wie ein Schlafwandler zwischen puppenhaft erstarrten Feinden, die aber jeden Moment zum Leben erwachen können. [...] Einmal sieht Jack eine

Kopie seiner Selbst über einen Zaun klettern. Als er hinterherklettert, sieht er, wie ihm eine weitere Kopie folgt.⁹⁸

On the *terrain vague*, there is another character who shows Jack the way to the docks. He had previously saved this character from being murdered and freed them from the clutches of ‘Monarch Solutions’ security forces, who were extorting them, in the industrial hall adjacent to the wasteland.



(Fig. 45)

Achim Fehrenbach explains in his article ‘So sieht also ein Riss im Raum-Zeit-Kontinuum aus’ that video games – including QUANTUM BREAK – are increasingly moving towards a series format by distributing the plot episodically, working with cliffhangers and flashbacks and creating an extensive repertoire of characters. The game also includes four 20-minute short film sequences in which players can only watch and not intervene.⁹⁹ In his major work *Egoshooter*, Stephan Günzel explains that the video game image itself can become cinematic; this happens in ‘in-game movies’, whereby short film sequences are incorporated into the game, so that the player moves from the online to the offline state.¹⁰⁰ This does not mean that

98 Achim Fehrenbach: ‘So sieht also ein Riss im Raum-Zeit-Kontinuum aus’, in *ZEIT Online*, 1 April 2016, <https://www.zeit.de/digital/games/2016-04/quantum-break-test> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

99 See *ibid.*

100 See James Newman, ‘Der Mythos des ergodischen Videospieles: Einige Gedanken über das Verhältnis von Spieler und Spielfiguren und Videospiele’ (2002), translated by Jeannette Pacher, in Karin Bruns/Ramón Reichert (eds.), *Reader New*

das Spielen in einem Netzwerk unterbrochen wird, sondern dass Spieler vom Spiel selbst getrennt werden, demgegenüber sie dann zur Passivität verdammt seien. Hierüber erhält das Spiel jedoch das, was ihm der medialen Form des Mediums nach nicht zukommen muss: eine Narration. Der Schritt ist erheblich und für die Computerspielanalyse nicht zu unterschätzen, denn daran lässt sich zeigen, dass der Medienwechsel vom Spiel zum Film bei gleichbleibender Bildperspektive den Wechsel vom solipsistischen Ego zum psychologischen Ich mit sich bringen kann.¹⁰¹

The short film sequence completely interrupts the interaction picture, with the intention of describing and familiarizing the players with the action as a sequence of causes (*plot*), but not the sequence of events (*story*). From a narratological perspective, according to Günzel, such plot elements can be cited as evidence that first-person shooters are indeed narrative and immersive: 'Immersion liegt [...] im Sinne der Bilddarstellung vor: als 'Eintauchen' in den Kopf der in der Filmsequenz zuvor herausgetretenen Egofigur, die im Ingamemovie von außen zu sehen ist.'¹⁰² Since a *terrain vague* user prefers to be his own master, it is in no way surprising that in the urban wastelands of the above video games (as well as others that I will only mention here: *FALLOUT IV*, *METRO EXODUS*, *INFRA*, *NO MAN'S SKY* etc.), pressing the escape button will end such a forced pause and restore your freedom of action.

Benjamin Beil emphasizes that video games in general, and not just in the case of game modding and editor games, are not self-contained artefacts that can be reduced to a set of rules or their narrative paths: 'Sie sind flüchtige Medien, deren Wesen sich erst im Akt der Nutzung – in der Partizipation durch den Spieler – vollständig erschließt [...], und produzier[en] eine wechselseitige Rekursion, die sich naturgemäß erst in der Prozesshaftigkeit des Spielens zeigt.'¹⁰³ In light of this chapter, can the *terrain vague* now be fully labelled as a participatory, interactive *ludotopia*?

Media: Texte zur digitalen Kultur und Kommunikation, Bielefeld: Transcript 2008, pp. 442–457.

101 Stephan Günzel, *Egosooter. Das Raumbild des Computerspiels*, Frankfurt a. M.: Campus 2012, p. 172–173.

102 See *ibid.*, p. 173.

103 Benjamin Beil, 'Partizipation', in Benjamin Beil/Thomas Hensel/Andreas Rauscher (eds.), *Game Studies*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2018, pp. 285–299, at p. 296.

2. Documentary Films about the Cracks and Edges, Gaps and Holes in the Urban Fabric

The image of the old self-contained and compact city has hardly corresponded to reality for well over a century; the city dissolved its boundaries long ago and expanded towards more rural shores. Today, we are in the middle of another phase of upheaval. For the first time since the plague and cholera, Europe is experiencing a decline in population and the city, which has continued to expand, is beginning to shrink again in many places (cf. the phenomenon of shrinking cities). But it is not shrinking in size: it is imploding from within. The result is a perforated, fractal urban structure and the proliferation of 'holes' in its core. Urban architects are already talking about a trend reversal in European urban development that will bring about a new type of city – one in which emptiness will be the norm and whose future shape will be characterized by the ambiguity, uncertainty and vagueness of unused, vacant spaces. So, it's no news that we are living, in terms of urban planning, in a 'Zeitalter der prinzipiellen Unbestimmtheit'.¹ And it's precisely such in-between spaces of the city, which we are all familiar with and can now explain, these empty spaces in the urban fabric and, above all, their treatment in documentary film – that will be the topic of the remaining chapters.

Despite its obvious relevance, the discussion about *terrains vagues* is still quite young, not without problems, and has not yet been adequately recognized by the public and politicians. As we already know, there are countless names for them, but only rarely a consensual definition, which we have already approached together in the systematic theory chapter. They are a ubiquitous and growing phenomenon but have only received greater scholarly attention in the last three decades. For a long time, they were neglected spaces in every respect. Although academic interest in urban studies has experienced an enormous upswing in recent years, in other disciplines, namely in cultural

1 This quote is by Thomas Sieverts from the documentary film essay NICHT-MEHR, NOCH-NICHT, Daniel Kunle and Holger Lauinger, Germany 2004.

studies and especially in literary and media studies, one searches almost in vain for critical publications dedicated to these spaces as the sole subject. This fact is even more puzzling in view of the abundance of artistic productions that either only refer to the term *terrain vague* in their (film) title, which at first glance does not say much, or that actually deal with these spaces in terms of their substance. The astonishment at this cultural-scientific neglect grows when one realizes that the phenomenon of *terrains vagues* is, on closer inspection, anything but a product of the urban development of recent decades, but a part of urban space that has always been there; what is today called 'upheaval' is merely a change in quantitative dimensions.

In their 2004 documentary film essay NICHT-MEHR, NOCH-NICHT, Daniel Kunle and Holger Lauinger pose the question of whether the phenomenon of 'urban wasteland' can be turned into something positive in people's minds and evaluated accordingly – and what its message to the *citoyen* or *citoyenne* might be:

Aufnahmen entleerter Stadtareale in Ost- und Westdeutschland wie in Dessau, Wolfen, Leipzig, Halle-Neustadt, Salzgitter und Bremen sind ein aufschlussreiches Zeitdokument voller eindringlicher Motive mit fast apokalyptischen Dimensionen. Erst über die unergründliche Macht der Bilder bekommt das statistisch anmutende Phänomen eine überzeugende Form. Verbarrikadierte Häuser und Geschäfte, stillgelegte Bahnhöfe, abgesperrte Stadtareale, halb abgerissene Investitionsruinen. Dass das Gespenst der Leere global umgeht, zeigen Beispiele aus Manchester, Liverpool und Amsterdam. [...] Architektur und Städteplanung stecken offenkundig in einer Sackgasse, da Wachstumsphasen in Schrumpfungsprozesse umschlagen.²

What is shown here is thus the negative of all urbanist ideals of profit maximization and efficiency, density and abundance, function and purpose, order, planning and design, full employment ideology and limitless growth, which are admonished, criticized and parodied in the following documentaries: LET'S MAKE MONEY by Erwin Wagenhofer (Austria 2008), URBANIZED by Gary Hustwit (USA 2011) and WORK HARD, PLAY HARD by Carmen Losmann (Germany 2012).

With his 2014 film DAS GELÄNDE³, for example, director Martin Gressmann succeeds in creating a long-term documentary that, over a period of almost 30 years from 1985, photographs a site in the heart of Berlin, namely the one

2 Holger Lauinger, <http://www.hl-redaktion.de/nicht-mehr-noch-nicht-2/> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

3 See DAS GELÄNDE: WASTELAND – TERRAIN VAGUE, Martin Gressmann, Germany 2014; see also: www.das-gelaende.de (accessed on 27 December 2020).

between 'Wilhelmstraße' and the former 'Prinz-Albrecht-Straße', where a centre of power of National Socialist rule existed from 1933 to 1945 and was later blown up after the war. Up until the 'Topography of Terror' documentation centre is built on the former wasteland, Gressmann films everything that comes in front of his lens: historical legacies and traces of history, helpless and curious people, yellow cranes, the 'Kreuzberg' redevelopment rubble, the headless skeleton of a soldier, asphalt remains, weeds, practicing novice drivers without a driving licence, Christmas trees and, of course, a whole lot of tourists. Gressmann's aim is to make the invisible visible, to separate layers of sediment, because he is fascinated by the 'Vitalität des Unordentlichen, Ungeplanten und Provisorischen'⁴ on this former wasteland in the centre of Berlin. The fact that when it was released in 2016 the film was subtitled WASTELAND: TERRAIN VAGUE shows once again that the French concept of *terrain vague* has also established itself in Germany.

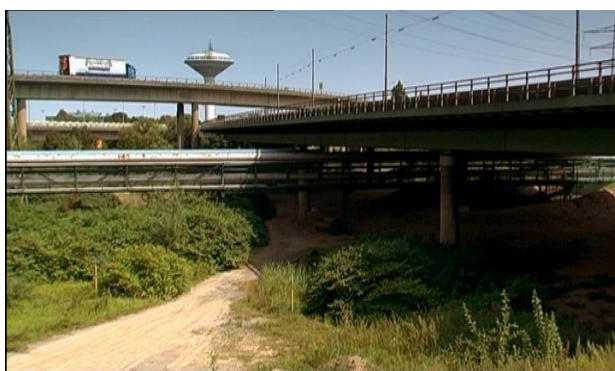
As early as 1990, the young Thomas Arslan had drawn our attention to the edges of the Berlin districts 'Neukölln', 'Treptow', 'Moabit', 'Mitte', 'Wedding', 'Prenzlauer Berg', 'Märkisches Viertel', and 'Wilhelmsruh' with his short documentary film AM RAND. He focuses on the remnants of the Wall and thus on the aesthetic impressions of regained freedom and expansiveness, which are revealed through his noticeably patient, at least calm, almost meditative dramaturgy (of the then still-future Berlin School):

4 Martina Knobon, 'Nazis, Weihnachtsbäume und Touristen: Die eindrucksvolle Dokumentation DAS GELÄNDE über ein Kernstück der Berliner Stadtgeschichte', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ.de)*, 15 November 2016, www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/dokumentation-nazis-weihnachtsbaeume-und-touristen-1.3248832 (accessed on 27 December 2020).



(Fig. 46)

In *AUSFAHRT EDEN*, a documentary film shot by Jörg Haaßengier and Jürgen Brügger in 2011, it feels like you simply stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway between Cologne and Leverkusen, climb over the crash barrier and make your way through the brambles...



(Fig. 47)

The synopsis from the directors themselves goes on to say:

Ein vergessenes Terrain, das doch ein großes Versprechen bereithält. [...] Weiße Flecken auf dem mentalen Stadtplan. Und siehe da, das vermeintliche Niemandsland zwischen Schnellstraßen, Gewerbegebieten, Brachflächen, Baggerseen und stillgelegten Gleisdreiecken ist bevölkert von Menschen, die sich diesen Raum zu Eigen gemacht haben und sich hier eine eigene Welt aufbauen – Archipele in den

so schwer zu fassenden ‚Un-Orten‘ am Rande der Stadt, Freiräume für Sehnsüchte und ungewöhnliche Pläne.⁵

The film's protagonists, whose stories are associatively interwoven, have one thing in common: they are all not only on the fringes of the big city, but also live on the margins of society. They all move in an in-between space: the shy Michael usually plants the slope of the ICE railway line at night with plants he has rescued from the urban system of building sites and pavements to create his Garden of Eden. The communicative, industrious, almost hyperactive Ulla builds a villa made of marble on a wasteland without permission, even giving up her flower shop in the middle of the city for it. However, she doesn't truly feel at home in her former wasteland of Eden. Günter and Klaus philosophize lethargically together in a subterranean, non-identifiable but inner-city location, drinking coffee, smoking and dreaming of a world centred on a rose garden with clouds floating above it. And the four children of the Nied family, who live in a part of the city where only garages and scrapyards are usually to be found, play carefree in their nooks and crannies of the city, making up songs, staging dance performances, roaming through the woods to pick blackberries and re-enacting shoot-outs from action films after they have made their way back from school together along the whole dual carriageway, a path that takes them back to 'their' paradise.⁶



(Fig. 48)

In their booklet for the DVD version, Haaßengier and Brügger introduce the Garden of Eden as a place derived from the Sumerian *Adina/Adana*⁷, which

5 AUSFAHRT EDEN, Jürgen Brügger/Jörg Haaßengier, Germany 2011, see *Booklet*.

6 See *ibid*.

7 'Das Wort ‚Eden‘ für den ‚Garten Eden‘ (hebr.: *Gan Eden* גַּן עֵדֶן) wurde vom sumerischen *Adina* oder *Adana* abgeleitet, was ‚Garten‘ oder ‚grüne Steppe‘ bedeutet

appeared to be fertile but shortly afterwards proved to be quite barren. Later, Eden primarily represented desolate, empty, uncultivated terrain; it also stood for the 'Hinterland', in short, the periphery:

'Eden galt später als das irdische Paradies, unzugänglich am Rande der bewohnten Welt gelegen. Es hieß, nur Kindern sei der Zutritt gewährt.'⁸



(Fig. 49)

Documentary film directors deal with the neglected areas within the city in so different ways. They go into the streets with their subject, but without popular-

und einen fruchtbaren Ort bezeichnet. Später bedeutete Eden allgemein das Hinterland fernab der Kulturzentren. In der jüdischen Tradition wurde der Name גן עדן , *Gan Eden*, zum Sammlungsort der Gerechten nach dem Tod und die Spekulation über dessen geographische Lage auf Erden wurde vermieden. Die sumerische Sprache wird als die erste Sprache angesehen, für die eine Schrift erfinden wurde (Altsumerisch ca. 2600–2150 v. Chr.). Mit dem Entstehen der Septuaginta, der ältesten durchgehenden Übersetzung des Alten Testaments im ägyptischen Alexandria 250 v. Chr., wurde aus dem persischen königlichen Lustgarten das ‚Paradies‘ oder der ‚Garten Eden‘, der die geordnete Welt vom Chaos schied. Das sagenumwobene sumerische *Adana* soll sich im Süden des dritten Himmels (hebr.: *Sagun/Shebaquim*) nach Henoch befunden haben, in dem der Baum des Lebens steht. Durch den Garten Eden fließen zwei Flüsse, einer mit Wein und Öl, der andere mit Milch und Honig (die göttlichen Bienen sammeln den Mannahonig, der dann von zwei Mühlensteinen, den Shebaquim, gemahlen wird). Die Hölle soll im Norden dieses Himmels liegen.' Holger Karsten Schmid: *Vom Garten Eden zum himmlischen Jerusalem, vom Weltenbaum zum Baum des Lebens – Eintrittstore in den Hyperraum und Brücken zum Paradies*, Norderstedt: Twentysix 2016, p. 25. There are equivalents of the Garden of Eden in almost all cultures: the Celtic Avalon, the old Norse Valhöll, the Greek garden of the Hesperides, the French baroque garden, the English landscape garden or simply a biotope in a German nature reserve.

8 AUSFAHRT EDEN, Haaßengier/Brügger, (00:01:10).

ricing it. Furthermore, they connect the abstract thinking of architects, urban planners, politicians, sociologists, ecologists, artists, promenadologists, writers, and filmmakers, as well as the inherently concrete thinking of children, with everyday life. Not only that, but they weave this together to convincingly show people thinking through moving images. Movements in and through the room sometimes make speaking superfluous, as Astra Taylor does in EXAMINED LIFE⁹.

In 2009, Marie Tavernier made a documentary film in the north of Paris about the neglected area of 'La Maltournée', which she called DÉLAISSÉ. She expressed the following:

L'espace de 'La Maltournée' à Saint-Denis, délaissé depuis la construction des routes qui aujourd'hui l'enserrent, fait partie du projet de la ZAC du quartier de 'la Porte de Paris'. Sous une apparente disgrâce, ce lieu se révèle à moi comme une clairière qui accorde la place au hasard, qui offre le temps de regarder, de réfléchir et de converser. Ce lieu sans destination, accessible sans distinction, permet une socialisation 'inventive'. Les passants occasionnels comme fidèles m'ont tracé la carte de 'La Maltournée' avant sa disparition.¹⁰



(Fig. 50)

This approximately half-hectare area, located amidst the tangled road network at the 'Porte de Paris' in Saint-Denis, is poorly accessible, situated between two

9 See EXAMINED LIFE, Astra Taylor, Canada 2008. Taylor quotes Nietzsche, according to whom no thought should be trusted that is not born in the open and brings the following philosophers out of their ivory towers and onto the streets: Kwame Anthony Appiah, Judith Butler, Michael Hardt, Martha Nussbaum, Peter Singer, Avital Ronell, Cornel West and Slavoj Žižek. Furthermore, the Suhrkamp film edition from 2010 includes an interview with Astra Taylor and Scott Hamrah, which also deals with the special places within the city for the philosophers.

10 The quote from Marie Tavernier is available at http://www.film-documentaire.fr/4DACTION/w_fiche_film/26245_1 (accessed on 27 December 2020).

national roads, a highway, and the turning basin of a lock on the Canal Saint-Denis. It is frequented not only by joggers and walkers, dog owners and swimmers, people who do yoga, read, learn their French-Arabic vocabulary, philosophize, or want to admire the sunset, but also by botany enthusiasts who marvel at the wild fruit trees (mainly quinces and mirabelles) hidden in the thicket, which in turn lines a seemingly abandoned playground along the road-side. But there are also groups picnicking, fishing, partying or just drinking beer, as well as individuals who simply enjoy the secluded location and watch the city from a distance, as if from an extraterritorial point.



(Fig. 51)

Marie Tavernier explains: 'Le délaissé présente l'image inversée d'une ville qui se défait en se faisant', alluding to some ideas from 'L'impensé de la ville' by Patrick Degeorges and Antoine Nochy.¹¹ Sometimes a group of committed citizens campaigning for the preservation of the area, for which a number of construction projects have already been discussed and planned without any of them ever being realized, organize neighbourhood parties on this *terrain vague*, where residents from different backgrounds meet.

11 DÉLAISSÉ, Marie Tavernier, (00:11:27) and Patrick Degeorges/Antoine Nochy: 'L'impensé de la ville', Atelier 'La forêt des délaissés' (January 2002) under the direction of Patrick Bouchain, see also Patrick Bouchain, *Construire autrement: comment faire*, Arles: Actes Sud 2006 (L'impensé).



(Fig. 52)

These are temporary actions, such as the one in the image above, where you can see that young people have previously sprayed ‘Pas de béton sur les fleurs sauvages’ on the ground; actions that leave no traces other than perhaps the fact that the informal name ‘La Maltournée’ (‘the misplaced’) given to the area by local residents, which we have already learnt about, can now also be found on official city maps – an indication that the practical and symbolic appropriation of the space by the residents is now experiencing a headwind again. For example, adhesive tape with ‘zone sensible’ printed on it is stuck to the appropriate place on city plans and maps, pavilions are set up, concerts are enjoyed, football commentaries from the *Stade de France* are listened to, a press conference and information events are organized, all this ‘pour lutter pour le paradis’.¹² In the case of ‘La Maltournée’, the contrast between abundance and emptiness, plannedness and wildness, speed and slowness, highly frequented monofunctional traffic areas and the underused, dysfunctional green space, economic activity and wasteland, controlled circulation and diffuse movement, closedness to individual experience and openness to appropriation is so drastic that, according to Axel Sowa, one has the feeling of truly being in the eye of a cyclone.¹³ Of course, there are also voices vehemently opposed to ‘La Maltournée’ and call the area ‘dégueulasse’, ‘un site qui marque une rupture’ and even claim it symbolizes ‘une frontière’. For others, it remains ‘un lieu qui a une âme et une dimension poétique’!¹⁴

12 DELAISSE, Marie Tavernier, (00:29:03).

13 See Sowa, ‘Dans l’œil du cyclone, rien n’est joué: Autour du bassin de la Maltournée, Saint-Denis’, pp. 60–65.

14 DÉLAISSÉ, Marie Tavernier, (00:39:50).

DÉLAISSÉ is more cinematic than most documentaries, if only because of the camera work. As far as the order of the interviews is concerned, a narrative arc is noticeable.¹⁵ The ideas are constantly taken up again through the editing of the film, whereby Tavernier subtly contrasts opposing shots of the *terrain vague*, modifies them and thus forms them into a narrative whole, accompanied by a camera pan from chaos towards utopia or at least towards a discussion about it. Moving images are therefore there to move people. And people are not resistant to documentary films about topics that are as explosive as the cracks, edges, gaps and holes in the urban fabric.

15 'Was darf ein Dokumentarfilm? Wie wahrhaftig kann er sein? Wie viel Inszenierung ist erlaubt? [...] Jeder Dokumentarfilm ist inszeniert. Egal wie sehr sich die Regisseurin oder der Regisseur der Tradition einer rein beobachtenden Kamera, dem sogenannten *Direct Cinema*, verpflichtet fühlt. [...] Auch der Blick des Filmemachers oder der Filmemacherin durch die Kamera ist immer eine Gestaltung der Wirklichkeit. Welche Brennweite kommt auf die Kamera? Aus welcher Perspektive wird gefilmt? Jede Entscheidung hinter der Kamera verändert die Wirkung des Gezeigten davor. Vermittelt wird nie die Realität, sondern die subjektive Wahrnehmung dieser Realität des Filmemachers. An den Filmschulen wird genau das gelehrt: Sich bewusst für eine Art der Gestaltung zu entscheiden. Führe ich Interviews oder verzichte ich darauf? Falls ja, lege ich Teile dieser Interviews ins Off? Zeige ich also andere Bilder zu dem, was die Menschen auf der Tonspur sagen, und erzeuge dadurch eine ganz andere Aussage? [...] In welcher Reihenfolge, in welchem Rhythmus montiere ich die Szenen? [...] Inszenieren ist legitim, es ist Filmkunst. Werner Herzog nannte es seine ‚ekstatische Wahrheit‘. [...] Es gibt auch Gegebenheiten, die sich schlicht nicht filmen lassen. Weil sie in der Vergangenheit passiert sind oder weil das Filmteam nicht dabei sein darf. Auch dafür haben Dokumentarfilmer viele verschiedene Lösungen entwickelt: Sie lassen Animationen die Geschichte erzählen. Oder ihre Protagonisten erzählen sie im Rückblick nach, zu abstrakten oder assoziativen Bildern. Oder die Filmemacher lassen bestimmte Situationen nachstellen. Eigentlich ist das *Reenactment* [...] eher verpönt'; Simone Gaul: 'Die Realität folgt keinem Skript', in *ZEIT Online*, 31 March 2021, online at <https://www.zeit.de/kultur/film/2021-03/dokumentarfilm-lovemobil-elke-lehrenkrauss-authentizitaet-filmbranche/> (accessed on 10 April 2021).

IV. Urban Interspaces in French Cinema

1. Interstitial Space in Film and Filmed Interstitial Spaces

Une ville : de la pierre, du béton, de l'asphalte. Des inconnus, des monuments, des institutions. Mégalopoles. Villes tentaculaires. Artères. Foules. Fourmilières ? Qu'est-ce que le cœur d'une ville ? L'âme d'une ville ? Pourquoi dit-on qu'une ville est belle ou qu'une ville est laide ? Qu'y a-t-il de beau et qu'y a-t-il de laid dans une ville ? Comment connaît-on une ville ? Comment connaît-on sa ville ? [...] Chasser toute idée préconçue. Cesser de penser en termes tout préparés [...]. Il y a quelque chose d'effrayant dans l'idée même de la ville [...]. Nous ne pourrons jamais expliquer ou justifier la ville. La ville est là. Elle est notre espace et nous n'en avons pas d'autre. Nous sommes nés dans des villes. Nous avons grandi dans des villes. C'est dans des villes que nous respirons. [...] Il n'y a rien d'in-humain dans une ville, sinon notre propre humanité.¹

When we move from one filmed wasteland to the next in the future, we will of course not, as Georges Perec suggested in his powerful, experimental literary snippets of *Espèces d'espaces*, only use Parisian streets whose names contain the letter 'c' to mark out the film space, to measure it. Firstly, I would like to recap the following to avoid any risk of confusion: what was the purpose of the previous chapters? And where exactly are we now? We are concerned with urban interstitial spaces, or more precisely, with urban wasteland. In a first step, we were interested in the term *terrain vague*, the whole spectrum of its meanings and the three etymological lines of the adjective *vague*. In addition, as we have seen, the expression can also be used metaphorically. To this end, we also looked at literary excerpts in which the term appeared. Secondly, I would like to make a clear distinction between this and the phenomenon of

1 Georges Perec, *Espèces d'espaces* (1974), Paris: Galilée 2010 (L'espace critique), p. 121 f.

terrain vague, which exists in non-linguistic reality. The third aspect I mention is the concept we carry in our heads; the idea we have of a *terrain vague*, the associations we have, how it is connoted for us. In the fourth stage, I carried out a systematic analysis using various parameters (the ontological levels and categories of meaning) in order to come as close as possible to a definition of the *terrain vague*. Furthermore, fifthly, the depiction of urban wastelands in visual media (such as photography, comics, video games, and documentaries about the phenomenon) must be precisely differentiated from one another on this basis. Now, as a sixth aspect, we dedicate ourselves to these *étrange* places or places of the *étrange* by having a closer look at and analysing their presence, their manifestations, their film aesthetic design and their specific functions as part of the narration and diegesis in (feature) films. I would like to start with Friedrich Kittler, who sees film as a slice of history:

Medien kreuzen einander in der Zeit, die keine Geschichte mehr ist. Mit Soundtracks, Montagen und Schnitten hat das Tonband die akustische Datenspeicherung vollendet; mit Filmtricks, Montagen und Schnitten hat die Speicherung optischer Abläufe begonnen. Kino war von Anfang an Manipulation der Sehnerven und ihrer Zeit. Das beweist nicht erst der mittlerweile wieder verbotene Trick, mitten in Spielfilmsequenzen und mehrfach das Einzelbild einer Coca Cola-Reklame einzukleben: Weil die 40 Millisekunden seines Aufblitzens nur die Augen und nicht das Bewußtsein erreichen, entwickeln die Zuschauer danach so unbegreiflichen wie unwiderstehlichen Durst. Ein Schnitt hat ihre Merkzeit unterlaufen. Und so durchaus beim Film.²

Filming is therefore, in principle, fragmentation of continuous movement, chopping, cutting. Is it any wonder that the cut comes at the beginning of optical data processing, but at the end of the acoustic counterpart? This is a fundamental difference that animates the differentiation of the real from the imaginary.³ In the following, I would like to deal with similar questions of a systematic, film-theoretical and film-aesthetic nature in a preliminary fashion, then go into more detail in the corresponding film chapter.

(I) How does cinematic spatial representation work in general? How is cinema as a practice of images and signs related to philosophy, the associated theory? How can the *espace quelconque* (as a classification element) be characterized, and how does it fit into the Deleuzian taxonomy?

2 Friedrich A. Kittler, *Grammophon. Film. Typewriter*, Berlin Brinkmann & Bose 1986, p. 177.

3 See *ibid.*, p. 180.

For André Gardies, the filmic space forms a structure of a higher order, which results from the interaction of individual filmic locations:

Si le lieu est un fragment d'espace, il suffirait alors de recoller minutieusement, comme les pièces innombrables d'un puzzle, les divers morceaux pour reconstituer cette sorte de totalité idéale que l'on appellerait espace. De cette manière, on obtiendrait une double définition, en miroir, tautologique: le lieu est un fragment d'espace et l'espace un ensemble de lieux.⁴

Nevertheless, the relationship between cinematic space and cinematic places should not be viewed in purely quantitative terms, especially not when Gardies goes on to define place and then space more precisely as follows: 'L'un, particulier, manifeste, repérable, contingent, ne permettrait-il pas d'accéder à l'autre, général, latent, virtuel, immatériel, immanent, en un mot systématique?'⁵ This distinction between space and place is to be found on a spatial-theoretical level, while we must also move to a film-theoretical level in order to approach the special form of cinematic space, because cinematic space is a medial, constructed and moving one, according to Laura Frahm. In her work *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen* (2010) she presents two chapters that are extremely relevant to this work, and to which I will refer as things progress further: 'Das Bewegungs-Bild und die Grenzen des Raums' and 'Jenseits der Bewegung: Das Zeit-Bild und das Denken des Kinos'.⁶ Frahm refers to Gilles Deleuze in her remarks.

In his two works on cinema, *Cinéma 1: L'image-mouvement (The Movement Image)* and *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps (The Time Image)*, Gilles Deleuze combines film analysis with philosophy and thus creates a new way of categorizing films. As the two titles already reveal, movement and time are the central criteria for categorizing cinematic works. With regard to film in terms of movement, Deleuze primarily refers to the French philosopher Henri Bergson and his idea of *moving images*, i.e. the equation of image and movement. Unlike Bergson, however, he considers this idea to have reached its optimal realisation in cinema. Bergson's model of the *stream of matter*, i.e. the unlimited quantity of images that incessantly act and react on each other without a fixed point, without a point of reference, that change mutually and thus become movement (*matter*) themselves, is for Deleuze the basic state of the filmic image of movement and thus the starting point of his theses: 'Der

4 André Gardies, *L'espace au cinéma*, Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck 1993, p. 69.

5 Ibid., p. 72.

6 Laura Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2010, pp. 152–166.

Film bezeichnet folglich ein nichtzentriertes Universum, in dem 'alle Bilder, auf allen Seiten und in allen Teilen, wechselseitig aufeinander einwirken und reagieren'⁷. As there is also a second reference system within which 'alle Bilder prinzipiell in Bezug auf ein einziges Bild variieren',⁸ which Deleuze calls the 'centre d'indétermination'⁹, three types of images can be distinguished: 'l'image-perception' (*perception-images* focus on what is seen), 'l'image-action' (*action-images* focus on behaviours) and 'l'image-affection' (*affection-images* focus on expressions of feelings).¹⁰

En fin de compte, c'est en trois sortes d'images que les images-mouvement se divisent quand on les rapporte à un centre d'indétermination comme à une image spéciale : images-perception, images-action, images-affection. Et chacun de nous, l'image spéciale ou le centre éventuel, nous ne sommes rien d'autre qu'un agencement des trois images, un consolidé d'images-perception, d'images-action, d'images-affection.¹¹

Frahm describes all three as metamorphoses of the movement image, which serves as the zero point, i.e. the starting material for the three derivations. According to her, the perception image describes movement in relation to fixed objects (nouns), while the action image describes movement in relation to actions (verbs) and the affect image describes movement as an expression of feelings and characteristics (adjectives).¹² The common basis for all remains the movement image. In his logic of derivation, Deleuze describes the *perception-image* as 'die Grundfunktion des filmischen Bewegungs-Bilds' and derives the *affection-image*, the action image and the relational image from it; consequently, according to Frahm, cinematic space is 'ausschließlich über die Bewegung zu denken'.¹³

In this respect, Deleuze thus goes beyond Bergson's thought without initially anchoring this in his concept of space. In his first thesis on movement, Bergson claims that 'le mouvement ne se confond pas avec l'espace parcouru',

7 Ibid., p. 154. Frahm refers to Gilles Deleuze's *movement-image* and its three varieties (second Bergson commentary): 'Il y a d'abord un système où chaque image varie pour elle-même, et toutes les images agissent et réagissent en fonction les unes des autres, sur toutes leurs faces et dans toutes leurs parties.', Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement* (1983), Paris: Minuit 2015, p. 92.

8 Ibid., p. 154.

9 Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, p. 92.

10 Ibid., pp. 94–96.

11 Ibid., p. 97.

12 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 155.

13 Ibid.

meaning that movement does not liaise with the space through which it passes, as Deleuze interprets it.¹⁴ He initially keeps the space and the movement separate from each other. If we take Euclidean space as the basis for the spatial concept of film, it must always be subordinate to time and can only indirectly depict time, which is always associated with heterogeneity. With regard to the relationship between space and movement, movement therefore remains 'eine äußere Bewegung' in relation to actions.¹⁵ However, Deleuze also recognizes 'eine innere Bewegung' in various forms in films from the 1920s and 1930s, which introduces 'eine gänzlich andere, dichte Art von Räumlichkeit' into the film; according to Frahm, this opening beyond Euclidean space becomes apparent when 'die relative Bewegung (im Film) zu einer absoluten Bewegung (des Films) übergeht'.¹⁶

Mais ce qui semble propre à l'école française, cartésienne en ce sens, c'est à la fois d'élever le calcul au-delà de sa condition empirique pour en faire une sorte 'd'algèbre', suivant le mot de Gance, et d'en faire résulter chaque fois le maximum possible de quantité de mouvement comme fonction de toutes les variables, ou forme de ce qui déborde l'organique.¹⁷

Various aspects are illuminated as mechanisms for the dissolution of boundaries of movement in film, such as the 'Bewegungsmaximierung' in French film or the variation of 'Lichtintensität' in German Expressionism.¹⁸ Furthermore, Frahm points to the potential infinity of cinematic space, which is to be contrasted with the finiteness of the limited image space visible on the cinema screen:

Dieses Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit des Raums lässt sich anhand des Verhältnisses von Onscreen und Offscreen differenzierter betrachten. [...] Dabei herrscht [...] Konsens darüber, dass dem Off, das heißt dem Außerhalb des Bildfeldes, eine zentrale Bedeutung zugesprochen werden muss, wodurch es nicht allein als Negation des On, sondern vielmehr in seinem spezifischen Potenzial für die filmische Raumkonstruktion in den Blick gerät.¹⁹

14 Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, p. 13.

15 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 157.

16 Ibid.

17 Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, p. 66.

18 See Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 157. Deleuze states: 'Mais ce n'est pas de la même façon que la lumière était tout à l'heure un immense mouvement d'extension et qu'elle se présente dans l'expressionnisme comme un puissant mouvement d'intensité, le mouvement intensif par excellence.' Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, p. 73.

19 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 131.

According to Igor Ramet, the off-screen forms a 'strukturell vielschichtigen Raum [...], der sich über unterschiedliche Verfahren wie Figurenbewegung, Blickkonstruktion, Ton [...] definiert.'²⁰ Frahm goes on to explain that André Bazin's distinction between *cadre* and *cache* laid the foundation for any consideration of the on-off relationship: While *cadre* means a self-contained frame, *cache* refers to the dynamic, flexible, changing frame of the filmic image.²¹

In her chapter 'Jenseits der Bewegung: Das Zeit-Bild und das Denken des Kino', Frahm presents the second part of Deleuze's philosophical writings on film – *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps*. In the first part of his film philosophy, Deleuze describes the *movement-image* which he describes as a material flow of images that constantly interact and react to each other without a fixed point, without a reference point, and change mutually, as the basic state of the cinematic *movement-image*. With the change in perspective from *image-mouvement*, which can only unfold within the boundaries of comprehensible space, to *image-temps*, which leads to the dissolution of the boundaries of metric-Euclidean space, two factors come to the fore that permanently change the construction of cinematic spaces beyond the boundaries of movement: 'die Transformation des Raumes und das Denken des Kinos.'²² According to Deleuze, this transition from *movement-image* to *time-image* takes place gradually in European post-war cinema. Deleuze names the 'crise de l'image-action' as the cause of the transition to the time-image: 'Figuren der Abgrenzung und der Abkehr' on the one hand and 'Figuren des Neuen und des Neudenkens' on the other allow us to recognize this process.²³ Frahm explains that Deleuze understands the *image-temps* as a negation of the *image-mouvement*, and thus the *time-image* is precisely what the *movement-image* is not. This inevitably leads to the following consequences:

En premier lieu, l'image ne renvoie plus à une situation globalisante ou synthétique, mais dispersive. Les personnages sont multiples, à interférences faibles, et deviennent principaux ou redeviennent secondaires [...]. En second lieu, ce qui a cassé, c'est la ligne ou la fibre d'univers qui prolongeait les événements les uns dans les autres, ou assurait le raccordement des portions d'espace [...]. L'ellipse cesse d'être un mode de récit, une manière dont on va d'une action à une situation partiellement dévoilée: elle appartient à la situation même, et la réalité est lacu-

20 Igor Ramet, 'Zur Dialektik von On und Off im narrativen Film', in Susanne Dürr/Almut Steinlein (eds.), *Der Raum im Film/L'espace dans le film*, Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang 2002, pp. 33–45, at p. 33.

21 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 131. See also André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, Paris: Cerf, ¹⁹2010, pp. 129–149, 187–202.

22 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 158.

23 Ibid.

naire autant que dispersive [...]. En troisième lieu, ce qui a remplacé l'action ou la situation sensori-motrice, c'est la promenade, la balade, et l'aller-retour continu [...]. En quatrième lieu, on se demande ce qui maintient un ensemble dans ce monde sans totalité ni enchaînement. La réponse est simple: ce qui fait l'ensemble, ce sont les clichés, et rien d'autre.²⁴

However, these characteristics, first recognizable in Italian neorealism, do not yet sufficiently explain the phenomenon of the emergence of the *time-image*. Only since the enrichment of the increasingly diminishing sensorimotor situations via the visual and the acoustic has the focus shifted to the second element of *image-temps*, the figure of the new. Purely optical and acoustic images are created that depict everyday and borderline situations, the subjective and the objective, and which have in common 'dass sie allesamt dem 'Ununterscheidbarkeitsprinzip' gehorchen'.²⁵ The transition (or oscillation) from the real to the imaginary, from the physical to the mental, need not be questioned; it loses all meaning. How can the change of images be described in its essence? In short, pure vision replaces the procedure of action:

Une situation purement optique et sonore ne se prolonge pas en action, pas plus qu'elle n'est induite par une action. Elle fait saisir, elle est censée faire saisir quelque chose d'intolérable, d'insupportable. [...] Il s'agit de quelque chose de trop puissant, ou de trop injuste, mais parfois aussi de trop beau, et qui dès lors excède nos capacités sensori-motrices.²⁶

The images thus become a mode of thinking that – although already inherent in the *movement-image* – can only fully unfold at this point. Frahm believes that Deleuze claims that film only became a medium of cognition, or rather of itself, in the post-war period, and that he presupposes a modification of the concept of space, ergo Deleuze's own idea of *espace quelconque*, of arbitrary space.²⁷ According to Michaela Ott, Deleuze sees 'den beliebigen Raum gerade dort entstehen, wo diese Wiedergabe äußerer Raumkontinua und auswendiger Bewegungsabläufe durch filmische Konstruktion neuer Raumzeitformationen durchbrochen wird'.²⁸ And with regard to visualization and de-visualization strategies, she adds:

24 Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, pp. 279–281.

25 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 159.

26 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma II: L'image-temps* (1985), Paris: Minuit 2017, p. 29.

27 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 161.

28 Michaela Ott, 'L'espace quelconque: Der beliebige Raum in der Filmtheorie von Gilles Deleuze', in Gertrud Koch (ed.), *Umwidmungen: Architektonische und kinematographische Räume*, Berlin Vorwerk 2005, pp. 150–161, at p. 154.

Dank des Einsatzes von Großaufnahmen und der ‚Vergesichtlichungsstrategie‘ entstehen ungewohnt flächige Räume und unübliche Kombinationen von Vorder- und gegebenenfalls Hintergrund, Räume ohne Maßverhältnisse, wie sie Deleuze in den Filmen von Dreyer, Bresson, Antonioni, Fellini, Resnais, Godard, Rivette [...] gegeben sieht. [...] Beliebige Räume mit affektiven Wertigkeiten entdeckt er in der Folge nicht nur im Vergesichtlichungsverfahren, sondern auch in den gleichsam umgekehrten Verfahren der Entgesichtlichung wie in den Filmen von Robert Bresson. Dessen Strategie der ‚Entthronung‘ des Gesichts in unüblichen Kadrierungen und Montagefolgen, seine Art, die Protagonisten an den Bildrand zu rücken, ihre Körper anzuschneiden und in unbestimmte Off-Räume zu verlängern, mithin das Bewegungs-Bild einem ‚Gesetz der Fragmentierung‘ zu unterwerfen, brächten ebenfalls beliebige Räume hervor.²⁹

According to Frahm, the media construction of the new spatiality is characterized by two forms, one in the *image-affection*, the other in the *image-temps*, whose difference reveals the differences between the inner and outer topology.³⁰ Frahm specifies that the arbitrary space in the *image-affection* is created by the close-up or detailed shot of affects whose surroundings are only depicted in a blurred way. In the *image-temps*, the arbitrary space represents precisely this barely recognizable surrounding space of the affect, i.e. everything that remains when the close-up of the affect is removed: ‘Der beliebige Raum ist damit auf seiner grundlegendsten Ebene die Subtraktion des Affekts aus dem Affektbild’.³¹ Since the *espace quelconque* is unstable and heterogeneous, a place of pure potentiality so to speak, it can become the central spatial concept of modern film. The viewer is presented with ‘separated’ and ‘empty’ spaces:

Nous sommes renvoyés une fois de plus à la première forme de l’espace quelconque: espace déconnecté. La connexion des parties de l’espace n’est pas donnée, parce qu’elle ne peut se faire que du point de vue subjectif d’un personnage pourtant absent, ou même disparu, non seulement hors champ, mais passé dans le vide. [...] [S]ans doute, l’espace quelconque avait atteint à une seconde forme, espace vide ou déserté. C’est que, de conséquence en conséquence, les personnages se sont objectivement vidés: ils souffrent moins de l’absence d’un autre que d’une absence à eux-mêmes [...]. Dès lors, cet espace renvoie encore au regard perdu de l’être absent au monde autant qu’à soi.³²

29 Ibid., p. 155.

30 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 161.

31 Ibid., p. 162.

32 Deleuze, *Cinéma II: L’image-temps*, pp. 16–17.

The *mental-image* (that focuses on the multiplicity of figures and memories) is also decisive for the new type of spatial construction in modern film, because it aims at the topological moment. Deleuze illustrates this using the oeuvre of Alain Resnais, in which thinking exists as the only true figure. The cinematic space opens up to thinking and can thus realize its full potential. For its construction, according to Frahm, this means that 'er sich aus unterschiedlichen Vergangenheitsschichten zusammensetzt, die komplexe Beziehungen untereinander herausbilden und sich insofern auf topologische Weise übereinander legen, als jede für sich ein Kontinuum bildet, das gedehnt, gestreckt und transformiert werden kann'.³³ The two main aspects that make new spatial concepts of modern films possible in the first place are the transformation of space and the thinking of cinema.³⁴ And Deleuze concludes: 'L'image n'a plus pour caractères premiers l'espace et le mouvement, mais la topologie et le temps'.³⁵

Against the backdrop of the theories by Frahm, Gardies, and Gaudin, the concept of the *espace quelconque* can be tailored as a central analytical tool. Gilles Deleuze, who developed his unconventional work in many directions – including questioning traditional anthropological and ethnological categories, discussing psychoanalysis and masochism, exploring Kafka, Proust, and Melville's literature, writing on space and time in art, and providing theoretical and philosophical insights into image, sound, and film – explicitly recommended not reading his work chronologically. Instead, he created a sort of quarry from which individual elements can be extracted and reassembled into new structures for contemplation.³⁶ Compared to Foucault, for example, who even provides analytical philosophy with a kind of toolbox, Deleuze's work is clearly more unwieldy to receive, as analytical aspects tend to remain in the background. Rather, it is about reflective thinking that attempts to go into depth through repetition.

'La loi de cet espace est 'fragmentation'.³⁷ Sub- and objects of the arbitrary space are thus never fully captured, never as a whole, but are only gradually reproduced: 'D'où le rôle spécial des décadrages'.³⁸ Neither closed angles nor other metric relationships now delimit this kind of space.

33 Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 165.

34 See *ibid.*, p. 166.

35 Deleuze, *Cinéma II: L'image-temps*, p. 164.

36 I owe this reading to Matthias Kramm and recommend Michaela Ott: *Gilles Deleuze zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius 2014.

37 Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, p. 153.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Un espace quelconque n'est pas un universel abstrait, en tout temps, en tout lieu. C'est un espace parfaitement singulier, qui a seulement perdu son homogénéité, c'est-à-dire le principe de ses rapports métriques ou la connexion de ses propres parties, si bien que les raccordements peuvent se faire d'une infinité de façons. C'est un espace de conjonction virtuelle, saisi comme pur lieu du possible. Ce que manifestent en effet l'instabilité, l'hétérogénéité, l'absence de liaison d'un tel espace, c'est une richesse en potentiels ou singularités qui sont comme les conditions préalables à toute actualisation, à toute détermination.³⁹

Deleuze concludes that the *espace quelconque* is the element of origin of the *image-affectation*. If you assemble quickly, countless singularities of pure potential, pure quality and genuine affects come together to create an *espace quelconque*.⁴⁰ But how do you compose such an arbitrary space?

Le premier moyen fut l'ombre [...]: un espace rempli d'ombres [...] devient espace quelconque. [...] La profondeur est le lieu de la lutte, qui tantôt attire l'espace dans le sans-fond d'un trou noir, et tantôt le tire vers la lumière [...]; mais c'est par une 'inversion des valeurs claires et obscures', par une inversion de perspective qui met la profondeur en avant. L'ombre exerce alors toute sa fonction anticipatrice, et présente à l'état le plus pur l'affect de Menace [...]. L'ombre prolonge à l'infini.⁴¹

The elements of light and shadow are joined by the process of poetic abstraction, a principle that governs opposition or conflict: '[L']acte de l'esprit n'est pas une lutte, mais une alternative, un 'Ou bien ... Ou bien ...' fondamental. [...] [L']esprit n'est pas pris dans un combat, mais en proie à une alternative.'⁴² This alternative could be of an emotional or aesthetic nature, of a religious form or of an ethical nature, or alternating:

De son rapport essentiel avec le blanc, l'abstraction lyrique tire donc deux conséquences [...]: une alternance des termes au lieu d'une opposition; une alternative, un choix de l'esprit, au lieu d'une lutte ou d'un combat. D'une part c'est l'alternance blanc-noir: le blanc qui capture la lumière, le noir, là où la lumière s'arrête, et parfois le demi-ton, le gris comme indiscernabilité qui forme un troisième terme. Les alternances s'établissent d'une image à l'autre, ou dans la même image. [...] [L']alternative ne porte pas sur des termes à choisir, mais sur des modes d'existence de celui qui choisit. C'est qu'il y a des choix qu'on ne peut faire qu'à condition de se persuader qu'on n'a pas le choix, soit en vertu d'une nécessité morale (le Bien, le devoir), soit en vertu d'une nécessité physique (l'état de choses,

39 Ibid., p. 155.

40 See *ibid.*, p. 157.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 157 f.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 158 f.

la situation), soit en vertu d'une nécessité psychologique (le désir qu'on a de quelque chose).⁴³

As soon as one is aware of one's choices, according to Deleuze, or more precisely of the fact that one has a choice at all, all decisions that one would have made in the belief that one had no choice, or all options that one could have chosen in the awareness of not having had a choice before, cease to apply. You therefore make a conscious decision to choose.⁴⁴ Deleuze's philosophical observations have cinematographic significance, because they are based on a closed space that is fragmented, thus creating a new, whole, spiritual and more open space:

[L]e Possible a ouvert l'espace comme dimension de l'esprit [...]. L'espace n'est plus déterminé, il est devenu l'espace quelconque identique à la puissance de l'esprit, à la décision spirituelle toujours renouvelée : c'est cette décision qui constitue l'affect, ou l'auto-affection', et qui prend sur soi le raccordement des parties. Les ténèbres et la lutte de l'esprit, le blanc et l'alternative de l'esprit : tels sont les deux premiers procédés à travers lesquels l'espace devient espace quelconque et s'élève à la puissance spirituelle du lumineux. Il faudrait encore considérer un troisième procédé, la couleur. Ce n'est plus l'espace ténébreux de l'expressionnisme, ni l'espace blanc de l'abstraction lyrique, mais l'espace-couleur du colorisme. [...] [L']a véritable image-couleur constitue un troisième mode de l'espace quelconque.⁴⁵

Due to its ability to absorb, the colour image imbibes objects, people, their movements and situations, as well as the recipients; basically, it absorbs everything that cannot escape it. Here, the colour itself is 'l'affect' – black and white are thought of as complementary, with white standing for the feminine (love, work, death) and black embodying the masculine. And the dream only represents the absorption of colour.⁴⁶

[L']e rêve devient espace, mais comme une toile d'araignée dont les places sont moins faites pour le rêveur lui-même que pour les proies vivantes qu'il attire. Et, si les états de choses deviennent mouvement de monde, si les personnages

43 Ibid., p. 160 f.

44 With regard to the animal world, Deleuze adds the following: 'Ayant l'innocence de celui qui n'est pas en état de choisir, l'âne ne connaît que l'effet des non-choix ou des choix de l'homme, c'est-à-dire la face des événements qui s'accomplit dans les corps et les meurtrit, sans pouvoir atteindre (mais sans pouvoir trahir non plus) la part de ce qui déborde l'accomplissement, ou la détermination spirituelle.', *ibid.*, p. 163.

45 Ibid., p. 165 f.

46 See *ibid.*, p. 166 f.

deviennent figure de danse, c'est inséparable de la splendeur des couleurs, et de leur fonction absorbante presque carnivore, dévorante, destructrice [...].⁴⁷

Rivette goes on to visualize such a spider's web (see chapter IV.6) by blurring the boundaries between space and dream for his living prey, the protagonist Marie. According to Deleuze, the great colourist Antonioni used cold colours in empty spaces, in harbours or the desert (see chapter IV.3.2) and thus lent the *espace quelconque* a new value.⁴⁸ Space is no longer defined by its parts, but by the fact that it is indeterminate in its form and can be recombined again and again in a variety of ways:

[L']ensemble amorphe en effet est une collection de lieux ou de places qui coexistent indépendamment de l'ordre temporel qui va d'une partie à l'autre, indépendamment des raccordements et orientations que leur donnaient les personnages et la situation disparus. Il y a donc deux états de l'espace quelconque, ou deux sortes de 'qualisignes', qualisignes de déconnexion, et de vacuité. Mais, de ces deux états toujours impliqués l'un dans l'autre, on dirait seulement que l'un est 'avant' et l'autre 'après'. L'espace quelconque garde une seule et même nature: il n'a plus de coordonnées, c'est un pur potentiel, il expose seulement des Puissances et des Qualités pures, indépendamment des états de choses ou des milieux qui les actualisent (les ont actualisées ou vont les actualiser, ou ni l'un ni l'autre [...]). Ce sont donc les ombres, les blancs, les couleurs qui sont aptes à susciter et constituer des espaces quelconques, *espaces déconnectés ou vidés*.⁴⁹

47 Ibid., p. 167.

48 '[Antonioni] se servira des couleurs froides poussées au maximum de leur plénitude ou de leur intensification pour dépasser la fonction absorbante, qui maintenait encore des personnages et des situations transformées dans l'espace d'un rêve ou d'un cauchemar. Avec Antonioni, la couleur porte l'espace jusqu'au vide, elle efface ce qu'elle a absorbé. [...] L'objet [...], c'est d'arriver au non-figuratif, par une aventure dont le terme est l'éclipse du visage, l'effacement des personnages. Certes, il était arrivé depuis longtemps au cinéma d'obtenir de grands effets de résonance, en opérant la confrontation d'un même espace, une fois peuplé et une fois vide [...]. [C]hez Antonioni, l'idée prend une ampleur inconnue, et c'est la couleur qui mène la confrontation. C'est elle qui élève l'espace à la puissance du vide, après que soit accomplie la part de ce qui peut se réaliser dans l'événement. L'espace n'en sort pas dépotentialisé, mais au contraire d'autant plus chargé de potentiel. [...] [L]e visage disparaît en même temps que le personnage et l'action, et l'instance affective est celle de l'espace quelconque qu'Antonioni pousse à son tour jusqu'au vide. Bien plus, il semble que l'espace quelconque prenne ici une nouvelle nature.', *ibid.*, p. 168.

49 Ibid., p. 169.

In the post-war period, these spaces were naturally booming due to their indeterminacy, their openness and their possibilities – in film studios, ateliers, theatres or in the open air, because the no-longer and the not-yet have a beneficial effect

avec ses villes démolies ou en reconstruction, ses terrains vagues, ses bidonvilles, et, même là où la guerre n'était pas passée, ses tissus urbains 'dédiérenciés', ses vastes lieux désaffectés, docks, entrepôts, amas de poutrelles et de ferraille.⁵⁰

Finally, Deleuze cites the crisis of the *action-image* as a further reason:

[L]es personnages se trouvaient de moins en moins dans des situations sensori-motrices 'motivantes', mais plutôt dans un état de promenade, de balade ou d'errance qui définissait des *situations optiques et sonores pures*. L'image-action tendait alors à éclater, tandis que les lieux déterminés s'estompaient, laissant monter des espaces quelconques où se développaient les affects modernes de peur, de détachement, mais aussi de fraîcheur, de vitesse extrême et d'attente interminable.⁵¹

In this context, Deleuze explains that 'die deutsche Schule der Angst', for example that of Daniel Schmid and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, likes to transform the urban exterior into deserts, while the interior is transformed into mirrored cabinets with only a few reference points, but all the more perspectives without connections, whereas the 'New Yorker Schule' enforces a rather horizontal view of the urban exterior, orientated low to the ground, in which relevant events primarily take place on the pavement.⁵² Deleuze agrees with Pascal Augé when he surmises that the increase and furnishing of arbitrary spaces could have their cause in experimental film, which breaks with traditional depictions of action and perceptions of place, because this type of film strives for a perception of space that is detached from human beings:

la perception à l'universelle variation d'une matière brute et sauvage sans en extraire aussi un espace sans repère où s'échangent le sol et le ciel, l'horizontale et la verticale. Le néant même est détourné vers ce qui en sort ou y retombe, l'élément génétique, la perception fraîche ou évanouissante, qui potentialise un espace en ne retenant que l'ombre ou le récit des événements humains.⁵³

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p. 170.

53 Ibid., p. 171.

In *LE PONT DU NORD*, for example, Rivette creates various arbitrary spaces as correlates without any point of reference (see chapter IV.6). Deserts, including urban deserts, have a similar effect. The sea and the beach inevitably associated with it are analogous to this:

L'espace rentre dans la mer vide. Tous les éléments précédents de l'espace quelconque, les ombres, les blancs, les couleurs, l'inexorable progression, l'inexorable réduction, l'épuration, les parties déconnectées, l'ensemble vide: tout intervient ici dans ce qui définit selon Sitney, 'le film structurel'. [...] [I]l y a la plage vide [...]. Le temps pour la caméra [...], avec des haltes et des reprises, c'est le temps du récit. Et le récit lui-même, l'image-son, unit un temps d'après et un temps d'avant, remonte de l'un à l'autre: un temps d'après les hommes, puisque le récit rapporte l'histoire déjà finie [...], et un temps d'avant les hommes, où aucune présence ne venait troubler la plage [...] [d]e l'un à l'autre une lente célébration de l'affect.⁵⁴

In *LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE*, Charef allows the sea and the empty beach in his final shot to become an arbitrary space that absorbs the shadows of the human events of the *récit* (see chapter IV.3.3).

In her influential work *Gilles Deleuze im Kino: Das Sichtbare und das Sagbare*, Mirjam Schaub encourages us to consider, first, the interval that lies between or within images; second, to conceptualize a powerful yet impotent image of thought, impotent in the sense of failing to logically connect thinking and acting; and third, to understand philosophy either as a system or as singularity.⁵⁵

Im ersten Kinobuch entwickelt Deleuze mit einem neuen Bewegungsbegriff (Bewegungsbilder, bewegliche Schnitte, beide aus dem Geist des Dividuellen gewonnen) eine Antwort auf die Frage der Philosophie des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts nach dem, was Bewegung sei. Die sechs verschiedenen Bewegungsbildtypen sind Deleuzes *erschöpfende Antwort* darauf, wie Bewegung als sichtbare Überbrückerin eines Intervalls von Reiz und Reaktion zu denken ist. Insofern ist die von Deleuze konstatierte Krise des Bewegungs- und speziell des Aktionsbildes durchaus eine Krise der eigenen begrifflichen Ausschöpfung. Erschöpft hat sich der Intervallbegriff, der im Zentrum der Reflexion über die Natur von Bewegungen und Bildern stand. So bleibt das Intervall im ersten Kinobuch einer Logik des Sichtbaren und des Raums verpflichtet, denn es meint die in sich logische und für den Betrachter nachvollziehbare Überbrückung vom ‚Ende‘ des einen Bildes zum Anfang des nächstfolgenden. Sind zwar die Schnitte des Kinos immer falsch, in dem Sinn, daß sie

54 Ibid., p. 171 f.

55 See Mirjam Schaub: *Gilles Deleuze im Kino: Das Sichtbare und das Sagbare* (2003), Munich: Fink 2006, p. 114 f.

selten eine komplette (bruchlose) Bewegungsabfolge dokumentieren, sondern Bewegungen immer schon eher verkürzen und abkürzen, so sind sie im *Bewegungsbild* immer logisch, nachvollziehbar, d. h. sie ordnen die zwischen den einzelnen Bildern verstrichene (Real-)Zeit der im nächstfolgenden Bild gezeigten Bewegung unter.⁵⁶

L'image-temps or the *time-image*, however, presents us with a completely different interval, namely a special type of false connections (*faux accords*), 'die nicht mehr durch die Imagination oder die Logik der zuvor gezeigten Bewegung überbrückt werden können, sondern auf das Fehlen von etwas aufmerksam machen, was selbst nicht Gegenstand eines Bildes werden kann'.⁵⁷ In Schaub's opinion, the time of the *time-image* refers to that 'outside' that Deleuze perceives as a loophole of the possible.⁵⁸ Closely intertwined with this is his view that philosophy is no longer systematic from the twentieth century onwards, as thinking has changed fundamentally:

Ein Denken, das nicht mehr autark und autonom bei sich ist, sich vielmehr den Einflüssen des Sozialen, Wirtschaftlichen, Psychologischen, Körperlichen ausgesetzt sieht. Dieses zersplitterte, inhomogene, auf Diskontinuitäten und Brüchen gegründete Selbstverständnis (ohne Selbst) führt, so Deleuze, mehr oder weniger unfreiwillig zur Entdeckung dessen, was durch den Systemanspruch gar nicht in den Blick philosophischer Selbstvergewisserung geriet: Singularität, Einzigartigkeit, Einmaligkeit, Ereignishaftigkeit. Mit dem zweiten Kinobuch vergewissert sich Deleuze der Triftigkeit dieses Umbruchs.⁵⁹

Schaub mentions a further class of existence of Deleuzian images: the inauthentic ones, which have the task of depicting time neither allegorically nor symbolically, but rather directly to depict 'jene *unsichtbaren Zwischenbilder*, die auf dem Zelluloidstreifen selbst fehlen, jene ‚Klebestellen‘ zwischen den Bildern, die selbst keinen eigenen Raum einnehmen, *wohl aber auf die Zeit verweisen, die in ihrem Herstellungs- und Montageprozess selbst verging*. Eine Zeit, die zugleich unwiederbringlich verloren ist und nicht nachträglich imaginiert werden kann'.⁶⁰

It remains to be seen whether the shift away from the sayable and the associated turn towards the visible as a result of the change in media has

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p. 115.

58 See *ibid.*

59 Ibid., p. 116.

60 Ibid.

materialized. Deleuze calls for 'un peu de temps à l'état pur',⁶¹ Schaub in turn pursues the question of whether this little bit of time can be found in pure form in those images:

Bilder werden für Deleuze zu *Kräftefeldern des Sichtbaren*, zu Diagrammen, die *Intensitäten* zum Ausdruck bringen können, aber Gefahr laufen, die unsichtbaren Kräfte zu stark an sich zu binden, sie von ihrem ‚Außen abzubinden‘ und gerinnen zu lassen wie Milch. [...] Man kann sehr schön beobachten, wie Deleuze in der Zeit zwischen 1970 und 1980 vom Differenzdenker zum Immanenzphilosophen wird. Während der Differenzdenker sich für Medien der Sukzession interessiert, welche ihren sinnfälligsten Ausdruck in der These vom ewigen Sinnaufschub und der Nachträglichkeit allen Verstehens findet, interessiert sich der Immanenzdenker für *Schwelphenphänomene im Sinnlichen*, die immer auf Effekten von Gleichzeitigkeit und Koexistenz beruhen.⁶²

Schaub further explains that, for Deleuze, the *time-image* does not signify a sequence (such as a narrative law) nor a before-and-after structure. Instead, it encompasses various facets that coexist and transform. This very choice of the (in)compossible virtual secures and guarantees freedom, as the most real of all worlds is the one that allows the most options, being the most open of all potential worlds.⁶³

Nur das Mögliche ist vollkommen, weil es wirklich alles ist, sogar noch, was nicht aktuell ist und damit nach unseren Vorstellungen unwirklich ist. Wer glaubt, glaubt immer an das Mögliche, gerade weil dessen Existenz *hic et nunc* nicht gesichert ist. Das Mögliche ist die Voraussetzung dafür, daß überhaupt etwas wirklich wird. Gibt es für Deleuze eine andere Philosophie als diejenige, die sich mit dem Möglichen beschäftigt, welches im Begriff ist, *wirklich* zu werden?⁶⁴

'Du possible, sinon j'étouffe.'⁶⁵ This is Deleuze's answer to the question of the possible, the never-ending, the unlimited, the disorganized, the virtual. According to Schaub, both the simultaneous and the successive are always the result of an adopted perspective that can be produced or staged, with a certain effect between the parallel orders.⁶⁶ Schaub further illuminates Deleuze's image

61 Gilles Deleuze, *Proust et les signes*, édition augmentée de 1964, Paris: PUF 1970, p. 76.

62 Schaub, *Gilles Deleuze im Kino*, p. 228.

63 See *ibid.*, p. 229.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

65 Deleuze, *Cinéma II: L'image-temps*, p. 221.

66 See Schaub, *Gilles Deleuze im Kino*, p. 231.

of time by describing images as the only way to present something virtual as present:

Während die modalen Zeitformen gerade das Nicht-mehr- oder Noch-nicht-Wirkliche zum Gegenstand der Auseinandersetzung machen, weil sie die Flüchtigkeit des eigenen sukzessiven Vollzugs sprachlich verlängern wollen, gibt es innerhalb des Sichtbaren lediglich *Modulationen des Realen*. Wo das Sagbare auf Modi und damit auf Wirklichkeitsabstufungen angewiesen ist, kann das Sichtbare sich seiner Wirklichkeit als Modulation von Farben und Formen sicher wissen. Im Kino erscheint diese Möglichkeit in ihrer Vollendung.⁶⁷

The voices, as well as the light, sound and movements are constantly modulating. Usually, viewers do not see all facets of a picture directly, but rather bring actual and virtual parts into a mutual interplay or continuously exchange them with each other.⁶⁸ However, this dual nature of the image (of the virtual and the actual) remains hidden at first and inevitably requires further images, for example generated by a camera pan, a mirror, the front and back of an object, so that as many acoustic and visual components as possible can be classified and the ontological levels of the film image can be broken down.⁶⁹

Daß wir den Wechsel von Bildern als *Wandlung und Modulationen im Sichtbaren* begreifen, und nicht als Vollzug, hat damit zu tun, daß wir *nicht sehen, daß da etwas aufeinanderfolgt*, aus dem schlichten Grund, weil es keine *Lücken, Leerstellen* innerhalb des Kontinuums des Sichtbaren gibt, *weil* die Bilder nahtlos ineinander übergehen. [...] Will man auf diese Modulationen aufmerksam machen, muß man das *Fehlen* von Bildern künstlich in Szene setzen. Genau dies tut das italienische und französische Nachkriegskino. Um den beständigen *Wechsel von Bildern* selbst zu zeigen, braucht es die Inszenierung der *Abwesenheit oder des Verlöschens der Bilder*. [...] Dafür eignen sich beim Film vorzüglich Tonspur und Bildschnitt. *Zwischen* zwei Bildern, *zwischen* zwei Tönen, aber auch im nichträumlichen Zwischenraum aus aktuellem Bild und aktuellem Ton (Bild-Ton-Schere) kann der Bezug zu jenem Außen, zu jener Unsichtbarkeit und Abwesenheit hergestellt werden, aus der jedes Bild seine Existenz bezieht. [...] Die Möglichkeiten des Sagbaren und des Sichtbaren, sich selbst durch einander gegenzuverwirklichen, sind damit abgesteckt. Beide Ordnungen sind komplementär zueinander, brauchen einander, um über den jeweiligen zeitlichen Vollzug, die jeweilige zeitliche Modulation des anderen Aufschluß zu geben.⁷⁰

67 Ibid.

68 See *ibid.*, p. 232.

69 See *ibid.*, p. 233.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 233 f.

According to Deleuze, the little bit of time in its pure form therefore arises neither from the supremacy of the simultaneous nor from that of the successive, because their logics are mutually dependent. The *terrains vagues* of the film corpus will be examined in more detail with the help of the analytical tools presented here.

Lastly, I would like to present Lotman's narrative-theoretical approach, which is based on his structural-semiotic spatial model and was modified in terms of set theory by Karl Renner in 2004.⁷¹ Lotman's spatial semantics are still suitable for analysing and interpreting narrative texts and films. According to Juri Lotman, every narrative world (diegesis) has a binary structure, i.e. it has two disjunctive complementary subspaces,⁷² between which runs a classificatory, in principle, i.e. under normal circumstances, insurmountable, impermeable boundary. The displacement of a figure across this boundary is called an event or subject. It is tantamount to breaking the rules, circumventing or violating a prohibition or deviating from a cultural norm and thus constitutes a revolutionary element. A subject can therefore prove to be movable or immovable in semantically charged space. If the subject respects the boundary and confirms the existing order, the text has no subject.⁷³ According to Lotman, calendars, telephone directories and poetry have no subject matter. If, on the other hand, the figure is able to free itself from its traditional space in order to cross the border, this is a subject-constitutive event, and the figure becomes the hero who carries the plot.⁷⁴ Let us now focus on aspects of film language:

71 See Karl Nikolaus Renner, 'Grenze und Ereignis: Further reflections on the event concept of J. M. Lotman', in Wolfgang Lukas/Gustav Frank (eds.), *Norm – Grenze – Abweichung. Kultursemiotische Studien zu Literatur, Medien, Wirtschaft*, Passau: Stutz 2004, pp. 357–381.

72 See Juri Lotman, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte* (1970), Munich: Fink ³1989. The complementary contrast of the subspaces unfolds on three levels: (1) abstract topological fundamental oppositions: *high vs. low; outside vs. inside; near vs. far; left vs. right; above vs. below* etc.; (2) semantic specification and evaluative charging: *near = familiar, far = strange; familiar vs. strange; good vs. evil; natural vs. artificial; Christian vs. pagan; virtue vs. sin; order vs. chaos; Apollonian vs. Dionysian; corrupt vs. integral* etc.; (3) basic, concrete topographical positions: *mountain vs. valley; city vs. nature; sea/water vs. land; heaven vs. hell, heaven vs. earth vs. underworld; desert vs. jungle/forest* etc.

73 See Matias Martinez/Michael Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, Munich: Beck ³2002, p. 140.

74 See Lotman, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*, p. 357 ff: In this case, the boundary proves to be permeable for the person acting on it. The cultural model realized in the text can therefore be static (= *subjectless*) or dynamized by crossing the

(II) What are the specific possibilities of the film to stage *terrains vagues* as a motif, to shape them, to embed them in the narration, to locate them as a *xenotopia* in the diegesis?

First of all, the film image is of course a moving image, be it through camera movements or image movements and frequency. If you want to depict urban wasteland on film, there are many technical camera options available. I would just like to point out a few here by (figuratively speaking) drawing ever tighter circles from the outside towards *the terrain vague* and thus approaching its core and a possible plot taking place there in terms of film space. I differentiate between tracking shots (*le travelling/tracking*) and panning shots (*le panoramique/panning*).⁷⁵ For example, a *terrain vague* could be filmed using a crane camera (*la trajectoire/crane*), as an aerial shot (*vue aérienne/aerial shot*) from a helicopter or similar, in order to provide an overview of the (empty) site, to show the viewer what is immediately adjacent to the wasteland and what access points exist that could be relevant to the characters' actions. If you want to bring the wasteland closer to the recipients, you move the camera closer (*move in*) and then move away again (*move back*). In addition, you can work with a zoom lens or a translocator whose focal length can be changed.⁷⁶ In this way, effects of approaching or distancing can be achieved without the camera moving in space, i.e. only by changing the proportions of the recorded terrain by adjusting the focal length. Computer simulations of camera movements can also be considered. If you want to get even closer to the action or even help shape it, you can go down to eye level with the protagonists. For example, you could set up a camera with a tripod to follow the action by panning the camera (horizontally or vertically depending on the panning axis, or even around the axis of the lens in the case of *rolling*, but from a fixed position). If one intends to cross the wasteland or film main characters moving through it, the camera can be mounted on *tracks* or on a *dolly* to move smoothly over the terrain. Additionally, it can continue to pan (with swivels) while filming. If it is not possible to drive on a *terrain vague* due to its nature (piles of rubble, fence remains, pits, wrecked vehicles, rubbish, bushes etc.), you can use a *hand-held camera* or a

boundary (= *subject-like*). As soon as the boundary is crossed, the text becomes revolutionary. If it is only attempted but fails or is undone and thus cancelled, the text is a restitutive one.

75 In the following, I refer to the groundwork of Benjamin Beil/Jürgen Kühnel/Christian Neuhaus, *Studienhandbuch Filmanalyse, Ästhetik und Dramaturgie des Spielfilms*, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink 2016, p. 96.

76 See *ibid.*, p. 98.

steadicam/steadycam.⁷⁷ With these two cameras, the person filming can move freely around the site, capture the action at close range, or turn the camera itself into the eyes of a fugitive or their pursuer. Depending on how intense a flight or chase scene is intended to appear, one may choose either the hand-held camera, which captures every movement and breath with a shaky image (this is even desired in certain styles, such as in the *Nouvelle Vague* of the 1960s, in documentary *direct cinema* or *cinéma vérité*, or taken to an obsession in the 'Dogma' group of the 1990s⁷⁸), or the steadicam (a type of floating stabilizer), which is mounted on a spring-loaded support attached to the cameraman's body, allowing them to move freely while still delivering a smooth and steady hand-held camera image. Since Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *THE LAST MAN* (*DER LETZTE MANN*, 1924), the *unleashed/unchained* camera (*la caméra déchaînée*) has been regarded as a further space-developing element, as the image makers can use it to tumble and fall as well as jump and dance – and all these movements are quite conceivable on a *terrain vague*. The unleashed camera thus symbolizes a subjective perspective and translates 'die emotionalen Befindlichkeiten einer Figur'⁷⁹ onto film. A tried and tested means of internal film montage is the *plan sequence* (*le plan-séquence*), in which 'mittels Kamerabewegungen – in der Regel einer Kombination komplizierter Schwenks und Fahrten – mehrere Einstellungen im herkömmlichen Sinne in einem einzigen *take* aufgenommen und entsprechend ohne Schnitt präsentiert [werden]⁸⁰ analogously described by Christian Metz in *Semiotologie des Films* as an *autonomous shot*.⁸¹ The direction of movement of the camera can also be an essential means of expression in the depiction of urban wasteland, as it is not only possible to move parallel to the image surface, i.e. from left to right and vice versa, but also to move into the depths of the space (with a *suction effect*) or forwards from the depths of the space, which may be perceived as threatening and aggressive.⁸² Benjamin Beil, Jürgen Kühnel and Christian Neuhaus also offer the following possibilities for describing the relationship between the objects in the image and the direction of movement of the camera:

77 See *ibid.*, p. 97.

78 See *ibid.*, p. 97.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

81 See the theories of this important film semiotician: Christian Metz, *Semiotologie des Films* (*Langage et cinéma*, 1971), Munich: Fink 1972.

82 See Beil/Kühnel/Neuhaus, *Studienhandbuch Filmanalyse, Ästhetik und Dramaturgie des Spielfilms*, p. 102.

[D]ie Kamera kann sich ihren Objekten (einschließlich der Figuren) annähern oder sich von ihnen entfernen (allativ vs. ablativ); mit Bewegungen der Annäherung oder Entfernung können Bewegungen nach oben oder nach unten verbunden sein (superlativ vs. delativ); die Kamera kann in Räume eindringen oder sich aus ihnen heraus bewegen (illativ vs. elativ); [...] die Kamera kann an den Objekten vorbeigleiten, über sie hinweg gleiten oder sie unterlaufen – etwa unter einer Brücke hindurch gleiten; sie kann sich mitten unter den Objekten bewegen; die Kamera kann ihre Objekte begleiten, ihren Bewegungen folgen (komitativ); sie kann Beziehungen zwischen Objekten herstellen, indem sie sich von einem Objekt zum anderen bewegt (kollativ).⁸³

This opens up various possibilities for highlighting the objects on a *terrain vague* with the help of the camera's direction of movement, as we will see in chapter IV.2 and elsewhere on the filmed 'playground' wastelands. Regarding the frame rate, cinematographers can naturally deviate from the standard frequency of 24 frames per second, which has been in place since 1927, by filming the relevant (empty) terrain either sped up (*l'accélééré/fast motion, accelerated motion*) or slowed down (*le ralenti, le ralentissement/slow motion*).⁸⁴

Let us now turn to the *mise-en-chaîne*, the syntax of the film, which consists of *le découpage* (the *cut(ting)*), a kind of sorting and selection of the filmed material, and *le montage* (the *editing*), the aesthetic construction after the cut. Beil, Kühnel and Neuhaus present the following 'attitude conjunctions' (as a *flowing cut*): the *dimming function* ends a setting by darkening the image until it is black. The *fade-in* makes the image brighter from a black starting point, until the desired image is visible. The *fade-through* is a combination of fade up and fade down that creates a smooth transition from one setting to the next. With a *crossfade*, a smooth transition to the next shot is also achieved. However, both shots are overlapped and visible until the previous one fades out and the next one fades in, gradually making only the new shot visible by weakening the previous one and strengthening the next. A similar blending effect is achieved with the *blur fade*, in which one shot is blurred beyond recognition, merges into the new shot and becomes sharp again. Among the types of flowing cuts are various trick transitions, such as *tilt/tilting aperture, fold/folding aperture, slide/sliding aperture, or iris diaphragm/transitions*.⁸⁵

Beil, Kühnel and Neuhaus also mention various filmic syntagms: an *autonomous shot* is one that is not connected to other shots in the film. The

83 Ibid., p. 103.

84 See *ibid.* p. 109.

85 See Beil/Kühnel/Neuhaus, *Studienhandbuch Filmanalyse, Ästhetik und Dramaturgie des Spielfilms*, p. 116.

syntagma, on the other hand, is a sequence of various narratively related shots. In this context, chronological means that syntagms are assembled in such a way that they follow a chronological order. The dichotomy *narrative vs. descriptive* means that a sequence of shots either tells a story or describes a state. *Linear vs. alternating* means that one or more narrative strands exist. The pair of opposites *continuous vs. discontinuous* means that the narration can be located in a space-time continuum (or not, as the case may be).⁸⁶

In relation to Deleuze, Beil, Kühnel and Neuhaus present the following types of organic montage: in a *parallel montage*, a plot is divided into several strands, which may or may not correlate with each other and can be played back at will. In a *converging montage*, strands into which the plot has been broken down, are brought together piece by piece or brought into context. By *acceleration montage* we mean a technique in which the alternation is accelerated the further the correlation between the storylines progresses.⁸⁷

Die französische Schule der Montage verbindet Deleuze vor allem mit dem Namen Abel Gance; er charakterisiert sie als quantitative Montage. Die Einheit der Bilderfolge ist hier nicht die organische Einheit des Ganzen und seiner Teile (Griffith) oder die dialektische Einheit der Gegensätze (Pudovkin und Eisenstein), sie liegt vielmehr in der Dynamik der Bilder, wobei hier die Objektbewegung im Bild, die Bewegung der Kamera und die Schnittfrequenz zusammenwirken. [...] Anders als Griffith und Eisenstein, die in der Montage durch Schnitt das filmische Darstellungs- und Ausdrucksmittel schlechthin sahen und auf Fahraufnahmen fast ganz verzichteten, arbeitet Abel Gance, und zwar in durchaus exzessiver Weise, mit der bewegten Kamera. Gance ist einer der Hauptvertreter der entfesselten Kamera der 1920er Jahre.⁸⁸

One means of *quantitative montage*, for example, is the principle of simultaneity, which Deleuze considers to be extensive-psychic, intellectual-mathematical and poetic. Variants of this are images superimposed by *multiple exposures*, the *split screen* and the *triple screen*.⁸⁹

The soundtrack in the film is divided into dialogue (*la parole*), music (*la musique*) and noises (*les bruits*), which span and shape the space-time continuum. Added to this is the absence of any kind of sound, an absence which can trigger oppression, tightness and even fear in the viewer, but increases the tension

86 See *ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

87 See *ibid.*, p. 124.

88 Beil/Kühnel/Neuhaus, *Studienhandbuch Filmanalyse, Ästhetik und Dramaturgie des Spielfilms*, p. 142 f.

89 See *ibid.*, p. 145.

(*suspense*).⁹⁰ The dialogue includes the conversation itself, the inner monologue, in which we hear the spoken and voiced thoughts of the character off-screen, and finally the narrative commentary, in which a voice off-screen describes or comments on events. The sounds can also be divided into three categories: *natural sounds* that have a direct relationship to the visuals, *background noises (atmos)* that cannot be directly assigned to the film image but can be assigned to the film scene, and *artificially generated sound effects*.⁹¹ The music has the elementary function of illustrating the events, commenting on them and intensifying the viewer's emotions in relation to the film images. It also structures the film syntactically, for example by separating different storylines from one another through changes, but also by linking different scenes through continuity. The music can include melodies with a recognizable value and thus act as a *leitmotif* ('Leitmotiv'). Due to their compositional characteristics (expressive unambiguity, stylistic plurality, adaptation and variation), these melodies are therefore true *idées fixes*.⁹² James Monaco breaks things down even further:

Siegfried Kracauer schlägt die Unterscheidung vor von ‚aktuellem‘ Ton, der logisch zum Bild gehört, und ‚kommentierendem‘ Ton, der das nicht tut. Ein Dialog von Personen im Bild ist aktuell, der von Personen außerhalb des Bildes ist kommentierend.⁹³ [...] Karel Reisz [...] unterscheidet jede Art von Ton in ‚synchron‘ und ‚asynchron‘. Synchroner Ton hat seine Quelle im Bild (der Cutter muß versuchen, ihn synchron zu bekommen). Asynchroner Ton kommt von außerhalb des Bildes. Wenn man diese beiden theoretischen Begriffsreihen verbindet, bekommt man eine dritte, deren Pole ‚paralleler‘ Ton und ‚kontrapunktischer‘ Ton sind. Paralleler Ton ist aktuell, synchron und mit dem Bild verbunden. Kontrapunktischer Ton ist kommentierend, asynchron und dem Bild entgegengesetzt oder kontrapunktisch zu ihm. [...] Diese Vorstellung vom Ton als logischerweise mit oder gegen das Bild arbeitend, liefert die grundlegende ästhetische Dialektik des Tons.⁹⁴

Let us now move from the language of film to the corpus: in the field of film studies within our research project, the corpus work proved to be considerably more difficult because there are (or were) no databases where one can search for settings, motifs, and/or terms. As a result, we primarily relied on film

90 See *ibid.*, p. 163.

91 See *ibid.*, p. 164.

92 See *ibid.*, p. 164 f.

93 Siegfried Kracauer, *Theorie des Films: Die Errettung der äußeren Wirklichkeit* (1960), Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1985, p. 161.

94 James Monaco, *Film verstehen: Kunst, Technik, Sprache, Geschichte und Theorie des Films und der Medien*, transl. by Brigitte Westermeier and Robert Wohlleben, Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt 2000, p. 216 f.

viewings and readings, exchanges with colleagues from literary, cultural, and media studies, and the snowball method. Nevertheless, some discoveries were made in this way. Even less than in the field of literature, film studies research can rely on works that focus on the urban interstitial space of wastelands as spaces in film and as cinematic spaces, and that pave the way for analysis and interpretation. Another major difference for the progress of the investigation lies in the fact that the literary treatment of urban wasteland is always linked to concepts, above all that of *terrain vague*, which on the one hand directs attention to its history, its semantics and its literary uses, and on the other has the advantage of being able to locate urban wasteland texts thanks to digitalized corpora. Neither applies to film. This has a central methodological consequence: compared to literary research, conceptual work in film clearly takes a back seat to 'work on the phenomenon'. Of course, there are films in which the term *terrain vague* is even used – in the paratext, in the visual space, in the dialogues – such as *TERRAIN VAGUE* (Marcel Carné, 1960) and *LE DOULOS* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1962), which are indeed also authoritative for their respective traditions (melodrama and crime film); in many cases, however, centrally present wastelands remain unnamed. In these cases, the previously developed topological model must be used to decide whether the space that initially appears to be a wasteland is a *terrain vague* or in what way it differs from a theoretical ideal type. Cases in which the conceptual designation and filmic representation of space diverge require special consideration. Finally, the primary task is to examine a space identified as *terrain vague* in the topography of the film in terms of its cinematic form, function and meaning. In addition to general theories on the relationship between film and space (Bazin, Beller, Deleuze, Dünne, Gardies, Gaudin, Günzel, Lotman, Ott, Rohmer, Seguin, among others), there are also specific works on film and urban space (Engell, Frahm, Nitsch, Türschmann, among others), as well as our own elaborations on the topology and aesthetics of the *terrain vague*. Regarding other visual representations, as previously discussed, reference can be made to photographic traditions in which the urban wasteland is thematically depicted as an eerie, crime scene-like fringe zone (Eugène Atget), as an extraterritorial and extraordinary place of strangeness (Man Ray) or as a social potential space of the suburb (Robert Doisneau). Finally, a last methodological remark on the relationship between content and form in the investigation of filmic representations of urban inter-spaces: just as the substantive exploration of the semantic layers and the narrative function of the *terrain vague* in literature always goes hand in hand with formal questions of the specifically literary presentation possibilities, so too in the medium of film, the *terrain vague* is considered from the triple

perspective of content-signifying space, formal space constitution, and their mutual relationship. In the implementation or application of the three aforementioned aspects of representation, the audiovisual space of the *terrain vague* is therefore to be examined thematically as well as in terms of a specifically cinematic time-space (*chronotopos*), space of experience and affect, and/or space of possibility, which need to be considered in terms of its medial representation techniques (image, sound, *mise-en-scène*, *montage*/editing, cinematic narration etc.).

The following preliminary considerations arose during the film selection and structuring process:

(1°) Is a historical, possibly even chronological structure useful? No, because it would be quite difficult for my purposes to subsequently make general statements about *terrains vagues* and thus trace their decisive lines in terms of their functions, different genres and directors, their preferences and film-aesthetic characteristics.

(2°) How fruitful and expedient is a categorization by genre? It would have been possible, but then I would have had to use the following genre templates, for example, in order to make the already solid research discussion fruitful in their respective fields. If I had classified the selection and analysis of the 'wasteland films' according to genre and the respective outstanding directors⁹⁵, the central film corpus of the study would have looked something like this: *mélodrame*: LE QUAI DES BRUMES (Marcel Carné, 1938) and TERRAIN VAGUE (Marcel Carné, 1960); *comédie (fantastique)*: MON ONCLE (Jacques Tati, 1958) and L'ÉCUME DES JOURS (Michel Gondry, 2013); *film policier*: LE DOULOS (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1962) and SÉRIE NOIRE (Alain Corneau, 1979); *cinéma beur/drame social/drame de banlieue*: LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE (Mehdi Charef, 1985) and LA HAINE (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995) and *cinéma du métissage*: WESH WESH, QU'EST-CE QUI SE PASSE? (Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche, 2001) L'ESQUIVE (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2004), LA GRAINE ET LE MULET (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2007), LA JOURNÉE DE LA JUPE (Jean-Paul Lilienfeld, 2009); *cinéma social*: LE GAMIN AU VÉLO (Jean-Pierre und Luc Dardenne, 2011), LA FILLE INCONNUE (Jean-Pierre und Luc Dardenne, 2016); *cinéma d'auteur*: CÉLINE ET JULIE VONT EN BATEAU (Jacques Rivette, 1974), LE PONT DU NORD (Jacques Rivette, 1981) and further traces of

95 See the exposé (cf. p. 17) for my dissertation project, available on the website of our project group: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

terrains vagues in the films of *Nouvelle Vague* directors François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Éric Rohmer etc.).

(3°) A third option for categorization, which I finally decided on after an interim assessment, **is selection according to intersections or affinity to the *terrain vague***. This is because the previous chapters on the *friche urbaine* in literature also reveal, as a result of the systematic descriptive model and thanks to various media representations of urban wastelands in photography, comics, video games and documentary films, which five thematic focuses are obvious and meaningful for (feature) film analysis: the *terrain vague* as a playground and space of possibility, as a place of (social) exclusion and the abject, as a place of (first/secret) love, as a crime scene and a place of crime, and as a place with potential for creativity and participation.

A further selection criterion for the films to be analysed is (in addition to a clearly recognizable narrative significance of the *terrains vagues*) their exemplarity. Due to the lack of prior work on my specific topic, the decision is made to prioritize depth over quantity in the chosen investigations. My own preparatory work includes, for example, my exposé, which I will refer to again in this chapter.⁹⁶ For some of the films in my selection, media interactions and cross-connections to literary source texts and/or lines of literary *terrain vague representations* must also be taken into account. Of course, references to other relevant films, some of them from Francophone cinema and other cinema traditions, should not be neglected. In context-sensitive analyses of representative film examples, I am now examining, on the one hand, the modelling of space in each film as well as the embedding and functions of the *terrain vague*, and on the other hand, various cinematic techniques (editing/*montage*, camera angles, soundtracks, and the use of music, lighting, colour etc.), which illuminate the filmed urban wastelands in a special light.

96 See Jacqueline Maria Broich, '*Terrains vagues: Urbane Zwischenräume im französischen Kino*', exposé for dissertation project at the University of Cologne, 25 March 2014, available at: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

2. The *terrain vague* as a Playground and a Space of Possibility

As I described in ‘Kinder und Jugendliche auf dem *terrain vague*: die Brache zwischen Freiheit und der Macht sozialer Verhältnisse’,¹ a chapter which I will now draw on here, the 1950s were the time of a late, radically anti-capitalist and revolutionary avant-garde movement: the *Situationist International*, which (led by Guy Debord) propagated the abolition of the boundaries between everyday life and art and developed artistic strategies with the explicit aim of engendering social change. One of these strategies, which is in the tradition of modern *flânerie*, is its development into the *dérive*, meaning the deliberate act of drifting in a supposedly familiar or unfamiliar urban environment. As a method of a critique of urbanism, the *dérive* is intended to serve the exploration of urban space insofar as it playfully and experimentally breaks through habitual patterns of movement and perception and thus opens the senses to ‘psychogeography’, i.e. the influence of the geographical milieu on one’s mental and emotional experience of the city.² A notable counterpoint to the so-called *littérature de terrain*,³ which refers to literature emerging from personal explorations ‘in the field’, is provided by texts published in the 1950s to 1970s, which can be attributed to the somewhat imprecisely defined realm of children’s and young adult literature. Texts and films of this kind are not only united by the fact that they focus on the world and everyday life of children and adolescents, but also by the fact that they consistently – but not only – present the *terrain vague* as a *terrain de jeux*, as a ‘playing field’. This brings together

1 See Broich/Ritter, *Die Stadtbrache als ‘terrain vague’*, Chapter I.2.10, pp. 58–72.

2 On the situationist concepts of *dérive* and *psychogéographie*, see Guy Debord, ‘Théorie de la *dérive*’, in Debord, *Œuvres*, ed. by Jean-Louis Raçon, Paris: Gallimard 2006 (Quarto), pp. 251–263.

3 On the concept of *littérature de terrain* and in particular on its manifestation in the work of the ‘wasteland researchers’ Jean Rolin and Philippe Vasset, see Dominique Viart, ‘Littératures de terrain: Jean Rolin et Philippe Vasset, explorateurs de terrains vagues’, in Broich/Nitsch/Ritter (eds.), *Terrains vagues*, p. 113–129.

two lines that are already known from the nineteenth century: on the one hand, Balzac had children playing in the open space of a *terrain vague* on the outskirts of the city as early as the 1830s, something we have encountered time and again ever since, and not only in literature; on the other hand, Zola often placed the *terrain vague* under the sign of love and the crossing of boundaries. A systematic connection between these lines is now constitutive for children's and young adult literature: the *terrain vague* permeates these texts as a place where young people create a child-like symbolic world from what they find there and invent their own rules in play, whether to imitate adult life or, more often, to evade the educational control of adults and deliberately break them through various forms of behaviour. The *terrain vague* usually offers a protected space for practices that can also be interpreted as rites of passage in that the adolescents either collectively cross the border into adulthood in various ways (first erotic experiences, first consumption of intoxicants, first criminal acts etc.) or also organize initiations into their own circle within the framework of gang structures.

2.1 LE CHANTIER DES GOSSES (HARLEZ, 1956–58)

LE CHANTIER DES GOSSES is a discovery on the subject of 'playgrounds', set largely on a vacant lot in the centre of Brussels, whose fate is closely linked to that of the children who appropriate this *terrain vague* as their paradisaical play area. Although not yet truly subcultural, the film by Jean Harlez, shot in Belgium in 1956–58, is still proletarian, although its dubbing was delayed until 1970 for financial reasons (fig. 53). In the narrow streets of Brussels' *Marolles* neighbourhood, the only real refuge for children is a *terrain vague*. One fine day, men in hats who are initially unidentifiable to the little ones arrive there, walk around the place, examine it, unfold maps and 'measure' the terrain. This is a bad sign for the children. They organize the resistance, just like Totoche and his friends in the comic story 'Pour une cabane et un arbre'.



(Fig. 53)

The undeveloped, hilly area, surrounded by wooden fences and residential buildings, places on the young users (all working-class children from the neighbourhood) no constraints and leaves them maximum freedom for all kinds of activities (from playing marbles and flying kites to sliding down the mounds of earth in cardboard boxes). However, it appears not only as a utopian adventure playground, but also as a space of friendship and solidarity, in which, on the one hand, adolescents of the same age can transgress boundaries together (such as collectively smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol) away from the control of adults and, on the other hand, in which adolescents of different ages support each other. This is when the children of the *terrain vague* join forces to fight against the invading, ominous land surveyors.



(Fig. 54)

However, they fail to achieve anything more than an interim success against the conquest of the wasteland by a luxury construction project. Their expulsion is unavoidable and leads to the bored youngsters, deprived of their free space,

wandering the streets and playing nasty tricks on the adults; and the attempt to use the new building site as a playground is only just short of fatal. The socialist perspective of the film, which is more than evident in the expulsion of the children from the wasteland used for communal and solidarity purposes by private real estate capital, also documents how other inner-city residents, especially the elderly and the poor, are displaced from their traditional living space by this early form of gentrification. In view of the threat posed by the capitalist modernization of post-war cities to a *terrain vague* conceived as a socialist-utopian paradise and in view of the real disappearance of inner-city wasteland in the course of these developments, the *terrain vague*, which embodied something like the hope of a better future for the younger generation, also takes on a nostalgic note.

2.2 MON ONCLE (TATI, 1958)

The *terrain vague* in Jacques Tati's 1958 film comedy MON ONCLE, which is also characterized by a pronounced interest in the changes in the urban space and life of its time, is also set in a similar context.⁴ At the heart of these changes – alongside the mechanization of the modern home – is an urban development characterized by the paradigm of functionalism, which, based on the *Athens Charter* developed in 1933 and published by Le Corbusier in 1943, makes the separation of the various functions (mainly living, working, leisure) the guiding principle and significantly dominates urban development in the post-war decades characterized by growth and modernization, the so-called *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–1975) in France.

4 'Die französischen Leinwände wurden in den Fünfzigern von dem beherrscht, was der junge Filmkritiker François Truffaut das *cinéma du papa* nannte, ein übertrieben literarischer und – wie Truffaut meinte – lächerlicher Stil; doch die *Nouvelle Vague* stand vor der Tür, und zumindest drei unabhängige, gegensätzliche Auteurs – Jean Cocteau, der Dichter; Jacques Tati, der Komödiant; und Robert Bresson, der asketische Ästhet – produzierten interessante Werke. Cocteau beendete 1950 seinen ORPHÉE und ein Jahrzehnt später sein LE TESTAMENT D'ORPHÉE. Tati inszenierte und spielte in LES VACANCES DE MONSIEUR HULOT (1953) und MON ONCLE (1958). Bresson, ein sorgfältiger Handwerker, drehte LE JOURNAL D'UN CURÉ DE CAMPAGNE (1950), UN CONDAMNÉ À MORT S'EST ÉCHAPPÉ OU LE VENT SOUFFLE OU IL VEUT (1953) und PICKPOCKET (1959).' Monaco, *Film verstehen*, p. 327.



(Fig. 55)

This is above all the time of the suburbanization of industry, which had already begun in the interwar period but was now massively accelerated by the generalization of the automobile, and now above all of housing, which resulted in an increasing densification and segregation of urban space not only in terms of functions but also socio-economic status. In addition to suburban living for those who have no other choice, there is also suburban living for those who can afford it. And at the same time as these homogenizing tendencies are having an effect, the old, complex and compact districts characterized by traditional urbanity, i.e. by a functional and social mix, are threatened with gradual disappearance. In the midst of this urban development, MON ONCLE is a *terrain vague* played on by children, which both literally and figuratively forms a threshold between the new and the old city (fig. 56).



(Fig. 56)

Although it is only a precarious interstitial space that will sooner or later have to make way for a new urban planning project, it appears timeless for the moment of its existence. This is because it is not yet caught up in the extensive restructuring of the city and the polarization between the old centre and the modern suburb. On it lie discarded railway tracks from the old industrial era, overgrown by ruderal vegetation; progress is suspended, as it were, and the traces of the past have not yet been removed. Here, children indulge in the harmless pranks they play on adults and eat greasy sweets to their heart's content without parental supervision.



(Fig. 57)

And Tati's childlike paradise also shines in utopian colours – albeit more subtly than Harlez's. Because in the play on the *terrain vague*, little G rard, nephew of Monsieur Hulot (played by Tati) and son of Monsieur Arpel a plastic manufacturer who only moves around in his car and whose absurdly sterile, artificial and high-tech villa stands in a lifeless, upper-class suburb, shows solidarity with the children from Hulot's neighbourhood, where people ride their bikes and chat with their neighbours on the street between the bakery, weekly market and bar or in the stairwells of the narrow townhouses.⁵ The wild,

5 'Der kleine G rard lebt mit seinen Eltern in einer futuristischen, vollautomatisierten Luxusvilla. Der Vater ist Kunststofffabrikant, die Mutter vor allem mit der peniblen Pflege des Haushalts besch ftigt. So verbringt G rard seine Zeit lieber mit seinem verschrobeneren Onkel. Dieser lebt in einem malerischen Altstadtviertel und steht mit der Moderne, insbesondere mit den K chenger ten auf Kriegsfu . In den

disorderly and social *terrain vague* naturally maintains intimate nostalgic relationships with the threatened living environment of the old neighbourhood and at the same time presents itself as a maximum counter-place to the world of functional and orderly constraints governed by economic imperatives. In this case, comedy is responsible for the contrast⁶ impressively represented by Tati's MON ONCLE.⁷ His best-known films were all made during the *Trente Glorieuses*, the years of construction and upswing characterized by a world that was modernizing itself through technology and architecture.⁸ However, Tati's films show with nostalgic clarity that this change comes at the expense of a traditional social space and life. While in MON ONCLE the absurd excesses, in particular the acceleration, desocialization and artificiality of mechanized life are demonstrated, whether by means of the internal processes of the plastics factory Plastac or the fully automated villa of the industrialist Arpel, an old suburban world of social harmony and unagitated leisure is evoked once again, shortly before its imminent demolition. And right in between is an undefined, fallow space where traces of disused production and circulation can be found, where greasy *beignets* are sold, where neither a cleaning-mad, 'modern' housewife nor an old street sweeper ensure cleanliness and order, and where rascals play pranks with impunity.

visuell ausgeklügelten, fast wortlosen Filmen von Jacques Tati steht weniger die Handlung als der menschliche Kampf mit den Objekten im Vordergrund. Seine konservative Liebe zum ‚alten Frankreich‘ (*la vieille France*) machte ihn zum Kritiker der wohlstandsversessenen Nachkriegsgesellschaft.‘, Philipp Bühler et al. (eds.), *Little Nick: Filmheft*, Munich/Zurich: Wild Bunch/Diogenes 2010, p. 16.

- 6 See also the chapter 'M. Hulot et le temps' in Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, pp. 41–48, at p. 41: 'C'est un lieu commun que de constater le peu de génie du cinéma français dans le comique. Au moins trente ans.'
- 7 See the exposé (cf. p. 17) for my dissertation project, available on the website of our project group: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).
- 8 See Michel Chion, *Jacques Tati*, Paris: Seuil 1987 (Auteurs); Lorenz Engell: 'Playtime: Die Filme Jacques Tatis', in Engell, *Playtime: Munich Film Lectures*, Constance: UVK, pp. 227–252; and Winfried Nerdinger (ed.), *Die Stadt des Monsieur Hulot: Jacques Tatis Blick auf die moderne Architektur*, Munich: Architecture Museum of the TU Munich 2004.



(Fig. 58)

To summarize, what follows here is a sketch and juxtaposition of two spaces that could not have been designed more differently by Tati. My comments are based on Wolfram Nitsch's⁹: On one hand, we view the Villa Arpel as a hyperbolically exaggerated *non-place*¹⁰, as Tati's cinematic setting¹¹, which, while not yet a transitory space, may be considered an abstract zone of hypermodernity that only subtly reflects global civilization; neither experiences nor vivid memories manifest in this *dead zone*, a desert, despite its originally intended hyperfunctionality; it is an antipole with smooth surfaces that offer no grip, in clinically pure surroundings and of spatially high abstraction due to the refusal of any indicators of local influence, thus as a monotonous area that cannot be located; monochrome, almost colourless or dominantly cold gray-blue¹² (fig. 55); homogeneous, profileless, and serial, thus complicating orientation; confusing despite architectural transparency (through glass fronts); overseeing non-conformity (like Hulot), stigmatizing and excluding; rather angular and straight-lined (aside from the two round windows); quiet and seemingly simpli-

9 Wolfram Nitsch, 'Vom Kreisverkehr zum Karussell: Nicht-Orte als komische Spielräume bei Jacques Tati', in *Romanische Studien* 3, 2016, pp. 301–317.

10 See Matei Chihai, 'Nicht-Orte', in *Handbuch Literatur & Raum*, ed. by Jörg Dünne/Andreas Mahler, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 2015, pp. 188–195.

11 'Meistens jedoch hat er sie am Set eigens erbauen lassen, jeweils beraten von dem Theatermaler und Architekten Jacques Lagrange.' Nitsch, 'Vom Kreisverkehr zum Karussell', p. 306.

12 See Karl Schlögel, 'Heiße Orte, kalte Orte', in *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit: über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, Munich: Hanser 2003, pp. 292–303: *Non-places* can appear as cold or hot places depending on the frequency, lighting and energetic charging by the users: see p. 296.

fyng, yet alienated, isolated, and mechanized; 'Ob ein *Nicht-Ort* als solcher erlebt wird, hängt nicht zuletzt, mit Michel de Certeau gesprochen, von den subjektiven 'Raumpraktiken' seines Benutzers ab'¹³, writes Nitsch.

The pedantic filmmaker and comedian Tati, nicknamed 'Tatillon', transforms his *non-lieux* on a cinematic level, both in terms of plot and staging, by contrasting this hypermodern Paris with a characteristic old-town¹⁴ flair: The *terrain vague* in MON ONCLE in the midst of picturesque Parisian suburban architecture is a direct personal antipole to the automated Villa Arpel; it directly adjoins Hulot's winding, narrow dwelling and represents an anthropological place by virtue of its striking cultural identity, with Hulot's small house can at least be precisely located on a Parisian city map, by street sign and house number (see fig. 58); the adjoining wasteland ('erhitzt' by the presence of the children, as Schlögel puts it) functions here as a creative space of possibility and an area of creative play; it is a colourful world with many round objects (hot pots, old car tyres in fig. 56), circular, cyclical things, but also many crooked and bent, twisted, loud and lively and even disreputable things.¹⁵

MON ONCLE, mit dem Oscar für den besten ausländischen Film ausgezeichnet, markiert den Höhepunkt des Filmschaffens von Jacques Tati. Bei seiner Herstellung genoß er jede erdenkliche künstlerische Freiheit und konnte erstmals aufwendige Studiobauten verwenden. Vor allem die Villa der Arpels ist ein bonbonfarben gehaltenes Abbild protziger und geschmackloser Architektur und mit modernsten technischen Errungenschaften wie z. B. einem automatischen Steakwender ausgestattet. Die künstlerische Gestaltung wird bestimmt von einer märchenhaften Schwarzweiß-Malerei und gelegentlich trivialer Deutlichkeit; dies gilt für die Verwendung der Farbe und die Personendarstellung ebenso wie für den Einsatz von Musik – die immergleiche Musette-Musik¹⁶ begleitet Hulot – und Geräuschen, die häufig wichtigere Akzente setzen als der äußerst reduzierte Dialog – Hulot bleibt im ganzen Film praktisch stumm.¹⁷

13 Nitsch, 'Vom Kreisverkehr zum Karussell', p. 304. See also Michel de Certeau: 'Pratiques d'espace', in *L'invention du quotidien 1: Arts de faire* (1980), Paris: Gallimard 1990 (Folio Essais), pp. 137–191.

14 See Nitsch, 'Vom Kreisverkehr zum Karussell', p. 317.

15 See *ibid.*, p. 313 f.

16 The *valse musette* is a waltz in $\frac{3}{4}$ time with triplets, a French folk dance that is mainly played by a musette accordion with a broad, floating sound. Guitar, bass, piano, drums and vocals are often added. Richard Galliano later developed his own style (*New Musette/Musette Neuve*), in which traditional musette elements were combined with jazz. I am thankful to Roman Wasserfuhr for introducing me to this.

17 Peter Christian Lang: 'Mon oncle', in *Metzler Film Lexikon*, ed. by Michael Töteberg, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 2005, pp. 431–432.

In terms of dramaturgy, the film was already considered problematic by contemporary critics, as some sequences had to be admired without reservation and others almost suffered because they were annoyingly repetitive.

Tati verlangt [vom] Zuschauer mit seiner ruhig beobachtenden Kamera und der nichthierarchischen Erzählweise stellenweise viel Geduld. Sie wird allerdings belohnt durch poetische Miniaturen und Slapstick-Einlagen. [...] Auch MON ONCLE, seine Kritik der Moderne, zeugt von Tatis Liebe zur menschlichen Unvollkommenheit, zum Kind im Menschen und zur Kreatürlichkeit des Lebens, am deutlichsten wohl in den liebevoll inszenierten Szenen mit den herumstreunenden Straßenköttern, die in ihrer unangepaßten Lebendigkeit hulohafte Züge haben.¹⁸

As a kind of *chronic compensatory heterotopia*, the *terrain vague* in MON ONCLE cannot be categorized in its urban frame of reference, and it also seems to be removed from the thematic hyperbolic antithetics of the old and modern world in its very own temporality. This *sui generis* space is ultimately the only one that, in its emptiness and openness, is able to contain what doesn't really want a place in the other two worlds, above all little Gérard Arpel, who is too alive and free for his aseptic, robotized parental home, but was born too young to belong to the world of his uncle Hulot. From the wasteland as a prism, we look at the passing and becoming of urban space and its relationship to society. The medium for this view is of course the walker and cyclist Hulot, who as the hero of the film is, at least according to Lotman's spatial semantics, the only border crosser, while the Arpels and their ilk never leave their world of *non-places* and Gérard's excursions into his uncle's neighbourhood are only of short duration. In this representation as a *chronotopos*, the *terrain vague* in MON ONCLE ultimately takes the form of a space of *heterochrony*, which encompasses the following aspects depending on the perspective: Hulot updates the wasteland in its aesthetic dimension as a threshold place, albeit without an epiphany moment, but nevertheless connected with a sacredness that, as a precarious paradise, removes it from the dehumanizing tendencies of modernity. And Gérard also finds in the wasteland the paradisiacal-utopian shelter for a childhood that can still be lived happily, protected from the automation and objectophilia threatening at home; the wasteland shows itself here as a space that corresponds to Gérard's lifetime in that it is characterized throughout by open possibilities that are still to be realized.

On the other hand, the process of suburbanization can be observed, in the course of which Tati in MON ONCLE, for example, effectively stages the children's prank-playing and pretending in the interstitial intermediate space

18 Ibid., p. 432.

near the old inner-city districts and demolished houses, which stand opposite the new, functionally separate suburban areas. The *terrain vague* appears here like an oasis or a threatened paradise in which the following trends converge: the loss of inner-city urbanity, the processes of displacement through urban development and the modernization and gentrification of the centre. And if we look back at fig. 58, we recognize a winking reference made by Tati, who has the children write 'Totoche Poche' in chalk on the side of the wooden palisade facing the *terrain vague*.

2.3 LE PETIT NICOLAS (TIRARD, 2009)

But there are also the much better-known *Petit Nicolas* stories written by René Goscinny and illustrated by Jean-Jacques Sempé, which were published as a collection of children's books between 1959 and 1964 (and posthumously between 2004 and 2009).¹⁹ They form the antithesis to *Totoche* in that Goscinny does not use the wasteland as a ground for social issues and political ideas, and little Nicholas ('der kleine Nick', as he is famously known in German) and his friends are not working-class children from Belleville, but the offspring of very bourgeois homes. But that doesn't make them any less raucous; nor does it diminish their fascination with the *terrain vague* of the neighbourhood, which is their absolute favourite place. In fact, quite a few stories begin with Nicolas' enthusiastic introduction of this special place in this or a very similar way: 'Je ne sais pas si je vous ai déjà parlé de mes copains, mais je sais que je vous ai parlé

19 'Nous sommes le 29 mars 1959 et ce jour-là paraît dans *Sud Ouest Dimanche* la toute première histoire du Petit Nicolas. L'enfance est mise en mots par Goscinny et en couleurs (même quand les dessins sont en noir et blanc, le ciel est bleu, à l'image des yeux de Marie-Edwige!) par Sempé. [...] Quelques mois plus tard, en octobre 1959, *Le Petit Nicolas* fait une entrée remarquée dans un nouveau journal pour la jeunesse: le légendaire magazine *Pilote*. En 1961, *Le Petit Nicolas* paraît en livre. Goscinny et Sempé font un passage remarqué dans une émission de télévision LECTURES POUR TOUS. Ils crèvent l'écran et font rire les téléspectateurs. Cinq ouvrages paraissent et *Le Petit Nicolas* devient progressivement une référence de la littérature jeunesse. En 2004, [...] Anne Goscinny exhume des archives de son père une centaine d'histoires inédites qu'elle publiera en deux volumes [...]: best-seller international, [...] traduit dans plus de trente langues. En 2009, sort en salle le premier film LE PETIT NICOLAS de Laurent Tirard qui remporte un immense succès avec 5,7 millions d'entrées. [...] Pour son second film, le Petit Nicolas quitte l'école et ses copains. Changement de décor, Beau-rivage et sa plage sont le nouveau terrain de jeux de Nicolas qui se fait un tas de chouettes nouveaux amis.' Floriane Ricard et al. (eds.), *René Goscinny & Jean-Jacques Sempé, Les vacances du Petit Nicolas: Huit histoires qui ont inspiré le film*, Paris: IMAV 2014, p. 8 f.

du terrain vague. Il est terrible.’ (‘I don’t know if I’ve already told you about my friends, but I know I’ve told you about the *terrain vague*. It’s great.’)²⁰ And even though Nicolas is sure that we already know this place, he never misses the opportunity to describe it again. There are old tins of food, cats roaming around, old mattresses, boxes and bottles, but above all ‘une auto qui n’a plus de roues mais qui est encore très chouette et elle nous sert d’avion, vroom, ou d’auto-bus, ding ding’ (‘an old car that no longer has wheels but is still very beautiful and it serves us as an aeroplane, vroom vroom, or as a bus, cling-a-ling’), in homage to Doisneau’s photograph (fig. 59).²¹ The objects, which have become ambiguous due to the loss of their original use and form and which the children find on the *terrain vague* – like Socrates’ flotsam and jetsam by the sea – can be imaginatively transformed into all sorts of things through play. Then it doesn’t matter if the throwing hammer for the athletics competition consists of just a stone and an old iron wire – ‘On fait semblant, quoi!’ (‘We’ll just pretend!’).²² And so, in another story, not only does the wrecked car become the parents’ car, which is taken on a camping holiday, imitating all the behaviour of the adults, but the *terrain vague* itself, on which no prescribed use and no fixed meaning limit the free run of the imagination, also becomes a campsite with a river, bringing the distance and strangeness of an unattainable holiday destination and place of longing – like the sea in Pierre Reverdy’s work – into one’s own urban neighbourhood.



(Fig. 59)

20 René Goscinny/Jean-Jacques Sempé, *Les récrés du Petit Nicolas* (1961), Paris: Gallimard 1994, p. 66. See also Goscinny/Sempé, *Le petit Nicolas et les copains* (1963), Paris: Denoël, p. 28 and 101.

21 Goscinny/Sempé, *Le petit Nicolas et les copains*, p. 101.

22 Ibid., p. 29.

In the film *LE PETIT NICOLAS* (2009) by Laurent Tirard, Nicolas leads the quiet and idyllic life of a little boy. He is a boy like any other. His parents love him very much, he and his gang of very unusual friends have a lot of fun together and get up to all sorts of mischief, until the day he thinks he has realized that his mother is pregnant. Nicolas can already imagine the situation: his little brother will take his place and his parents will no longer look after him. Nicolas therefore plans to have his little brother picked up by a ‘gangster mechanic’ as soon as he is born, but the gangster demands 500 francs for the deal. Nicolas and his gang first have to earn or collect the cash.



(Fig. 60)

After reading an *Astérix* comic, they have the following idea, which they immediately share with non-gang members of the same age: ‘Hé, les gars, ça vous intéresse de devenir invincibles?’ – ‘De quoi tu parles?’ – ‘Venez au terrain vague! Et vous allez comprendre!’ – ‘Ouais, et alors?’ – ‘Alors, nous, on a trouvé la formule de la potion magique! Bois ça et tu deviens fort comme tout!’²³



(Fig. 61)

23 *LE PETIT NICOLAS*, Laurent Tirard, France 2009, (01:07:45–01:08:15).

With a cinematic trick, illustrated aesthetically through the alternation between a downward and an upward camera perspective (*contre-plongée* and *plongée*), they manage to convince their ‘opponents’ of the magic potion’s effectiveness, prompting them to creatively replicate it due to high demand.



(Fig. 62)

On the *terrain vague*, they easily earn the money Nicolas urgently needs to get his little brother ‘out of the picture’.



(Fig. 63)

By means of a long shot (and a *voix hors champ*) at the end of the film sequence, the viewers are given an overview of the urban wasteland (and the urban system in which it is embedded in the background), because they have to run away from an angry father whose son has been suffering from an acute rash since drinking the magic potion, and they didn’t even have enough time to pack up the money they had made.



(Fig. 64)

With a view to the historical background of the film, Bühler explains:

In Frankreich gibt es [...] eine besondere Tradition, den Schulalltag aus Kindersicht zu präsentieren. Ohne direkten Verweis nimmt *LE PETIT NICOLAS* Bezug auf einige solcher filmgeschichtlichen Vorläufer. Als Grund für den warmherzigen, oft auch nostalgischen Blick dieser Filme nennt Regisseur Laurent Tirard die einheitliche Organisation des Schulsystems, die den verschiedenen Generationen über Jahrzehnte einen ähnlichen Erfahrungsschatz bescherte.²⁴

According to Tirard, he was influenced by the following classics for his own film version: *MON ONCLE*, *LES QUATRE CENTS COUPS*²⁵, *LA GUERRE DES BOUTONS*²⁶, *AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS*²⁷ and *LES CHORISTES*.²⁸

24 Bühler, *Der kleine Nick. Filmheft*, p. 16.

25 See *LES QUATRE CENTS COUPS*, François Truffaut, France 1959; 'Held des autobiographisch gefärbten Erstlingsfilms von François Truffaut ist der 14jährige Antoine Doinel, der bei seiner lieblosen Mutter in ärmlicher Umgebung aufwächst. In der Schule wird er regelmäßig geschlagen und in die Ecke gestellt. Als er die Schreibmaschine des Stiefvaters stiehlt, um sie im Leihhaus zu Geld zu machen, landet er in einem Heim für schwer erziehbare Jugendliche, aus dem er aber flieht. Die letzte Einstellung zeigt ihn am Meer, von dem er immer geträumt hat. Gefeierte für seine realistische Genauigkeit und stilistische Brillanz, wurde der Film zu einem frühen Meilenstein der französischen *Nouvelle Vague*.' *ibid.*

26 See *LA GUERRE DES BOUTONS*, Yves Robert, France 1962; 'Zwischen den Jungenbanden der Dörfer Longueverne und Velrans herrscht blanker Krieg. Um den gefangenen Gegner zu entehren, werden ihm sämtliche Knöpfe abgeschnitten. Weil dies zuhause Ärger gibt, treten die Jungen bald nackt gegeneinander an. So eskaliert der Konflikt immer weiter, doch am Ende siegt in dem liebenswerten Kinderfilmklassiker immer der Humor. Als Vorlage diente ein Roman des Antimilitaristen Louis Pergaud aus dem Jahr 1912. Mit viel Witz und Einfühlungsvermögen nimmt der Film die Dummheit der Erwachsenen aufs Korn und übt auch an der 1962 noch immer üblichen Prügelziehung deutlich Kritik.' *ibid.*, p. 17.

If, like Laurent Tirard, you have already tamed Molière on film, you can still have ambitions to take on Sempé and Goscinny: Tirard takes on the challenge of bringing little Nicholas, the star of all school playgrounds, to life. As his red jumper, white shirt, and blue pants suggest, not a single gaiter button is missing in the meticulous recreation of the young hero's era. This attention to detail lends the story a real-life feel without denying it an unreal atmosphere. Because all the protagonists sail around in a postcard-perfect France, in a holiday album full of vibrant colours, the *terrain vague* on which Nicolas, Rufus, Clotaire, Agnan, and Alceste operate and thrive feels so pleasantly removed from reality, devoid of all worries and elevated as a treasure. This is (according to Fornerod in *Ouest-France*) the deliberate choice of a director who tends to play with Goscinny's cheerful dialogues rather than paying tribute to Sempé's poetic world.²⁹

This charming hero seems to transcend the ages without ageing. Since 29 March 1959, the date of publication of the first story of *Le Petit Nicolas* in *Sud Ouest Dimanche*, he has been wearing shorts, playing marbles with his gang of boys and writing on his desk in the classroom. But even more than 60 years after his first appearance in the Sunday newspaper, he continues to delight young and old alike, far beyond the borders of France. But what is the secret of this figure?

27 See *AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS*, Louis Malle, France/Germany/Italy 1987; 'Winter 1943 im besetzten Frankreich: Der 12jährige Julien verbringt eine wunderbare Zeit in einem katholischen Internat auf dem Land. Auf dem Schulhof liefern sich die verwöhnten Bürgerkinder Schneeballschlachten und Wettkämpfe im Stelzenlaufen. Der stille Mitschüler Jean Bonnet scheint an solchen Vergnügungen kein Interesse zu haben. Als der neugierige Julien herausfindet, dass Jean Jude ist und von den katholischen Priestern versteckt wird, ist es bereits zu spät: Jean wird von den Deutschen abgeholt und deportiert. In seinem Spätwerk verarbeitete Louis Malle eine schmerzhaft Erinnerung an die eigene Jugend. Sein vielfach ausgezeichnete Film verknüpft nostalgische Bilder einer unschuldigen Kindheit mit der Kritik an der französischen Kollaboration bei der Judenvernichtung.', *ibid.*

28 See *LES CHORISTES*, Christophe Barratier, France/Switzerland/Germany 2004; 'Eine Anstalt für schwer erziehbare Jungen im Jahr 1949: Der neue Aufseher Clément Mathieu setzt gegen den Willen des strengen Heimleiters auf neue Methoden der Erziehung. [Durch] große[n] persönlichen Einsatz bringt er die aufmüppigen Schüler zum Chorsingen. Der Mut machende Appell an das musische Talent gibt vielen Rabauken eine neue Richtung im Leben, einer wird sogar Dirigent. Mit einer typisch französischen Mischung aus hartem Realismus und nostalgischer Verklärung wurde der Film zu einem großen Erfolg. Allein in Frankreich sahen ihn etwas 8,5 Millionen Zuschauer.', *ibid.*

29 See *ibid.*, p. 20.

Sûrement son caractère intemporel. Ses créateurs [...] ne lui ont pas donné d'âge précis. Leur héros aurait 7, 8 ou 10 ans. Il vivrait avec ses parents dans une grande ville, peut-être en banlieue parisienne dans les années 50. Mais finalement, ce n'est pas si important car le monde de Nicolas, c'est d'abord celui de l'enfance. Un univers paisible, où l'on s'amuse à jouer aux cow-boys et aux Indiens dans un terrain vague, où l'on montre fièrement aux copains sa dernière collection de timbres... Et surtout, où l'on adore se bagarrer sans méchanceté. À sa hauteur, Nicolas regarde aussi le monde des adultes, incarné à l'école par la maîtresse, le directeur ou encore le surveillant, 'le bouillon' comme l'appellent les écoliers. Avec lui, il ne faut pas rigoler, sinon on risque d'aller 'au piquet' ou pire, en retenue. À la maison aussi, et chez les copains, les adultes sont toujours là pour fixer des règles et finalement constater, avec impuissance, qu'elles ne sont pas respectées!³⁰

It is obvious that the *terrain vague* in our examples is a space of play and possibility. This term was coined and used by Donald Winnicott who, in relation to children's play,³¹ speaks of 'spaces' that open up objects that are not completely fixed in their meaning, so that the child can occupy them with its own meaning in a creative way and thus experience itself through the environment as an independent, actively shaping subject.³²

30 Laure Wallois, 'Le Petit Nicolas fête ses 60 ans!', in *Revue de la Presse (Littérature Jeunesse)*, 5/2019, Bremen: Schünemann 2019, p. 9.

31 In Roger Caillois' terminology, childlike play does not mean 'compétition (*agôn*)'. See the overview 'Répartition des jeux' in Roger Caillois, *Les jeux et les hommes* (1958/1967), Paris: Gallimard 2018, p. 92.

32 See Donald Winnicott, *Vom Spiel zur Kreativität*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1985 (English-language original: *Playing and Reality*, London: Tavistock 1971). Of course, this kind of creative use is already inherent in the work of the American philosopher, psychologist and educationalist John Dewey and, independently of this, in the work of the Italian doctor, reform pedagogue and philosopher Maria Montessori. While the former not only proclaims in his work *Democracy and Education* that democratic education significantly contributes to a meaningful, maturity-promoting, self-determined activity, which primarily humanizes young people in a consistent fashion, assuming that the desire for self-expression and learning is present in every individual and only needs to be nurtured, further asserting that everything – including all learning – is based on experiences in the sense of discovery-based experimentation ('learning by doing'), and thus that externally controlled activities always remain joyless, inefficient, and counterproductive, Maria Montessori (some of whose work was criticized by Dewey) argues that the individuality of the human being must be at the centre, which should be oriented towards the intrinsic value, needs, and talents of the individual, so that intrinsic motivation and natural joy are preserved, enabling individuals to mature into balanced and independent personalities using all their senses. See John Dewey (1916): *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: Macmillan 2016; and Maria Montessori: *Il Metodo della Pedagogia*

Following this cinematic exploration, which turned the *terrain vague* into a space between the utopian freedom of childhood play and the now-to-be-focused power of social relations, as used to make the socio-political problems of the time microscopically visible, it remains a recurring theme in children's and young adult literature of various forms.

Räume der Kindheit können überall sein. Dabei gibt es sie im engeren Sinne genau-sowenig wie Räume der Adoleszenz. Mit dem Älterwerden eines Menschen wandeln sich die subjektiven Lebenssituationen, und mit ihnen das Verhältnis zu Umgebungen. Sie lassen ein und denselben Raum in der Abhängigkeit von Perspektiven, sozialen Rollen und gesellschaftlichen Zuschreibungen von Normen ‚richtigen‘ Verhaltens mal als diesen und mal als jenen erscheinen. [...] Es gibt aber nicht nur *tatsächlich* Anwesende, sondern auch politische und pädagogische Programme, die von Hinterbühnen her auf verdeckte und versteckte Weise steuern, Räume überwachen sowie strukturieren und den Staat samt seiner Werte und Normen repräsentieren. Aber im subjektiven Erleben werden all diese mit anderen geteilten Räumen doch zu höchst persönlichen Welten. [...] [N]icht zuletzt der Raum selbst [wird] denkwürdig, als etwas am eigenen Leib Erlebbares. Aber es ist nie der Raum *an sich*, der das Leben und Erleben tangiert und das Befinden stimmt, sondern die RaumZeit des So-Seins in Situationen.³³

Similar to Jürgen Hasse and Verena Schreiber in their introduction to the *spaces of childhood*, Egbert Daum describes the *terrain vague* as a ‘no man's land’ where children romp around in free play:

Anzutreffen ist eine erstaunliche Leichtigkeit des Handelns und Seins der Kinder, die an die eigene Kindheit erinnert und zu exotischer beziehungsweise romantischer Verklärung förmlich einlädt. Doch soll [...] kein arkadisches Idyll – etwa als sozialräumliches Gegenstück zu urbaner ‚Hektik‘, ‚Zerrissenheit‘ und ‚Entfremdung‘ – entworfen werden. Vielmehr stellt sich die Frage, was diese hybridartigen, keiner Nutzung eindeutig zuzuordnenden Räume so bedeutsam für Kinder macht und worin ihre besondere Qualität hinsichtlich kindlicher Entwicklungs- und Sozialisationsprozesse liegt.³⁴

The *terrain vague* therefore encourages children to develop freely, to invent their own rules and to imitate adults, whereby they always actively engage with their environment, appropriate realities, process them and change them con-

Scientifica applicato all'educazione infantile nelle Case dei Bambini, Città di Castello: S. Lapi 1909.

33 Jürgen Hasse/Verena Schreiber, ‘Introduction’, in Hasse/Schreiber (eds.), *Räume der Kindheit: Ein Glossar*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2019, pp. 9–14, at p. 9 f.

34 Egbert Daum, ‘Niemandland’, in Hasse/Schreiber, (eds.), *Räume der Kindheit: Ein Glossar*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2019, pp. 253–258, at p. 254.

structively.³⁵ Daum also points out that the trend is, however, known to be heading in a different direction: ‘Kindheit und Jugend sind durch Reduzierung von Eigentätigkeit, durch Zunahme der Erfahrung aus zweiter Hand sowie durch wenig spontanes, von Erwachsenen kontrolliertes Handeln gekennzeichnet.’³⁶ Therefore, the immense potential of these valuable inner-city biotopes for coping with various challenges in life should not be neglected.³⁷ According to Ulrich Gebhard, the urban wasteland is good for its young users all round and has long since ceased to represent something exclusively marginalized and different.³⁸

Mit dem schnellen industrialisierungsbedingten Wachstum der Städte kamen die Spielplätze in den öffentlichen Raum. In der uns heute bekannten Form gibt es sie seit den 20er-Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts.³⁹ Zum städtebaulichen Standard wurden sie rund 100 Jahre später. Schon die prekäre Lebensqualität im Moloch der Metropolen erzwang ihre Anlage geradezu. Ihr vorderstes Ziel war damals aber nicht die kreative und freie Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit. Unzureichende Hygiene, schlechte und viel zu kleine Wohnungen, Enge, Gestank, Lärm und andere Mängelsituationen städtischen Wohnens verlangten nach einem Ausgleich.⁴⁰

While playgrounds in terms of building regulations should provide sufficient space for movement, sports and running games (horizontal bars, bridge, tower etc.), for equipment (swings, slide, seesaw, climbing frame etc.), for communication in peace and quiet (gnome house, seating area etc.) and for messier games (sandpit, running water etc.), this does not stimulate creativity any more than the domestic garden, which is controlled by the parents’ eye and integrated into the smart home, says Jürgen Hasse.⁴¹ The normative, monetary, and programmatic obsession with regulating playgrounds and municipal square,⁴²

35 See *ibid.*, p. 255.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 256.

37 See *ibid.*, p. 257.

38 See Ulrich Gebhard, *Kind und Natur*, Wiesbaden: Springer 2013, p. 112 ff.

39 Precursors of today’s playgrounds have existed in the aristocratic world since the thirteenth century.

40 Jürgen Hasse, ‘Spielplatz’, in Hasse/Schreiber (eds.), *Räume der Kindheit: Ein Glossar*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2019, pp. 315–321, at p. 315.

41 See *ibid.*, p. 316 f.

42 ‘Platzordnungen’ definieren schließlich die Zeit des ‚freien‘ Spiels, und dies in zweidimensionaler Hinsicht. Zum einen über die tageszeitlich erlaubten Nutzungskorridore (im Allgemeinen von morgens 7 bis abends 20 Uhr). Zum anderen über biografische Zeitfenster: Spielplätze sind (je nach Ausstattung und Programm) für Lebensabschnitte von Kindheit und Jugend reserviert (bis zur Erreichung des 12.,

and likewise parental oversight, undermine the act of playing in its true sense, acting as a (meta-)ludic spoilsport: 'vor allem *ein freies Handeln*. [...] Das Kind und das Tier spielen, weil sie Vergnügen daran haben, und darin eben liegt ihre Freiheit'.⁴³ Hasse offers the following as food for thought:

Viele Spiele dienen außerdem der zivilisatorischen Einübung sozial erwünschten Verhaltens, also nicht dem Spaß und auch nicht der Bildung. [...] In vorderster Reihe bester ‚Spielplätze‘, die eigentlich keine sind, stehen somit Brache, Ödland, Baustelle – und noch die rückseitige Kehrrechtecke des Supermarktes, wo das Leergut steht und ab und zu eine Ratte vorüberhuscht. [...] [Es] wird nur vorgetäuscht, dass Spielplätze persönlichkeitsgestaltende Spielräume bieten; sie werden dann allzu leicht zu Orten der Ruhigstellung von Kindern im Modus der Bewegung. [...] Alternative Räume abenteuerlicher Spiellust gibt es in vielen Städten – oft genug bekämpft [...] sind sie doch ein Stachel im Fleisch der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und ihrer hyperadretten Ordnungshygiene.⁴⁴

The *terrain vague* as a playground and space of possibility in the film is 'eine autopoetische Subwelt', 'eine Ausgleichs- und Begegnungswelt' for subjects who 'sich dem Trubel der [Stadt] zwar entziehen, aber dennoch eine Dosis frische Luft in kindlich[-quirliger] Lebendigkeit schöpfen wollen. *Spielplätze* für Kinder sind auch *Schauplätze* im gelebten Kosmos der Stadt'⁴⁵. Gilles Deleuze's already quoted answer ('Du possible, sinon j'étouffe.'⁴⁶) to the question of the possible, the unlimited, the virtual underscores once again that the most real of all potential worlds must be the one that, by virtue of its openness, grants the most options, with the actual and the virtual conditioning each other in the filmed scenes of play and possibility spaces, just as the visible and the sayable do.

14. oder 16. Lebensjahres). Erwachsene ohne Kinder gelten hier schnell als sozial auffällig, wenn nicht sogar verdächtig.', *ibid.*, p. 318.

43 Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens: Vom Ursprung der Kultur im Spiel* (1938), Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt 1956 (Rowohlts deutsche Enzyklopädie), vol. 21, p. 15.

44 Hasse, 'Spielplatz', p. 317 ff.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 321.

46 Deleuze, *Cinéma II: L'image-temps*, p. 221.

3. The *terrain vague* as a Place of (social) Exclusion and the Object

3.1 LE SANG DES BETES (FRANJU, 1949)

From the 1940s onwards, however, the urban open space was also taken up in other genres of French film. For example, in the prologue to his documentary short film *LE SANG DES BÊTES*¹ from 1949, Georges Franju poetically focuses on the wastelands located on the outskirts of the city. The film addresses the industrial work and slaughtering processes of horses, cows, calves, and sheep in the cruel-looking Parisian slaughterhouses of La Villette (19th arrondissement) and Vaugirard (15th arrondissement) in the 1940s. The prologue can be identified as being located on one of these wastelands, very close to the *Porte de Vanves*, at the border of the 14th and 15th arrondissements.

Aux portes de Paris, sur les terrains vagues, jardins des enfants pauvres, sont éparpillés les singuliers débris de vagues richesses. Tout un bonheur désassorti s'offre aux amateurs de brocante, aux poètes et aux amoureux de passage, à la limite de la vie des camions et des trains.²

A harmless flea market scene, stranded objects that bear witness to the past, trains, children at play and lovers that separate the city centre from the *terrains vagues* of the periphery and whose presence only emerges as the film progresses as a real connection between the almost otherworldly-looking slaughterhouses and our 'ordinary', 'this-worldly' world. Trains, which still separate the city centre from the *terrains vagues* of the periphery, shuttle back and forth between everyday urban life and the almost otherworldly-looking slaughter-

1 See *LE SANG DES BETES*, Georges Franju, France 1949.

2 *LE SANG DES BETES*, Franju, (00:00:58–00:01:16). A translation: 'At the gates of Paris, on uncultivated/undeveloped land, in the gardens of the poor, are scattered the bizarre remains of uncertain riches. This is where lovers of antiques find their happiness, as will travellers passing through in love, very close to the lorries and trains.'

houses. Then things arrive in the interstitial space romanticized as a flea market scene, which is conceived entirely euphemistically as an aestheticized place.



(Fig. 65)

Through a *panoramique horizontale*, a pan that Franju executes extremely slowly, almost celebrates, the *grands immeubles* in rank and file appear almost calming, grounding and sublime. Fig. 65 allows us to associate, here as *photograms*, the photographs of Man Ray (fig. 3) and Robert Doisneau (fig. 22).



(Fig. 66)

Travelling is also done carefully, so that still lifes (like those in fig. 66) are artfully³ seen and framed from various *objets trouvés* (gramophone, suitcases and boxes) and one can get closer to them, even if not yet with a zoom lens or transfocator. The mannequin (captured in a half-length shot) stands statically, but with a dynamic gaze pointing out of the *photogramme* on the *terrain vague* at the gates of Paris. As a figure, its verticality contrapuntally and minimally off-centre breaks through the horizontal lines of the building roofs, pipes, the goods train and the layers of terrain.



(Fig. 67)

Henri Lefebvre's terms, which he coined in his *Production de l'espace* (1974), juxtapose two spaces in relation to LE SANG DES BÊTES. Lefebvre begins with two theses: on the one hand, space is the product of concrete social conditions and practices (especially of an economic and political nature). On the other hand, it is the result of a production process that is historical. As a historical space, it is a transitional space to the secular order for purely human purposes, in which capitalist modes of production are established (construction of infrastructure, transport routes for trade).⁴ Furthermore, this economic accumulation and efficiency could be transferred to the housing sector (HBM/HLM). In

3 See Juri Steiner's chapter 'No Man's Land und Terrain vague', in Steiner, *New Babylon: Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Paris zwischen Second Empire und 1968*, dissertation, University of Zurich 2003, <https://opac.nebis.ch/ediss/20030025.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

4 In this context, it is worth having a look at LA ZONE: AU PAYS DES CHIFFONNIERS, Georges Lacombe, France 1928.

this respect, there is a break with the nature of absolute space. As a space of representation (*espace de représentation*), it follows the traces of a buried absolute space through the poeticizing depiction of the prologue (silence at the gates of the city, idyll, music etc.).⁵ After the prologue, the viewers leave the *terrain vague* and the slaughterhouses (*abattoirs*) become the subject of the short film. As a logical consequence of the historical space in the prologue, they now embody an abstract space, namely that of neoliberal, globalized capitalism, which is about the serial, industrialized production of meat (expansion, efficiency and investment). In this context, according to Lefebvre, the space of the slaughterhouses can be described as homogenized, functionally fragmented, inhuman, subject-poor and neither individually nor collectively experienceable.⁶

3.2 TERRAIN VAGUE (CARNÉ, 1960)

Marcel Carné, in the tradition of poetic realism, possibly laid the foundations for the history of *terrain vague* film.⁷ The melodramatic crime film *LE QUAI DES BRUMES* (1938)⁸ tells the story of a deserted soldier who seeks refuge in the

5 See Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (1974), Paris: Anthropos 42000.

6 See *ibid.*; see also Bernard Tschumi, *Tschumi: Parc de la Villette*, with texts by Jacques Derrida and Anthony Vidler, London: Artifice 2014 (books on architecture), pp. 15, 17, 238 f. I am grateful to Axel Sowa for making me aware of this work.

7 'Les films réalistes poétiques français des années 1930 mêlaient les intrigues policières aux histoires d'amour teintées de fatalisme dans les décors sordides et brumeux'. Paul Duncan/Jürgen Müller (eds.), *Film noir*, Cologne: Taschen 2017 (Bibliotheca Universalis), p. 19.

8 'Wie Alfred Hitchcock den britischen Spielfilm der dreißiger Jahre beherrschte, [...] schuf Renoir eine neuartige Verschmelzung der Richtungen. Er verband den Humanismus von Stummfilmkünstlern wie Chaplin mit realistischer Technik. Die Einflüsse seines humanen, sozial bewußten und komödiantischen Stils wirken immer noch nach. Zur selben Zeit bildete sich in Frankreich eine Anzahl anderer starker, sehr persönlicher Stile heraus: Marcel Pagnol drehte einige populäre, lyrische und schüchterne Studien des französischen Provinzialismus. René Clair, dessen Ruf mit den Jahren gelitten hat, machte amüsante, wenn auch leichtgewichtige Filme. Marcel Carné zeichnete verantwortlich für eine Reihe höchst theatralischer, geistreicher Dramen, vor allem *LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS* (1944). Jacques Prévert war oft sein Mitarbeiter.' Monaco, *Film verstehen*, p. 302. In the same year as *LE QUAI DES BRUMES*, Marcel Carné also shot *HÔTEL DU NORD* (1938), from which the following quote was taken, which captures the mood of Carné's films well: 'Atmosphère! Est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère?!'; Jan Henrik Groß/Camille Larbey (eds.), *Schimpfen auf Französisch*, Munich: Spotlight 2019 (Écoute), p. 19: 'Edmond explose à sa copine Raymonde qu'il souhaiterait être seul, car il a 'besoin de changer

harbour town of *Le Havre* and, while awaiting his departure overseas, becomes embroiled in both a love story and a deadly criminal story. As a social outsider thrown into a gloomy reality, he finds refuge in a shabby harbour bar, which ambivalently gives hope to the marginalized characters who meet there, but also plunges them into a sober emptiness. Due to this ambivalence of the dockside shack, a division into a dark outer space of powerlessness and a bright inner space of choice does not hold true. It is interesting that this utopian space in a pessimistic light is located on a terrain that can be identified as *terrain vague* in its utter desolation and emptiness – a terrain, which, due to its detachment from spatio-temporal coordinates and external circumstances, can be labelled with Deleuze's concept of the *espace quelconque* ('arbitrary space'), which, because it suspends the unambiguity of space and thus opens up pure potential, is considered symptomatic of the decay of the *action-image* and, in its poetic abstraction, paves the way for neo-realism. So, when Deleuze speaks of detachment and potentiality at this threshold of film history – from the crisis of *movement-image* to *time-image* – it is not at all surprising that this development manifests itself *materially* in the depiction of a *terrain vague*. For the plot of the film, or rather for its characters, this interstitial space, neither shrouded in darkness nor illuminated by nighttime lamplight but rather filled with swirling mists, indeed represents a crisis-ridden grey area of uncertainty, which mirrors the precise spatial correspondence of their 'affective' constitution. Not immediately, but soon it will become apparent that the wasteland will lose its pessimistic 'lumière noire' and appear in a far more hopeful light.

This is not quite the case in Marcel Carné's *TERRAIN VAGUE* (1960), in which the historical coupling of 'espaces quelconques, espaces déconnectés et vidés' with neo-realism and the post-war period, and in the background with the contemporary existentialism of a Sartre, is particularly easy to perceive. It also shows how the caesura in film history that Deleuze points to coincides with the one that André Bazin observes in the emergence of the plan sequence in relation to the old montage film, because the open space of the urban wasteland offers a stage-like scenery that wants to be depicted in its specific spatio-temporal relationship to its surroundings. However, the first thing to note about *TERRAIN VAGUE* is the fact that this term is given to a film as a title.

With reference to the content of the film, a portrayal of the lives of French youth in the Parisian suburbs of the 1950s, the title concept certainly encompasses not only the wasteland as a fundamental spatial component of a

d'atmosphère', c'est elle. Raymonde takes cela pour une insulte. Avec un gros accent parisien, elle lui sort cette réplique, qui restera la plus célèbre de tout le cinéma français.'

suburban reality depicted as associated with bleakness and crime – a reality which is cinematically realized in a neorealist tradition, close to the milieu, unvarnished, and with formal ruptures – but also the lives of the youth themselves, which unfold in precarious conditions and often on the fringes of legality. With regard to the narrative function of the *terrain vague*, there is a hitherto unique consolidation of aspects of representation known from the literature. For lines of utopian occupation, heterotopic staging and a transgressive moment are brought together in such a way that various functions are ascribed to the title location, an industrial wasteland surrounded by barren open land: situated opposite the *non-place* of anonymous blocks of flats, the wasteland serves as a secret meeting place for a gang of youths and as a hiding place for stolen goods, where the adolescents find protection from parental and police surveillance and a venue for initiation rites.⁹



(Fig. 68)

Enabling such transgressions, the *terrain vague* provides them with a place of refuge and freedom, which they appropriate as a space for emancipation against the oppressive life of the *banlieue*. The test of courage demanded of the hero,¹⁰ namely to jump blindfolded from several metres into the void in the

9 See the exposé (cf. p. 17) of my dissertation project, available on the website of our project group: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

10 Michel Audiard and Albert Simonin, who had been pencilled in to write the dialogue and screenplay (*scénario*) for *LES TONTONS FLINGUEURS* (1963) by Georges Lautner shortly afterwards, may have been inspired by this scene for the following

industrial ruins, certainly allows for an existentialist interpretation in terms of 'being thrown into nothingness' and 'self-design' against this background. However, the unscrupulous competition and power games between the young people behind it show that a complete 'utopianization' of the *terrain vague* is not to be found in the genre of melodrama or crime film. Most of the characters still fail or are at least unable to leave the fringes of society permanently. Furthermore, cross-connections to Italian neorealism (De Sica, Antonioni, Fellini¹¹, Rossellini etc.) emerge, which, however, go beyond the French focus of this work: in *IL DESERTO ROSSO* (Michelangelo Antonioni, Italy 1964), to name just one example, the coldness and practicality of the industrial halls in the harbour of *Ravenna* are reflected in the neuroses and depression of the protagonist, who repeatedly crosses the same *terrain vague* to reach the machine halls where her husband works as an engineer.

TERRAIN VAGUE is one of many things also characterized by this ambiguity: at the centre of the plot is a gang of young people from a large housing estate in the Parisian *banlieue*,¹² who use an industrial wasteland (fig. 69) in the im-

film quote, which reflects the general attitude of the milieu: 'Les cons, ça ose tout. C'est même à ça qu'on les reconnaît!'

- 11 In 'Schauplatz Ödland', Wolfram Nitsch analyses various wastelands in Federico Fellini's early films; here he explains his sequence from *LE NOTTI DI CABIRIA* (1957): 'Die fast sieben Minuten lange Episode spielt auf einer Brache am Stadtrand von Rom, in Sichtweite eines vorstädtischen Neubaugebiets. Dort strandet am Ende einer Nacht die Prostituierte Cabiria [...]. Ein Kunde im Lastwagen hat sie auf dem Straßenstrich aufgegabelt und später [...] an einer dunklen Ausfallstraße abgesetzt. Gleich neben der Fahrbahn gähnt ein Ödland, das sie mit sichtlichem Widerwillen betritt. [...] Wie Cabiria im Morgengrauen feststellt, bietet das Ödland tatsächlich Menschen Zuflucht, die in Rom sonst keinen Platz mehr finden. In zwei höhlen- oder kraterartigen Löchern, die sich darunter auftun, hausen ein Ehepaar und eine heruntergekommene Hure, in der sie ihre ehemalige Kollegin Elsa [...] wiedererkennt. Fast könnte man meinen, die römische Protagonistin hätte es in die sogenannte *zone* verschlagen, ein ausgedehntes *terrain vague* vor den Toren von Paris, das die französische Photographie und Filmkunst der Nachkriegszeit gerne als Refugium marginaler Existenzen in Szene setzt.' Wolfram Nitsch, 'Schauplatz Ödland: Brachen in den frühen Filmen Fellinis', in *Die Horen* 277, 2020, pp. 7–11, at p. 7 f. Wolfram Nitsch also examines wasteland sequences in Fellini's *LA STRADA* (1954), *LA DOLCE VITA* (1960) and *OTTO E MEZZO* (1963).
- 12 With regard to the stigmatization of urban neighbourhoods, Pütz, Glasze and Tijé-Dra distinguish three different research approaches that do the following: '(1) Stigmatisierung mit Fragen der sozioökonomischen Marginalisierung verknüpfen, die (2) in einer eher post-strukturalistischen Perspektive ‚erfolgreiche‘, d. h. hegemoniale Stigmatisierungsprozesse sowie deren Effekte analysieren, die aber auch die Frage nach Gegendiskursen und dem Unterlaufen von Stigmatisierungen stellen, und die (3) Politiken untersuchen, welche darauf abzielen, mittels raumbezogener

mediate vicinity of the prefabricated buildings and the adjacent empty wasteland as protection and as a space of liberation in which the young people can both escape the oppressive social conditions and organize themselves in their gang (including tests of courage and fights for the role of leader). At the same time, however, it is precisely in these gang structures that the violence of social marginalization is perpetuated in the form of a rigid hierarchy, which has fatal consequences for certain gang members.



(Fig. 69)

Stadtpolitiken (*area based policies*) wie bspw. das Programm ‚Soziale Stadt‘ die Stigmatisierung bestimmter Stadtviertel aufzubrechen. [...] Ein viel beachtetes Konzept zur territorialen Stigmatisierung liefert der französische Soziologe Loïc Wacquant [...], dessen Arbeiten konzeptionell auf einer Weiterentwicklung von Ansätzen Pierre Bourdieus und empirisch auf langjährigen ethnographischen Forschungen in der Pariser *banlieue* und dem Chicagoer *black ghetto* basieren. Darin ruft Wacquant das Zeitalter einer *urban advanced marginality* für die morphologisch und demographisch unterschiedlichen, aber jeweils im höchsten Maße marginalisierten Stadtviertel westlicher Gesellschaften aus. Vor dem Hintergrund grundlegender postfordistischer und neoliberaler Transformationen unterliegen diese marginalisierten Viertel einem grundlegenden Wandel. Kennzeichen dieses Wandels ist die starke Internalisierung des verräumlichten Stigmas seitens der Betroffenen und von Entscheidungsträgern. In Politik und Medien werden die vermeintliche Andersartigkeit der Orte und ihrer Bewohner betont und auf diese Weise spezifische sicherheitspolitische Maßnahmen legitimiert, die für andere Viertel kaum Akzeptanz finden würden.‘ Robert Pütz/Georg Glasze/Andreas Tijé-Dra, ‘Stigmatisierung von Stadtvierteln: Einleitung in das Themenheft’, in *Europa Regional* 20, 2015, pp. 59–62, at p. 59. On this, see also Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, Cambridge/Malden: Polity 2008.

TERRAIN VAGUE is not merely one of the earliest films to portray life in the new housing estates emerging on the outskirts of Paris in the 1950s from the perspective of young people, thus establishing clear references to Italian neo-realism, but also something like the French adaptation of REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE¹³ by Nicholas Ray from 1955. While the latter, and in particular the hero embodied by James Dean, is quasi emblematic of the phenomenon of greasers, the latter thematizes their French variant, the so-called *blousons noirs*. It was one of the first international youth subcultures to emerge simultaneously in various European countries in the late 1950s, influenced by American pop culture, especially rock'n'roll (in Germany under the term 'die Halbstarke'). Its representatives are typically described as male youths from the working class, dressed in jeans and black leather jackets, with a striking hairstyle and casual appearance, who usually appear in gangs, often on mopeds, and have a pronounced tendency towards aggressive and sometimes petty criminal behaviour. While they were regarded by the public of their time as immoral hooligans who were stigmatizingly associated with poverty and crime,¹⁴ today they are sometimes seen as the first youth protest culture of the post-war period.¹⁵ In the context of Paris, this phenomenon is closely linked to the new settlements of the *banlieue*, the *villes nouvelles*, and thus partly also to the spatial proximity of the area of the former *zone*, which at that time was still characterized by extensive *terrains vagues*, and where suburban youths – and not the *blousons dorés* of the bourgeoisie – spent their leisure time due to a lack of alternatives. With Carné's film, the connection between the *terrain vague* and youthful suburban subculture becomes more explicit than ever.

13 See REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, Nicholas Ray, USA 1955.

14 According to a study on the genealogy of the stigma of large housing estates, they are 'insbesondere in Deutschland und Frankreich zunehmend als bedrohliche Orte eines ‚gesellschaftlichen Außens‘ konstituiert – paradigmatisch für diesen Diskurs steht der männliche, ‚gefährliche Jugendliche‘ aus der Großwohnsiedlung. [...] Dabei stellt [man] eine zum Teil erhebliche Diskrepanz zwischen der Außen- und Innenwahrnehmung des Stigmas fest, da Betroffene auf die Stigmatisierungen entweder durch die Übernahme von auf [sie] projizierten Fremdbildern reagieren, Strategien der sozialen und räumlichen Abgrenzung entwickeln oder diese stark relativieren.', Pütz/Glasze/Tijé-Dra, 'Stigmatisierung von Stadtvierteln', p. 60.

15 See, for example, the contemporary sociological-criminological study by Aimée Racine et al., *Les blousons noirs: Un phénomène socio-culturel de notre temps*, Paris: Cujas 1966, and the more recent contribution to cultural studies by Sébastien Le Pajolec/Jean-Jacques Yvorel, 'Du Gamin de Paris aux jeunes de banlieue, évolutions d'un stéréotype', in Myriam Tsikounas, *Imaginaires urbaines de Paris romantique jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris: Le Manuscrit 2011, pp. 191–246.

3.3 LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE (CHAREF, 1985)

The film *LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE* (1985)¹⁶, based on a literary work by the director Mehdi Charef, marks the beginning of the history of the *cinéma beur*, in which Maghrebi filmmakers deal with the milieu of suburban social housing estates, particularly the situation of the young people living there. As part of the concrete landscape of the *cités HLM*, the *terrain vague* here is not just a space on the edge of the city, but above all a space on the edge of society. Harboursing violence, drug dealing, protection rackets, prostitution and illegally occupied containers, it even marks the limits of human dignity or the bottom of the social abyss, so to speak. How the otherness and potentiality of the *terrain vague*, marked by marginality and transgression, can assume dystopian dimensions and in what cinematic form this view of urban and existential emptiness is reflected are my guiding questions here. *LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE* thus offers us a double-sided view of underprivileged milieus, where the youthful characters of the second North African immigrant generation in the French urban area lack spatial resources to have age-specific experiences. Consequently, illegal deals are made to supplement pocket money, and violence is used. However, the *terrain vague* also emanates hope to the young migrants.

As I explained in the monograph, the emergence of *littérature beure* in the 1980s, i.e. literature written by the descendants of Maghrebi immigrants born or raised in France and focused on the history, situation and everyday reality of the second or third generation of immigrants to which the authors themselves belong,¹⁷ brings back an already familiar sociological perspective on the *terrain vague* as a place of marginalized lifeworlds and suburban youth subculture. The assertion of their own voice by the *beurs*, who no longer want to be merely objects of journalistic reports and scientific studies, is also accompanied by an unvarnished depiction of the living conditions in social housing estates in French suburbs, especially in Paris. In Mehdi Charef's 1983 novel *Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed*, this is done through the story of 17-year-old Madjid, who is of Algerian descent and tries to keep his head above water with petty crime together with his clique of friends, seeking to survive against the hope-

16 'À cette date, quand un réalisateur choisit de montrer une atmosphère glauque au cœur de Paris, il opte plutôt pour la rue Saint-Denis'. Sébastien Le Pajolec, 'La jeunesse au Forum: Clichés de la marginalité', in Jean-Louis Robert/Myriam Tsikounas/Martine Tabeaud (eds.), *Les Halles: Images d'un quartier*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne 2004, pp. 217–235, at p. 227. This is the case with Charef, as well as with *LA NUIT PORTE-JARRETTES* (1985) by Virginie Thévenet.

17 Another example is Karine Tuil, *L'insouciance*, Paris: Gallimard 2016.

lessness that prevails in the suburbs. During the narration, of course, a detailed description of the milieu emerges.¹⁸ In this context, the *terrains vagues*, which have now almost disappeared from the city center, remain, as in the case of the *zone*, an essential part of the social and geographical margins of the city. Charef, similar to Cendrars and Doisneau, views them from two opposing perspectives, and thus as highly ambivalent places. On the one hand, they are places of absolute hopelessness and inhumane misery, where what is rejected by society gathers. It is more than just a sad irony that not only waste of all kinds is stored and incinerated in the ‘disgusting holes’ of the *terrains vagues*, but that there are also people for whom there is no place in society – not even in dilapidated social housing.¹⁹



(Fig. 70)

What continues to make the *terrains vagues* into a kind of ground of the social abyss and thus, as in Calaferte’s case, into remote ‘off-places’, is the fact that, as seemingly ownerless places that stand outside legal and police hegemony, they almost inevitably become the scenes of crime. Arguing hodologically, Madjid and his friend make their way to the *terrain vague*, which also leads them across a scrapyards (fig. 70). The accompanying film music gives the impression that their criminal act of selling a drug addict to punters on the wasteland is ritualized. Through a combination of *travelling* and *panoramique*, the route that the three of them take until they arrive at the construction trailer is literally followed step by step. It almost seems as if the viewers also have to

18 See Mehdi Charef, *Le thé au harem d’Archi Ahmed*, Paris: Mercure de France 1983.

19 See *ibid.*, p. 74.

make an effort and bend down to get through the hole in the fence to the 'other' side. The viewer suffers with them.



(Fig. 71)

In addition to violent crime and drug trafficking, Charef is also home to the unscrupulous exploitation of undocumented foreign day labourers who are housed on a wasteland in inhumane conditions.²⁰ On the other hand, however, the *terrain vague's* characteristic of being an as-yet-undefined, open space of possibility prevails over these gloomy conditions to such an extent that it can also offer a glimmer of hope, at least for Madjid and his friends. In the unused, open spaces, they not only find the space that the confining flats and streets of the estate lack. On the *terrains vagues*, they also escape the social pressure that the youth face both at home within their families and at school, and as soon as classes are over, they immerse themselves in endless football matches. Because: 'C'est comme ça que naissent les grands footballeurs; sur les terrains vagues' ('This is how the great footballers are born, on the *terrains vagues*').²¹ So even 150 years after Balzac had schoolchildren playing in an empty lot outside the capital, and 120 years after Hugo brought a spark of happiness and confidence to the Parisian 'limbo' through the songs, laughter and frolicking of suburban children, the *terrain vague* remains a place of promise.

20 See *ibid.*, p. 77.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 114.



(Fig. 72)

In 1985, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* was filmed under the direction of the author himself with the title LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE²², which arose from a misunderstanding between the protagonists Balou, Pat and Madjid in physics class, in which Balou – lost in thought between two worlds – writes the homophonic expression 'le thé au harem' on the blackboard instead of 'Le théorème d'Archimède', for which he receives a resounding slap in the face from his teacher. It is one of the first *cinéma beur* films in which filmmakers from the second generation of North African immigrants deal with the problems of young migrants in the French metropolitan areas, who get by in the periphery of the capital with scams, dealing, pimping and hustling. Charef, who previously worked as a mechanic in a tool factory, tells the story as he experienced it himself.²³ Both the *terrain vague* filled with various residential containers and construction trailers in front of the concrete blocks of the suburb (see fig. 72), and likewise the activities in this marginal zone itself, make the viewer think of a circus scenario, where the majority, slightly bored, watches from beyond as the outsiders, behaving animalistically, struggle in the arena.

En 1995, LA HAINE²⁴ est présenté au Festival de Cannes. Il y reçoit le prix de la mise en scène. Quelques semaines avant l'élection présidentielle, ce long-métrage met le problème des cités au cœur du débat politique. [...] [L']occupation des espaces publics est mise en images. Saïd, Hubert et Vinz sont assis dans le centre commer-

22 See LE THE AU HAREM D'ARCHIMEDE, Mehdi Charef, France 1985.

23 No author, 'Tausendundeine Nacht', in *Der Spiegel*, 52/1985, pp. 128–130, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13517056.html> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

24 See LA HAINE, Mathieu Kassovitz, France 1995.

cial (de la même façon, les jeunes stationnent devant les halls d'immeuble dans les grands ensembles), une canette de bière à côté d'eux. [...] Comme les zoneurs, les 'jeunes de banlieue'²⁵ ancrent symboliquement leur marginalité sociale au cœur de l'espace parisien. [...] Mathieu Kassovitz épouse le point de vue des jeunes, il ne les montre jamais comme des marginaux. Dans la période précédente, les documents audiovisuels pouvaient montrer de la compassion à l'égard des jeunes exclus. Mais, si ces réalisateurs étaient du côté des marginaux, ils n'étaient jamais à leur côté. La vision du téléspectateur était toujours relayée à l'écran ou sur la bande-son [...]. [...] [D]ans LA HAINE, [il] n'est pas filmé comme un espace menaçant mais, au contraire, comme un lieu apaisé et endormi. La nuit n'est plus synonyme d'hostilité et de crainte. Ce silence et ce vide attestent le nettoyage policier effectué les années précédentes. [...] Il constitue le cœur d'un Paris embourgeoisé, transformé en une gigantesque galerie marchande, qui a relégué les couches populaires dans les cités de banlieue.²⁶

As a cinematic metaphor for a city that seems to protect itself from its suburbs, the Forum *Les Halles* is for Kassovitz an expression of the social segregation to which the young people of the *cités* fall victim. Today, the neighbourhood enjoys a better reputation than in the 1980s, as we will see in the following chapter. But even if they are less visible on the screen, the clichés remain. 'Un siècle avant les zoneurs, Florent, le héros du *Ventre de Paris*, était déjà considéré comme un parasite. Marginalisé par ses années de bagné, démuné et affamé par sa cavale, Florent préfigure les jeunes vagabonds [...].'²⁷ Ultimately, it is worth emphasizing the relative homogeneity of this stereotype of marginal figures in audiovisual representations, the majority of which tend to produce the same tropes *ad nauseam*. Both LA HAINE and LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHI-MÈDE provide viewers with a very specific image of the *banlieue*.

Anderas Tijé-Dra points out that large suburban housing estates (usually referred to as the *banlieue* in French, occasionally also as the *ghetto*) have been the subject of discussions about the stigmatization of urban districts and thus spatial discrimination for many decades. Social, political, scientific, and media debates, which have become increasingly unmanageable, attest to this and con-

25 'Sachant que le stéréotype du *jeune de banlieue* s'inscrit lui-même dans une longue chaîne de représentations, de l'apache du début du siècle au blouson noir des années soixante, en passant par le loubard des années soixante-dix.', Le Pajolec, 'La jeunesse au Forum: Clichés de la marginalité', p. 233.

26 Ibid., p. 232.

27 Ibid., p. 233.

stitute the aforementioned urban spaces and their residents as 'hochgradig problematisch'.²⁸

Eine funktionalistische Bauweise machte die als *cités* [...] bezeichneten Großwohnsiedlungen in *banlieues* zum Zeitpunkt ihrer Fertigstellung in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren noch zu einem erstrebenswerten Wohnort. Ihre architektonische Form drückte einen avantgardistischen Urbanismus aus und symbolisierte Fortschritt; ihre immensen Wohnkapazitäten entschärften die Wohnungsnot der prosperierenden Nachkriegsgesellschaft. Kurz darauf setzten bis heute andauernde, sich gegenseitig verstärkende Prozesse ein. Sie sollten die *banlieues*, *cités* dauerhaft als [...] *quartiers sensibles* stigmatisieren. [...] Die ab den 1970er Jahren einsetzende De-Industrialisierung traf besonders (Arbeiter-)Vorstädte in den Industriegürteln der französischen Metropolen. Viele Bewohner stammten aus Südeuropa und den ehemaligen Kolonien Frankreichs. Parallel zur wachsenden Arbeitslosigkeit erfolgte ein sukzessiver Wegzug der bisher noch verbliebenen Bewohnerschaft aus der Mittelschicht. Dadurch konzentrierten sich in bestimmten, mittlerweile auch baulich degradierten Großwohnsiedlungen ökonomisch schwache Bevölkerungsgruppen mit überproportionalem Zuwandereranteil. Deren geringe Beschäftigungsmöglichkeiten aus Qualifikations- oder Konjunkturgründen erschwerten über Generationen hinweg soziale Teilhabe. In manchen Vierteln entstanden daher Schattenökonomien erheblichen Umfangs. Sie stützen bis heute das Bild von ‚gefährlichen‘ *banlieues*, obwohl viele der verbundenen Stereotypen nur auf einen geringen Teil aller Viertel in den Vorstädten zutreffen [...]. Internationale, länger anhaltende Aufmerksamkeit erhielt die ‚*banlieue*-Krise‘ schließlich infolge der Vorort-Revolten im November 2005.²⁹

Similar *cités HLM* have already been shown and discussed in this chapter in LE SANG DES BÊTES, TERRAIN VAGUE and also in LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE. According to Tijé-Dra, the term *banlieue* and the concept of disadvantaged, underprivileged, sensitive neighbourhoods, often associated with the subject of migration, serves as spatial evidence of the failure to integrate migrants from the Maghreb, Central and West Africa and the overseas territories who immigrated to France during decolonization and the post-war economic upswing.³⁰ Méлина Germes and Georg Glasze conclude that this structural transformation marginalized migrants on various levels: economically, socially, spatially

28 See Andreas Tijé-Dra, *Zwischen 'Ghetto' und 'Normalität': Deutungskämpfe um stigmatisierte Stadtteile in Frankreich*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2018 (Urban Studies), p. 11.

29 Ibid., p. 12.

30 See *ibid.*, p. 15.

and culturally.³¹ In the context of this spatialization of social issues, Tijé-Dra points out that there are indeed sensitive neighbourhoods in French urban areas that are not large suburban housing estates and, consequently, possess a certain social marginalization, entirely independent of their exact urban geographical location; a phenomenon resulting from the definitional imprecision of the term *banlieue*.³²

In his highly acclaimed work *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Erving Goffman mentions different perspectives of stigmatization: social exclusion due to physical or psychological impairments, personal deviation from recognized and binding norms, individual failure, belonging to or affiliation with certain ethnic groups, states and religions.³³ The French sociologist Wacquant, who has already been referred to in relation to the film *TERRAIN VAGUE*, combines Goffman's identified types of discrimination with territorial stigmatization and, from these, derives his observations of an 'advanced urban marginality' or a new type of urban poverty, which he sees embodied in the 'urban outcasts'.³⁴

Im Sinne der Habitusstheorie Bourdieus werden die territorialen Stigmatisierungsprozesse sowohl ‚bottom-up‘ als auch ‚top-down‘ reproduziert [...], woher auch ihre Persistenz und Wirkmächtigkeit rühren. Die stigmatisierenden Bewertungen solcher Stadtteile als ‚ethnische Enklaven‘, ‚soziale Brennpunkte‘ oder ‚Ghettos‘ finden gleichermaßen Eingang in die habituellen Dispositionen von Bewohnern und politischen Entscheidungsträgern. [...] Andererseits internalisieren viele Bewohner eine ‚Schande des Wohnortes‘ [...]. Sie bestimmt Alltagssituationen und lässt die Betroffenen unterschiedliche Bewältigungsstrategien entwickeln. Hierzu gehören das Beschuldigen der ‚Anderen‘ für den schlechten Ruf der eigenen Nachbarschaft, das Betonen der Differenzen zu den ‚Anderen‘, das Vermeiden von Besuch sowie

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- 31 See Mélina Germes/Georg Glasze, 'Die *banlieues* als Gegenorte der *République*: A discourse analysis of new security policies in the suburbs of France', in *Geographica Helvetica*, n°65, pp. 217–228.
- 32 See Tijé-Dra, *Zwischen 'Ghetto' und 'Normalität'*, p. 16. Tijé-Dra sheds light on both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses and spatial discourses in general, such as the genre-specific practices of French rap, and is primarily interested in the following research questions: 'Wie lassen sich gegenhegemoniale Diskurse als Modi der Raumherstellung konzeptualisieren? [...] Wie konstituieren die Akteure in ihren Texten die stigmatisierten Viertel der französischen Agglomerationen? Auf welche Themen, Gegenstände, Akteure und soziale Beziehungen rekurren sie hierbei wiederholt?'; p. 19.
- 33 See Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New York: Simon & Schuster 1963, p. 14.
- 34 See Loïc Wacquant, 'Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality', in *thesis eleven*, n°91, pp. 66–77, at p. 72.

die Angabe falscher Adressen bei Korrespondenzen. Die starke Internalisierung der territorialen Stigmatisierung fördert Desintegrationsprozesse innerhalb der Bewohnerschaft der Stadtteile. Dies bedeute oftmals die Abnahme von sozialen Beziehungen zwischen den Bewohnern, sowie den Verlust von emotionalen Bindungen zum Wohnort und der Identifikation mit dem Wohnumfeld. Laut Wacquant wurden durch den sektoralen Wandel bestimmte französische *banlieues* und US-amerikanische Ghettos bis zur Jahrtausendwende zu indifferenten Räumen des Überlebens und des harten Wettbewerbs um prekäre Lohnarbeit.³⁵

According to Wacquant, there is a *banlieue/ceinture rouge* around Paris (as a counterpart to the American *black belt*), which is home to a non-negligible proportion of the former working-class population, which in turn is socially defamed and deprived of political participation due to a lack of collective identity or sufficient social security.³⁶ One unavoidable consequence of this is, for example, 'die Hinwendung zu informellen Sektoren. Der Verbund aus territorialer Stigmatisierung, Informalität und sozioökonomischer Schwäche erschwert gerade Jüngeren den Eintritt in regularisierte Arbeitsverhältnisse erheblich.'³⁷ It is not difficult to recognize that Madjid from LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE, who comes from a large immigrant family, grew up and continues to live in such a social housing estate; concrete everywhere and graffiti, (a)political slogans and obscene drawings on the walls. Torn between two cultures, two skin colours and two languages, he likes to invent his own roots and ties, as explained by Wacquant and Tijé-Dra. Our protagonist waits for something, while he lounges around in boredom, but without thinking much about it, because the fear that reigns along with unemployment and violence is simply unbearable for his siblings, his old father who fell from the roof, and his mother Malika. His friend Pat, always on hand for 'les dragues et les drogues', a few jokes and the informal, crooked deals they go through together, are the only rays of hope in his life, which is doomed to failure, in which even the most robust animal would no longer have the strength to dig a hole to die in

Ils longent la vieille ligne de chemin de fer à l'herbe haute et sauvage, jusqu'au foyer des travailleurs immigrés. Solange ne cesse pas de se plaindre. – C'est loin encore? qu'elle demande. [...] – On arrive, la rassure Madjid. C'est là, tu vois, ces baraques en bas, jaunes, derrière la grue. Ils dévalent le talus en se tenant aux hautes herbes sauvages. [...] C'est des baraquements en préfabriqué, plantés sur un terrain vague, rocailleux et poussiéreux. L'hiver, c'est la boue qui prend place. Des travailleurs latins, nord-africains, y logent, dans cette cité gérée par l'employeur. Ils

35 Tijé-Dra, *Zwischen 'Ghetto' und 'Normalität'*, p. 29 f.

36 See *ibid.*, p. 30 f.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

vivent là comme des bêtes, à l'écart de la ville, entre les travaux de l'autoroute, la voie du chemin de fer et le port de Gennevilliers, dans ce camp de travail entouré d'un haut grillage. Madjid se dirige vers la première baraque. [...] Il leur faut bien une heure pour faire le tour [...]. C'est payant, la misère sexuelle des travailleurs immigrés! En rien de temps, on ramasse une poignée de fric. Solange est complètement soûle, d'autant qu'elle demande à chaque client de la bière. Un petit coup de toilette dans l'évier et en route vers une nouvelle baraque. Pat tient le chronomètre, cinq minutes par client, pas plus.³⁸

In both the novel and the film, the abject completely breaks through the urban space at the latest when Madjid and Pat take the occasional prostitute Solange from the suburban area of the *cités HLM* to the *terrain vague* so that she can work there for a small fee of a packet of cigarettes and a few beers and earn the two friends some extra income or pocket money. Charef plays cinematically with the proximity and distance of the viewer's gaze, which he directs through a certain physicality of the characters and uses to objectify and subjectify the perspective. Viewers oscillate between aesthetics of shock and intriguing voyeurism, thereby exploring for themselves how distancing the visible and sayable truly are, with the animalistic portrayal further intensifying the evaluative effect.³⁹ Although the *terrain vague* is presented in the novel as a kind of internment camp,⁴⁰ in the film the camera slowly pans from one isolated container to the next (see fig. 72).

Analogies between the novel and the film are therefore obvious; however, some elements differ from the original. At first glance, it may seem that the depiction of the *terrain vague* in the film does not take up the novel's glimmer of hope that this very place in the novel radiates, especially for the children and young people. The view of the *banlieue* wasteland appears to be even gloomier,

38 Charef, *Le thé au harem d'Archy Ahmed*, p. 77 ff.

39 Analogue to the study by André Otto, 'Megastadt: Kinematographisches Mumbai und das Rhizom des Abjekten', in: *Handbuch Literatur & Raum*, ed. by Jörg Dünne/Andreas Mahler, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2015 (Handbücher zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Philologie, vol. 3), pp. 494–504, at p. 502 f.

40 Indeed, refugee camps can resemble a *terrain vague* with their provisional, heterochronic focus, precarious living conditions of migrants, informal businesses, and seemingly unambiguous functional and meaningful attributions. See the chapter 'Eine Soziologie des *Jungle*: Alltag in einem prekären Raum' from the work by Michel Agier/Yasmine Bouagga/Maël Galisson et al. describing the largest slum in Europe: *Der 'Dschungel von Calais': Über das Leben in einem Flüchtlingslager*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2020 (X-Texte zu Kultur und Gesellschaft), p. 119–137. For further information on urban development and migration, see Klaus Schäfer (ed.), *Aufbruch aus der Zwischenstadt: Urbanisierung durch Migration und Nutzungsmischung*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2018 (Urban Studies).

perhaps even free of utopian overtones. Nevertheless, it is clear on the screen that it is the young people who dictate the rules, drive the business and collect the debts. Illegal activities that could probably not even be carried out in a concrete tower in the Parisian suburbs are outsourced to the *terrain vague*. There, the young protagonists earn the few *francs* they need to be able to afford everyday essentials. Claude Chabrol praised Charef's film, which was awarded the *Prix Jean Vigo* for the best French first feature, as a 'Nektar der Wahrheit' due to its power and clarity.⁴¹ This nectar, in which Parisian society reflects itself in the mid-1980s, is also extracted from this filmed *terrain vague* of trailers and residential containers.⁴²

41 No author, 'Tausendundeine Nacht', p. 128

42 The following *cinéma beur* and *cinéma du métissage* films, which often contain a *banlieue* wasteland, i.e. a *terrain vague* in a stigmatized neighbourhood, should be mentioned in more detail: *BYE-BYE* (Karim Dridi, Switzerland 1995); *ICI ON NOIE LES ALGÉRIENS* (Yasmina Adi, France 2011); *L'ESQUIVE* (Abdellatif Kechiche, France 2004); *LA GRAINE ET LE MULET* (Abdellatif Kechiche, France/Tunisia 2007); *LA HAINE* (Mathieu Kassovitz, France 1995); *LA JOURNÉE DE LA JUPE* (Jean-Paul Lilienfeld, France/Belgium 2009); *L'ENFANT* (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne, Belgium 2005); *LE GAMIN AU VÉLO* (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne, Belgium 2011); *DEUX JOURS, UNE NUIT* (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne, Belgium/Italy/France 2014); *NÉS QUELQUE PART* (Malik Chibane, France 1998); *SALUT COUSIN!* (Merzak Allouache, France/Algeria/Belgium/Luxemburg 1996); *SUZANNE* (Katell Quillévéré, France 2013); *WELCOME* (Philippe Lioret, France 2009); *WESH WESH, QU'EST-CE QUI SE PASSE?* (Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche, France 2001). On *cinéma beur* see Cornelia Ruhe, *Cinéma beur: Analysen zu einem neuen Genre des französischen Films*, Konstanz: UVK 2006. On the *cinéma du métissage* see Öngün Eryılmaz, *Jenseits von Heimat: Raum im cinéma du métissage in Deutschland und in Frankreich*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2018.

4. The *terrain vague* as a Place of (first/secret) Love

4.1 L'ÉCUME DES JOURS (GONDRY, 2013)

In *L'ÉCUME DES JOURS* (2013) by Michel Gondry, the protagonist Colin (Romain Duris) leads a very comfortable life: the daydreamer has sufficient financial means, he loves parties, the quirky dishes of his star chef Nicolas (Omar Sy), he loves jazz, idleness and his 'piano cocktail' and gets on brilliantly with his best friend Chick, who is a passionate Jean-Sol Partre devotee. Once, at lunch with Chick, he learns that he has met a young girl called Alise who supposedly shares his passion for Partre. Colin meets Chloé (Audrey Tautou) at a birthday party to which Nicolas has invited him. They fall in love on a *terrain vague*, as we will see below, and celebrate a dazzlingly imaginative wedding. However, Chloé suffers from a mysterious illness during their honeymoon together.

Colin and Chloé's first date takes place at the *Forum des Halles* after seeing each other for the first time at the party. They have the meeting point generated by machine, into which Nicolas types the following: 'Mon coin préféré de Paris'. The search engine, which does not search but is, strictly speaking, a place-determining machine, is therefore also responsible for the narration. It thence determines the location – more or less by chance. The first choice is *La Tour Eiffel*, but Colin thinks it's too complicated and too far away, so Nicolas and Chick spin the *Wheel of Fortune* again. *Le Château de Versailles* is the machine's second choice in the search for Colin's favourite place in Paris. Colin replies that this is too 'poussiéreux et ringard'. Finally, he agrees to the third option, *Le Forum des Halles*, and hurries there. From off-screen, via mobile phone, he is informed that there are 7,000 businesses there. He replies to Nicolas and Chick: 'Parfait, il y a tout ce qu'on puisse chercher et c'est au centre!' When he arrives, he realizes to his regret or rather astonishment that *Les Halles* is a major construction site,¹ which can be viewed through a peep-

1 See also Volker Hagedorn, *Der Klang von Paris: Eine Reise in die musikalische Metropole des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt 2019; Artists love and suffer on this major construction site in Paris and compose the sound of the

hole that is normally available to viewers at tourist attractions and vantage points so that they can enjoy the panoramic view. Colin's telephone communication ends abruptly as his mobile phone slips out of his hands when Chloé arrives and falls through one of the peepholes into the pit. She informs him that he seems to have missed out on the no-longer on site so far: 'Ils ont commencé les travaux il y un an!' At first, the two just look at each other, sticking their heads through the peepholes, in the spirit of a first rapprochement on this *terrain vague-chantier*. The hard cut suggests that the two main characters have yet to find a common rhythm. Chloé discovers cloud-shaped rides with glass domes attached to one of the cranes, with which she first floats over the *terrain vague* and before emancipating herself a little from the crane. At the moment the lovers' journey begins, a chanson ('I will always love you') is added to the film score. As the scene progresses, the chanson transitions from being film music to music within the film, as it emanates from the speaker of the van. Colin switches off the song, whereupon Chloé begins to sing Colin's name to the tune of the chanson. It begins again immediately, but this time as film music.



(Fig. 73)

With the help of toy construction machines, Michel Gondry creates a view of the *terrain vague* as a large construction site. It looks as if electric model railways are running through the wasteland criss-crossed by glass tunnels – like arteries of the city.

metropolis in oscillation between railway and electricity, splendour and social misery, empire and the dawn of modernity.



(Fig. 74)

Bernard Marchand provides a very good overview of the city's history in *Paris, histoire d'une ville*.² He repeatedly refers to the fact that the neighbourhood of *Les Halles*³ was characterized as follows: 'lié au *nomadisme* d'une population sans travail ni domicile fixe, surtout dans les quartiers d'immigration pauvre du vieux centre: près de l'Hôtel de Ville et autour des Halles';⁴ also from the chapter 'Paris grandit trop vite (1815–1850)': 'Des transformations aussi importantes, dans le commerce, l'architecture et la vie quotidienne, étaient directement liées aux difficultés de circulation et à l'inconfort des rues de Paris. Les héros de Balzac, les Rastignac, les Rubempré, allaient d'ordinaire dîner dans *les Halles*.'⁵ Furthermore, with regard to Rambuteau, it says: 'il détruisait des îlots sordides habités par une population misérable et dangereuse, et il améliorait la circulation entre *les Halles* et la Bastille';⁶ also in the chapter 'La ville modernisée (1850–1890)' one finds: 'L'insalubrité s'était tellement aggravée dans ces îlots misérables que les quartiers parisiens plus aisés commençaient à craindre la contagion. Il fallait ensuite à Napoléon réduire la misère urbaine, plus dure à supporter que la pauvreté dans les campagnes, engendrant violence, insécurité et révolutions';⁷ and with regard to Haussmann: 'L'approvi-

2 For further information, see also Camille Piton, *Comment Paris s'est transformé: le quartier des Halles* (Éd. 1891), Paris/Vanves: Hachette Livre 2012.

3 See Alfred Fierro, *Histoire de Paris illustrée*, Toulouse: Le Pérégrinateur 2010, p. 44: '[L]es deux premières halles étaient en 1183 destinées aux drapiers et aux tisseurs, puis une troisième réservée à la mercerie et à la lingerie, les denrées alimentaires occupent à peu près tout l'espace au XV^e siècle, laissant une petite place aux fripiers.' Molière was for example 'fils d'un marchand tapissier des Halles', p. 78.

4 Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville (XIX^e–XX^e siècle)*, p. 33.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

sionnement de la capitale fut entièrement revu: les Halles centrales, que Napoléon 1^{er} puis Rambuteau avaient agrandies, furent détruites et remplacées par les admirables édifices de fer construits par Baltard – une étonnante prouesse technique [...]. Les grands abattoirs de la Villette complétèrent ce système d’approvisionnement⁸; Marchand continue: ‘Les employés [...] étaient restés près du centre [...] dans les I^{er} et II^e, autour de la Bourse, dans le Sentier, autour des Halles, enfin dans le Marais. Ils étaient remarquablement peu nombreux rive gauche: la dissymétrie est frappante⁹; in the chapter ‘La Ville lumière (1890–1930)’ he sets out the goals of the renovations: ‘relier les gares entre elles et avec les Halles [...]; mieux intégrer Paris à son arrière-pays; améliorer la circulation dans la ville même; faciliter les flux de marchandises vers le marché central’¹⁰; ‘Plusieurs projets avaient envisagé un carrefour principal aux Halles. Le métro, tel qu’il était finalement conçu, était interdit aux wagons de marchandises et ne pouvait plus servir directement le trafic du marché central. Ce quartier [...] jouait encore un rôle tellement important que le projet de 1900 prévoyait un carrefour souterrain près de Saint-Eustache: c’est là que devaient se croiser les deux lignes principales coupant Paris d’est en ouest et du nord au sud’;¹¹ under the heading ‘Atermoiements et velléités (1929–1952)’ Marchand assesses as follows: ‘Entre 1913 et 1960, rien ne changea à Paris [...]. Des îlots déclarés insalubres depuis trente ans étaient encore debout et habités en 1960. Les Halles devaient toujours être déplacées et encombraient encore le centre de la ville. La banlieue avait grandi, certes, mais sans être mieux organisée’;¹² in the chapter ‘Un nouvel haussmannisme (1953–1974)’, Marchand explains:

Le quartier des Halles fut transformé [...] brutalement. Pendant plusieurs siècles, il avait constitué le souci principal des souverains quand ils s’intéressaient à leur capitale. [...] Les halles de Baltard, construites pour alimenter Paris quand l’agglomération comptait 2 millions d’habitants, ne suffisaient plus à une métropole de plus de 7 millions. [...] Leur déplacement devait libérer 2,5 hectares au cœur de Paris: une opportunité exceptionnelle qui ne semble pas, curieusement, avoir été envisagée avant 1960. [...] Chose incroyable, on ne commença à s’en préoccuper qu’en 1963, en partie sous la pression de la SEMAH (Société d’études pour l’aménagement des Halles, créée cette année-là): un architecte et un urbaniste (projet Rotival-Lopez) proposèrent alors à la Ville de détruire et de reconstruire toute une partie du vieux centre, sur 19 hectares, sortant largement du cadre des Halles. Le conseil municipal, choqué, refusa. La

8 Ibid., p. 79.

9 Ibid., p. 134.

10 Ibid., p. 175.

11 Ibid., p. 182.

12 Ibid., p. 277.

question devenait chaque jour plus urgente: avec le départ progressif des activités traditionnelles, le quartier se transformait en un bidonville inquiétant.¹³

Marchand explains that Charles de Gaulle decided in 1967 to move the finance ministry to *Les Halles*, a decision that was met with criticism. He left the future of the neighbourhood and the associated decisions to Georges Pompidou. Champeaux, APUR, the Capitant Commission and the Max Stern Group had other plans:

Leur projet regroupait des commerces et des équipements publics dans un forum souterrain, au-dessus d'un nœud principal de communication: la station RER reliée au réseau métropolitain. Le projet fut adopté, en 1969, par le conseil, mais aussitôt bloqué par le gouvernement qui hésitait à construire le nœud central du RER, trop coûteux. Après mai 1968, les pavillons vides de Baltard furent utilisés pour des expositions spontanées et du 'théâtre révolutionnaire', ce qui poussa l'État à trancher plus rapidement. Après un an d'hésitation, en juillet 1969, le nouveau président, Georges Pompidou, décida d'installer à Beaubourg le musée d'art moderne qui devait être construit d'abord à la Défense et qui porte son nom. [...] Finalement, le gouvernement choisit un compromis: agrandir un peu les espaces verts, réduire un peu le nombre des commerces du Forum, et celui des logements sociaux prévus.¹⁴

The *Forum des Halles* was designed to attract thousands of customers while keeping rebellious youths (including those from the *banlieue*) away; a rather difficult undertaking, as the sections of the population that frequent galleries, forums and indoor shopping centres do not necessarily represent the affluent customer base that the products on offer there are intended to attract. Supervisors tried to prevent the young people from gathering (near the FNAC); regular hosing down and watering of the ground was intended to prevent them from sitting down, 'mais les difficultés des commerçants, la rotation rapide des baux, la dégradation progressive du niveau des magasins montrent bien que le centre commercial ne répond pas aux besoins [...] de la clientèle qu'attire le Forum.'¹⁵ In the centre of Paris, the halls provoked traffic jams and congestion every day from midnight onwards due to delivery vans and lorries, which regularly paralysed the flow of traffic until midday. Translocation and relocation were essential: 'chose faite le 28 février 1969 et, le 3 mars, s'ouvre le Marché d'intérêt national (MIN) de Rungis, le plus grand marché alimentaire de gros d'Europe. Les 12 pavillons de Baltard sont démolis d'août 1971 à janvier 1976,

13 Ibid., p. 296 f.

14 Ibid., p. 298.

15 Ibid., p. 299.

un seul est sauvé et remonté à Nogent-sur-Marne.¹⁶ Zola's 'Ventre de Paris'¹⁷ is hereby relocated to Rungis, to an area south of the metropolis, so to speak. The opening of the *Châtelet-Les Halles* interchange and tunnel station in 1977, which is served by three RER lines, as well as five metro lines, once again made *Les Halles* a communication and transport hub, located on the *rive droite* of the agglomeration, and a universally accessible point of entry and arrival, naturally also from the periphery.¹⁸

La 'réhabilitation' du vieux centre, c'est-à-dire l'enchérissement de la rente foncière et la transformation sociale des quartiers, fut ainsi menée à bien de façon tournante et avec une vitesse accélérée: [...] Les Halles changèrent encore plus profondément et plus vite: plus que de 'réhabilitation', c'est de rénovation qu'il faudrait parler. En moins de quinze ans, l'un des quartiers les plus misérables et les plus populaires de Paris est devenu coûteux, central, envahi par les magasins à la mode [...] et les bureaux. [...] Les dommages sociaux provoqués par la rénovation des *Halles* furent considérables. Il ne paraît pas que les hauts responsables se fussent inquiétés des ménages pauvres et surtout des vieillards relogés en banlieue, loin de leurs emplois et de leurs amis [...]. En revanche, la théorie du complot capitaliste des spéculateurs immobiliers, chère au cœur de certains marxistes français, ne tient guère: elle prête aux acteurs de ces grandes transformations un goût du lucre qui est certain, mais aussi une connaissance des données, des faits et des mécanismes urbains qui est bien plus douteuse.¹⁹

In his 1980 article 'Tendenzen zeitgenössischer Architektur – destilliert aus den 600 internationalen Entwürfen zum Quartier der *Hallen* in Paris', Ot Hoffmann illustrates the architectural competition for the indoor district north of the Seine, on an area that was 420 metres long and 360 metres wide.²⁰ He refers to a planning history with long disputes:

Um die leere Fläche, an deren Westrand der Börsenrundbau und – als nördliche Abgrenzung – daneben die Kirche *Saint-Eustache* liegen und auf der im Südosten das Monument der *Saints-Innocents* schwimmt, wurde jahrelang mit zahlreichen

16 Fierro, *Histoire de Paris illustrée*, p. 190.

17 See Zola, 'Le Ventre de Paris', pp. 601–895. The title metaphor here stands for the abundance of foodstuffs (supplied to the population and offered in the central market halls) in *Les Halles*, whose steel and glass construction (according to Baltard's designs from 1854–74) symbolized technical progress, economic prosperity, health and wealth.

18 See Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville (XIXe–XXe siècle)*, p. 299.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 300.

20 In the following I refer to Ot Hoffmann, 'Tendenzen zeitgenössischer Architektur – destilliert aus den 600 internationalen Entwürfen zum Quartier der *Hallen* in Paris', in *Bauwelt*, n°25/01.07.1980, Berlin: Bauverlag 1980, pp. 1092–1107.

öffentlichen und geheimen Skizzen, Vorentwürfen und Gegenprojekten, Beauftragungen und Abfindungen bei laufenden Programmänderungen (Bürostadt bis öffentlicher Park) gerangelt [...], so das unterirdisch um einen großen Lichthof herumliegende *Forum commercial* mit der Station der neuen, unabhängig vom vorhandenen Metronetz verlaufenden Super-U-Bahnen und der oberirdische Block der Klimazentrale im Norden, ganz zu schweigen von den Einmündungen eines unterirdischen Straßentunnels, der die *Rue de Turbigo* mit der *Rue des Halles* verbindet, das Gebiet aber von Nord nach Süd in den Untergeschossen zerschneidet.²¹

While Hoffmann meticulously describes that 600 designs from around the world, with the dominant design features of axis, square, and block, pour in, to his great surprise, the submitted works are predominantly associated by the experts (the jury, among architects etc.) with the terms rationalism and functionalism.²² In addition to pillar structures, ramps, round arches, domes and slopes, 'Portal-, Turm- und Brücken-Motive' appear again and again, 'und natürlich tausende von Quadratmetern Glasdachfläche- und Luftarchitekturen in Form von überspannenden Brücken oder Gerüsten, als wolle der Rationalist sagen, daß er nicht nur die Luft der großen leeren Plätze liebe, [...] sondern ebenso die Leere unter Durchfahrten, Luftarchitektur [...] in Dachstühlen und Gerüsten, die keinen Gebrauchswert haben'.²³ From figs. 73, 74, and 77, it becomes clear that the location device Colin and Chloé initially sends them to the hall district when Colin searches for his favourite place, but he knows nothing about the (eternal) construction site. Colin explains that *Les Halles* is not only centrally located in Paris, but that you can also find everything your heart desires there. Viewers gain an impression not only of the significant planning disputes in the 'belly of Paris' but also of the building forms, materials, and architectural tendencies, albeit not only contemporary ones, but rather as a cross-section throughout all times that the hall district has experienced as an urban, always provisional construction site: glass metro tunnels and domes of the vans for better views, futuristic-looking technology, symmetrically arranged residential blocks, air architectures, and supposedly floating bridges and corridors, all in rationalistic design.

21 Hoffmann, 'Tendenzen zeitgenössischer Architektur', p. 1092.

22 See *ibid.*, p. 1096: 'So wie der Prozeß der Entwicklungen zugunsten des Fixierten unterbewertet wird, so wird der Zeitbezug überbewertet. Es mag verrückt klingen, aber es ist bei architekturformaler Betrachtungsweise eigentlich unwesentlich, wann ein Gebäude errichtet wurde. [...] Die wichtigsten Vorwürfe gegen den Funktionalismus lauten doch, er sei zu verstandesgemäß, berücksichtige Gefühls-werte nicht, sei zwar rein, aber kalt und gäbe dem Menschen und dem Leben zu wenig Raum.'

23 *Ibid.*, p. 1101.

Das Einschreiben von Formen in andere Formen ist ein weiteres unbedingtes Kennzeichen. Hierbei können runde in viereckige Formen eingeschlossen werden und umgekehrt; man kann fast schon eine Lust zu Restflächen und Zwickeln vermuten. [...] Die herausgearbeiteten Formen überschneiden, mischen sich, gehen in Form von Collagen neue, ungewohnte Verbindungen ein... Immer aber werden sich Worte wie 'Kälte' mit den gewonnenen Eindrücken verbinden, immer wieder stößt man auf hintergründige Elemente wie 'Luft' und 'Leere'.²⁴

Hoffmann uses the above words to describe the hallmarks of rationalism. In *L'ÉCUME DES JOURS*, Gondry plays precisely with what rationalist architecture inscribes in public buildings, namely a certain indeterminacy of purpose in public space:

Keine Andeutung läßt auf seine Verwendbarkeit schließen. Er ist leer wie in surrealistischen Gemälden und doch kein ‚neutrales‘ Angebot an den Nutzer, den man sich schlechterdings in ihm nicht vorstellen kann. Seine Gegenwart würde bereits eine Entweihung darstellen. So gibt es den ‚öffentlichen‘ Raum auch dort, wo er nicht durch den Menschen belebt sein wird. [...] Diese Negierung der Nutzung ist auch in Einzelheiten der Architektur spürbar. Die ‚Ablesbarkeit‘ der Fassade [...] ist aufgegeben zugunsten rein formaler Vorstellungen. Ja, diese Negierung geht häufig so weit, daß sich eine Nutzung [...] von vornherein verbietet.²⁵

For Gondry, the perpetual construction site in *Les Halles* is therefore predestined to be the first meeting place for Colin and Chloé in public space without any fixed usage specifications on the *terrain vague* there. '[P]lus tôt, dans *Le Ventre de Paris*, Émile Zola conte les aventures de Cadine et Marjolin, des enfants trouvés près du marché des Innocents. Tout au long du roman, ces deux personnages circulent à travers les Halles comme si un lien vital les y rattachait.'²⁶ As we have already seen and read, the constant transformation of the *Les Halles* neighbourhood has also frequently been the subject of media coverage, documented photographically by Doisneau and Atget, for example, as well as on film by Ferreri.

The flight of Chloé and Colin in their little cloud makes the viewer think that they are travelling on rails that lead them to a section of the *Petite Ceinture* that has long since fallen into disuse. This impression is intensified by the fact that the sequence was presumably shot with a hand-held camera to imitate the characteristics of a journey on rails. We recognize from the reflection in the

24 Ibid., p. 1101 f.

25 Ibid., p. 1104.

26 Sébastien Le Pajolec, 'La jeunesse au Forum: Clichés de la marginalité', in Jean-Louis Robert/Myriam Tsikounas/Martine Tabeaud (eds.), *Les Halles: Images d'un quartier*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne 2004, pp. 217–235, at p. 218.

glass dome that it is apparently no longer on a rope, the ‘lien vital’. In the meantime, Chloé and Colin have detached themselves from the crane, but when they get out, they are brought back down to earth by a rope.



(Fig. 75)

Sitting on the bench of the *terrain vague* (fig. 75), they philosophise about life: ‘Toute ma vie dépend de cet instant.’ – ‘Celui que nous vivons?’ – ‘Et si je le rate...’ – ‘D’abord, je pense le contraire. On est deux. Si on rate ce moment, on essaie celui d’après! Et si on échoue, on recommence! On a toute la vie pour réussir!’²⁷ Colin then kisses her, because he wants to keep this precious moment of their first kiss forever. The Polaroid camera integrated into her little cloud shoots a photo of the lovers, which Colin picks up and turns round, providing the following caption: ‘Six mois plus tard...’. Various layers of time accumulate in this film sequence. Six months later, their wedding takes place and during their honeymoon Chloé is infected with an incurable disease: a water lily grows incessantly in one of her lungs, robbing her of air and vitality. Gondry realizes this spatially in the film by allowing interior spaces, such as the shared flat, to be reclaimed by flora and fauna:

27 L’ÉCUME DES JOURS, Michel Gondry, 2013, (00:24:07–00:25:32).



(Fig. 76)

Spider webs, creepers and climbing plants, thorns and fungi overgrow walls, windows and façades. The rooms become smaller.²⁸ The walls shift. Some figures age faster. The interior is gloomy and oppressive. Although Chloé manages to delay the growth of the water lily with fresh cut flowers, she is unable to recover, even while the jazz song ‘Chloé’ by Duke Ellington accompanies her almost the entire time.



(Fig. 77)

28 Here, see Guillaume Bridet, *L'Écume des jours (1947): Boris Vian*, Paris: Hatier 1998, p. 21 ff.: ‘Le cadre spatio-temporel subit cependant un certain nombre de transformations qui écartent le roman du réalisme. Tout d’abord, en ce qui concerne l’espace, on remarque un triple phénomène d’assombrissement, de réduction et de liquéfaction. La narration décrit plusieurs fois les mêmes lieux et signale leur dégradation au fil du temps. Ainsi, un lieu enchanteur dans une première scène devient ensuite un lieu de désolation dans une deuxième scène. [...] Cette dégradation n’est pas seulement le propre de l’appartement de Colin. Elle concerne aussi le monde extérieur, la ville ainsi que les éléments naturels. [...] Finalement, le monde extérieur devient identique à l’intérieur de l’appartement. Ainsi, la dernière scène du roman se déroule dans une île marécageuse.’

It is not only in Zola's work that the *terrain vague* functions as a refuge for lovers, as a meeting place²⁹ for the first rendezvous, for a first kiss or as a rendezvous point for a (still) secret love. Although the original novel by Boris Vian³⁰ with the same title from 1947 does not contain the term *terrain vague*, the 26-year-old engineer managed to write the 'most moving contemporary romance novel' within a few months, according to Raymond Queneau. It is a novel in which these special places play a not insignificant role:

Der Schaum der Tage ist Romeo und Julia ohne Familienzwiste, Tristan und Isolde ohne Zaubertrank, Paul und Virginie in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, eine Dame, deren Kamelien durch eine Seerose ersetzt sind, Héloïse, die keinen Abaelard kastriert. Es ist die Zeit einer Wende: der Moment nach dem Krieg, wo sich der französische Roman dazu durchringt, den Leser Bebop-Luft atmen zu lassen. Boris Vian pfeift auf akademische Regeln, er will der Sprache Komik und Swing verpassen, er will uns [...] zu Tränen rühren, [...] zum Träumen bringen und mehr als eine Romanze vorlegen: ein Fenster öffnen für das Wunderbare. [...] Vian beschließt, dass das Wunderbare die Begegnung eines Ingenieurs mit einer an Tuberkulose Erkrankten durchdringen kann.³¹

Beigbeder compares Vian's work to a 'kosmetische Lotion' and a 'Jungbrunnen-Elixier', stating that it makes one younger; depending on one's age, one discovers different, always new things in it. It can be seen as an initiation ritual.³² We also attribute these qualities to the *terrains vagues*, frequented by young people performing initiation rites or by older people who feel young there:

Der Schaum der Tage ist das französische Gegenstück zu Salingers *Der Fänger im Roggen* (veröffentlicht vier Jahre später, 1951).³³ Das Schreiben emanzipiert sich

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- 29 See the following assessment of *Les Halles* during the 1980s: 'La télévision et la presse se félicitent que le Forum soit le point de rencontre des jeunes au cœur de Paris, elles identifient cette jeunesse à une avant-garde culturelle dans les domaines de la musique et de la mode. (L'émission mythique HIP HOP présentée par Sidney, qui a introduit le rap en France, est tournée au Forum le 25 mars 1984.) [...] Le quartier des Halles est devenu le rendez-vous d'une jeunesse bourgeoise qui s'encanaille avec des styles vestimentaires excentriques [...]. Parce qu'il s'apparente à un espace indéfini (en même temps commercial, culturel et associatif), le Forum incarne alors le site idéal pour changer d'identité, de classe social, pour faire, le temps d'un après-midi, l'expérience de sa liberté.' Le Pajolec, 'La jeunesse au Forum: Clichés de la marginalité', p. 226 f.
- 30 Boris Vian, *L'Écume des jours* (1947), Paris: Fayard 1996.
- 31 Frédéric Beigbeder, 'Nachwort', in Boris Vian, *Der Schaum der Tage*, transl. by Antje Pehnt, edited by Klaus Völker, Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch 2016, p. 205 f.
- 32 See *ibid.*, p. 206 f.
- 33 See J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, New York: Little, Brown & Company 1951.

hier, kriert sein eigenes Vokabular, lässt alle Freiheiten zu. Die Personen in beiden Romanen sind verhinderte Liebende im jugendlichen Alter: Holden Caulfield ist ein New Yorker Cousin von Colin [...]. Ein Detail ist frappierend: In beiden Büchern gibt es Eisbahnen. Die Verliebten lieben es, händchenhaltend übers Eis zu gleiten. Eine Eisbahn ist allerliebste, zart, frisch und weiß, sie ist aber auch gefroren, gefährlich, schneidend und hart.³⁴

Now let's take a quick sideways look at two other films: firstly, *UNE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR* (1951) by Guy Lefranc, with a screenplay by Michel Audiard, which is a post-war version of *HÔTEL DU NORD* (1938) by Marcel Carné, with Annabella (Suzanne Charpentier) and Jean-Pierre Aumont, Arletty (Léonie Bathiat) and Louis Jouvet. In Lefranc's *drame policier*, the two young lovers Catherine Mareuil (Dany Robin) and Jean Bompard (Daniel Gélin) are found dead on a *terrain vague* by police inspector Ernest Plonche (Louis Jouvet) (fig. 78). Plonche invests and learns that Catherine's parents, rich industrialists, are not in favour of the marriage they are planning, as they believe Jean has no future. The secretly engaged couple prefer suicide to separation and commit suicide together on an urban wasteland (fig. 80).



(Fig. 78)

34 Beigbeder, 'Nachwort', p. 211.



(Fig. 79)



(Fig. 80)

CASQUE D'OR (1952) by Jacques Becker serves me as a hinge on the threshold between love and crime: we find ourselves in the *Belle Époque* of the Parisian underworld around the year 1900. In terms of subject matter, this is not a classic *terrain vague* on which a love story unfolds, but rather the jealous struggle of three men for the prostitute Marie (played by Simone Signoret). Her character is modelled on Amélie Hélie, a well-known Parisian prostitute at the time.³⁵

35 'D'après ses *Mémoires*, Amélie Hélie [...] devient la maîtresse d'une prostituée surnommée la Belle Hélène [...], elle erre dans Paris [...], elle rencontre Manda qui lui propose de la protéger [...]. Il a suivi une formation de polisseur mais [...] il est entré dans la criminalité. Il dirige la bande des Orteaux [...]. Le bonheur du couple aurait été complet n'eussent été les infidélités du jeune homme. Le 20 décembre 1901, Amélie le quitte et trouve refuge chez son amie Berthe. Un soir où elles sont de

Lundi. [...] La nuit est tombée, deux fiacres se garent devant l'*Ange Gabriel*. Les bourgeois qui en descendent entrent dans le bal sous les regards curieux des hommes de la bande. Tandis qu'une des femmes est invitée à danser par Roland, Marie et Julie entrent à leur tour. Leca rejoint Marie car il voudrait savoir ce qu'elle a décidé. Alors qu'elle souscrit à ses avances, Leca ne peut en informer Roland car Manda est lui aussi venu la chercher. S'ensuit un duel au couteau dans l'arrière-cour de l'*Ange Gabriel* où Manda tue Roland. Leca appelle Marie car la victoire de Manda lui donne des droits sur elle. Cependant, la jeune femme paraît indifférente et, suivie par Leca, elle rentre dans la salle. Alors que, dans l'arrière-cour, ils se débarrassent du corps, ils sont interrompus par l'arrivée de policiers prévenus par le serveur. La bande se disperse et Marie profite de la confusion pour échapper aux assiduités de Leca.³⁶

The *terrain vague* is therefore located in a backyard. The lifeless body of Marie's actual partner, Roland Dupuis, is to be disposed of over the wall onto a *terrain vague* after being killed in a duel with the rival and challenger Georges, nicknamed Manda, a deeply honest carpenter, by the mafia boss Félix Leca and his henchmen of the gang *Les Apaches* ruling in Belleville. However, this does not happen because the police arrive immediately and find the body. Raymond, a good friend of Georges and a former *Apache*, is accused of murder and imprisoned for wearing the deceased's wristwatch. When Manda turns himself in to the police, he and his friend Raymond manage to escape from the prisoner transport coach, but Raymond is shot dead. Manda takes revenge on Leca, who framed Raymond for everything and lured him into prison himself just to win Marie over. He is then guillotined for double murder, which Marie observes through the window of a nearby building. It tells the story of a rivalry between gangsters that begins with love at first sight and ends miserably on the scaffold.

sortie toutes deux, elles rencontrent Leca [...]. Leca est d'origine Corse, il a reçu une formation de découper en métaux [...] et dirige la bande de Popincourt [...]. Leca qui désire la jeune femme, insulte Manda. [...] Le 30 décembre, Manda attaque Leca au couteau, le 2 janvier, on tire dans leurs fenêtres et le 5 janvier, les deux bandes s'affrontent. Leca est blessé de deux balles qui le conduisent à l'hôpital. De peur d'être arrêté, il s'en échappe en fiacre, mais la voiture est prise d'assaut par Manda, qui de nouveau le poignarde [...]. Arthur Dupin, le journaliste du *Matin*, décrivant l'attaque du fiacre, emploie pour la première fois le terme d'*apache* en référence aux attaques de diligence de l'Ouest américain [...]. Casque d'or, quant à elle, aurait reçu son surnom de l'infirmière qui, interrogeant Leca au sujet des deux femmes venues le visiter, aurait dit: 'la blonde ou la brune, Casque d'or ou Peau d'ébène?', Valérie Vignaux, *Casque d'or de Jacques Becker*, Neuilly: Atlante 2009, p. 56 f.

36 Ibid., p. 71 f.



(Fig. 81)

Here, too, the palisades conceal urban backyard wastelands. The film scholar Dieter Krusche assesses the film as follows:

Becker ging es nicht darum, einen 'historischen Gangsterfilm' zu drehen; er schuf einen ganz ungewöhnlichen Film über die *Belle Époque*, in dem die Menschen wichtiger sind als die Ereignisse, die Gefühle realer als die kriminalistischen Verwicklungen. Ein Film von ungewöhnlicher Schönheit, strengem Stilwillen, klarer Dramaturgie – wohl Beckers Meisterwerk.³⁷



(Fig. 82)

37 Dieter Krusche, *Filmführer*, Stuttgart: Reclam 1973, p. 253.



(Fig. 83)

In her chapter ‘De la picturalité’, Valérie Vignaux describes Becker’s cinematic approach in exemplary fashion, whereby the characteristics of a work from the *Belle Époque* are contrasted with the scene presented to us in figs. 82 and 83:

Au premier plan un élément est représenté en contre-plongée, tandis qu’un second apparaît dans la profondeur, dans une mise en perspective décalée et en taille réduite. On trouve encore un détail qui, isolé de l’ensemble, apparaît dans un coin de la page en médaillon. Disproportion dans la représentation et dans le point de vue qui vise à dramatiser les événements. Or, on peut remarquer que le découpage de la scène qui se déroule dans l’arrière-cour de l’*Ange Gabriel* et où Manda et Roland se battent en duel s’appuie sur ces effets d’échelle. Becker associe de fortes contre-plongées sur les personnages, accentuées encore par une lumière sombre et contrastée, à des gros plans volontiers outranciers, qu’il s’agisse de celui sur le couteau ‘l’arme du crime’ ou celui où les doigts de Roland s’enfoncent dans les yeux de Manda.³⁸

Vignaux also explains that the filmmaker – as in his use of Amélie Hélie’s *mémoires* – also transposes subtle references to the iconography of the turn of the century through painting and photography. More concretely:

[L]ors de la présentation des hommes de la bande, tandis que nous entendons leurs surnoms, les plans isolent deux à deux les couples, figés comme dans des portraits. On peut encore signaler les nombreux plans filmés à travers des vitres, ceux par exemple où Manda est vu à travers la vitrine de l’atelier Danard ou encore celui où Marie regarde à travers la vitrine de l’*Ange Gabriel*, les policiers portant le corps de Roland. Ces cadres sur les devantures vitrées des magasins sont fréquents au début de la photographie. Ils constituent pour le photographe un exercice de style car

38 Vignaux, *Casque d’or de Jacques Becker*, p. 77.

celui-ci doit à la fois mettre en évidence le reflet de la surface vitrée tout en évitant de s'y réfléchir. On songe en particulier aux vitrines d'Eugène Atget [...]. Dans MONTPARNASSE 19 le cinéaste poursuit la référence à la photographie en reproduisant à l'identique les cadres de photographies connues de Robert Doisneau.³⁹

As a portrait of a turn-of-the-century milieu at the interface between wasteland photography and wasteland cinema, *CASQUE D'OR* can be categorized as *réalisme poétique/psychologique/social* – but critics are not in agreement about this. When asked during an interview in 1954 by Jacques Rivette and François Truffaut what interested Becker more than intrigue, he replied soberly, modestly and almost ashamedly: 'Ce sont les personnages.'⁴⁰ Far more than the *récit* or the milieu. And he adds more precisely:

'[C]inéaste social?' – Je crois qu'il y a tout de même une espèce de vérité. On a eu tort tout crûment que j'avais cherché à tout prix à être 'social'. Cette impression est causée par le fait que, dans mes films, on s'intéresse en général d'assez près aux personnages. C'est le côté un peu entomologiste que j'ai peut-être [...]. Mais je m'intéresse aux personnages par un certain nombre de côtés qui ne sont pas seulement ceux qui sont indispensables à la compréhension de l'action.⁴¹

In his writings on Jacques Becker, René Gilson summarizes this as follows:

Becker était hanté aussi par ses personnages et son goût, sa quête de l'humain commençait dans la vie. Le quotidien était pour lui richissime d'insaisissable. Mais ce n'était pas l'extraordinaire qu'il y cherchait, ni l'insolite, Jacques Becker avait d'abord un regard d'homme devant lequel on était dans l'impossibilité de mentir.⁴²

As a former assistant director to Jean Renoir, one of the most important representatives of 1930s poetic realism and a pioneer of Italian neo-realism in the post-war years, Becker acted cautiously between worlds: social awareness, conflicts between the individual and society, realism and milieu studies on the one hand, and the futility of love, humanism and the gloomy everyday life of the tragic heroines on the other. Is it any wonder that he has his protagonists in *CASQUE D'OR* fight a duel over Marie and dispose of the loser in a backyard wasteland? Figs. 82 and 83 indicate that the *terrain vague* can also be a place of crime, a crime scene.

39 Ibid., p. 78.

40 Jacques Rivette/François Truffaut, 'Entretien avec Jacques Becker', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°32, 2/1954.

41 Ibid.

42 René Gilson, 'Jacques Becker', in *Anthologie du Cinéma*, n°14, supplement to *L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma*, n°58, 4/1966.

5. The *terrain vague* as a Place of Crime

5.1 LE DOULOS (MELVILLE, 1962)

Against the backdrop of the long history of the *terrain vague* in French crime literature, crime film¹ also utilizes the urban wasteland as a genre-specific location by showing, through it or on it, a kind of underside of bourgeois life. In *BOB LE FLAMBEUR* (1956) by Jean-Pierre Melville, a gang of burglars uses an empty lot on the outskirts of town near the railway tracks as a free stage to rehearse their next caper.²

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- 1 When asked why Melville made crime films, he replied in 'Entretien avec Jean-Pierre Melville', *Journal du cinéma*, émission télévisée réalisée par Pierre-André Boutang et Henry Chapier, 8 novembre 1970: '[S]on propre goût pour le genre, lui qui fut l'un des meilleurs connaisseurs du film noir hollywoodien et l'un de ses principaux consommateurs cinéphiles de France, des années 1930 aux années 1950. Puis l'aspect formel spectaculaire et le mode de récit simple et populaire qu'il mobilise, pouvant se réduire à un nombre limité de figures, de motifs, de situations connus de tous [...]; enfin, la possibilité offerte à l'artiste de travailler à l'intérieur des codes en imprimant son style personnel'. Antoine de Baecque, *Jean-Pierre Melville, une vie*, Paris: Seuil 2017, p. 130.
 - 2 See Wolfram Nitsch, 'Der Gangster als Spieler: Handwerk und Hasardspiel in Melvilles *Bob le flambeur*', in Hermann Doetsch/Andreas Mahler (eds.), *Gangsterwelten: Faszination und Funktion des Gangsters im französischen Nachkriegskino*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017, pp. 153–170.



(Fig. 84)

In Melville's *LE DOULOS* (1962), an empty peripheral area of railway tracks forms a magnetic pole for visitors from the demimonde and underworld. 'Die Bedeutungen des Wortes *doulos* erklärt der Vorspann: Es bezeichnet im Argot einen Hut, die Person, die einen solchen Hut trägt, und schließlich einen Spitzel.'³ And the motto of the film is the well-known quote by Louis-Ferdinand Céline: 'Il faut choisir, mourir ou mentir', which Hans Gerhold forms into the 'Prinzip der Lüge' that governs the film, as 'niemand ist, was er ist'.⁴

Der Gangster Maurice [Faugel] wird, kurz nach seiner Entlassung aus dem Gefängnis, bei einem Einbruch von der Polizei überrascht. Auf der Flucht wird sein Komplize getötet. Er hält seinen Freund Silien für den Spitzel, der der Polizei den Tip gegeben hat. Kurz darauf wird Maurice wegen eines anderen Mordes verhaftet, doch Silien schafft es, durch Zeugenbeeinflussung und einen zweifachen Mord, den Ver-

3 Franz Rodenkirchen, 'Le doulos', in *Metzler Film Lexikon*, ed. by Michael Töteberg, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 2005, pp. 176–177, at p. 176. 'Un soir de janvier 1957, Jean-Pierre Melville reçoit les épreuves d'un roman, *Le Doulos* de Pierre Lesou, à paraître dans la Série noire, la collection de Marcel Duhamel chez Gallimard. Il est immédiatement séduit par l'ambiance montmartroise et la description précise des mœurs et du code d'honneur d'un milieu qu'il connaît de l'intérieur, un univers décrypté et expliqué dans ses multiples sens et usages, à l'image du 'doulos', qui signifie à la fois 'chapeau' (le feutre fétiche du gangster) et le 'donneur', la 'balance', l'indicateur qui renseigne la police.' De Baecque, *Jean-Pierre Melville, une vie*, p. 134.

4 Hans Gerhold, *Kino der Blicke: Der französische Kriminalfilm*, Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 1989, p. 26.

dacht von [sich] abzulenken. Maurice erfährt zu spät die wirklichen Zusammenhänge: Er hat aus Rache auf Silien einen Killer angesetzt. Vergeblich versucht er, ihn zu retten. Der Killer erschießt zuerst Maurice, den er irrtümlich für Silien hält; anschließend töten er und Silien sich gegenseitig.⁵

With a sharp tongue, Céline's quote could indeed be reformulated to suggest that the protagonists initially lie before ultimately meeting their demise. In perhaps the greatest achievement of *film noir à la française*,⁶ one of the most important French crime thrillers with a remarkable cast and acting performances, Maurice Faugel steals from and murders the fence Gilbert, who is responsible for the death of his wife. After hiding his loot (jewellery and cash), he plans another robbery with his accomplices, Silien and Rémy. But Silien, himself a friend of Commissioner Clain,⁷ appears to be an informant.

Nichts lag Melville ferner als die Bearbeitung realistischer, zeitbezogener Sujets. Seine Gangster sind idealisierte Typen, ihr stilisiertes Erscheinungsbild (im obligatorischen Trenchcoat und stets mit Hut) macht sie zu zeitlosen Charakteren, die er in stark ritualisierter Form immer wieder variiert. Silien, der 'doulos', ist der erste Vertreter dieser präzise durchgezeichneten Figuren. Er folgt einem persönlichen Ehrenkodex, der jedoch völlige Einsamkeit bedeutet und ihn zwangsläufig verdächtig macht, denn Vertrauen birgt [...] Verrat und [...] Lüge in sich. In der letzten Einstellung verharrt die Kamera auf dem Hut des getöteten Silien, und Melville signalisiert damit noch einmal dessen symbolische Stellung als überindividuelle Verkörperung eines Prinzips.⁸

5 Rodenkirchen, 'Le doulos', p. 176.

6 'Der begeisterte Anhänger des amerikanischen Kinos der dreißiger Jahre transponierte Manhattan nach Paris; Volker Schlöndorff, Regieassistent bei *Le doulos*, hat berichtet, wie Melville in nächtlichen Autofahrten die einschlägigen Viertel auf Motivsuche durchstreifte. Die Innenaufnahmen wurden größtenteils in Melvilles eigenem Filmstudio in der *Rue Jenner* gemacht, das er sich 1947 eingerichtet hatte, um unabhängig von der Filmindustrie arbeiten zu können. Diese Autonomie machte ihn zum Vorbild der Regisseure der *Nouvelle Vague*, die ihn als eine Art Vaterfigur verehrten. Melville akzeptierte diese Rolle für einige Zeit, distanzierte sich dann jedoch zunehmend, denn sein Anspruch der Professionalität – im klassischen Sinne der Beherrschung des filmischen Handwerks – widersprach der Auffassung der ‚begabten Amateure‘ von der *Nouvelle Vague*.', *ibid.*, p. 176 f.

7 'In filmtechnischer Hinsicht besonders bemerkenswert ist das Verhör Siliens im Büro des Kommissars Clain, eine neuneinhalbminütige Plansequenz mit ununterbrochenem Dialog. Das Gespräch wurde ohne Schnitt in einer Einstellung aufgenommen, wobei die Kamera und die Personen ihre Standorte mehrmals verändern. Diese technische Leistung (noch erschwert durch verglaste Wände) findet inhaltlich ihre Entsprechung, denn Silien übersteht das Verhör, ohne seine Ambiguität preiszugeben.', *ibid.*, p. 177.

8 *Ibid.*

In his second gangster film 'hat Melville Montmartre gleich eingangs endgültig den Rücken gekehrt und das hier [in BOB LE FLAMBEUR] noch halbwegs transparente Großstadtmilieu durch eine unübersichtliche Vorstadtzone voller undurchsichtiger Figuren ersetzt'.⁹



(Fig. 85)

This includes one of the two protagonists who, immediately after a murder committed on the outskirts of the city, buries the murder weapon and the loot on the wasteland and marks this area on a self-made treasure map as 'terrain vague' (fig. 86) so that his obscure accomplice can later retrieve the objects. This crime film thus points in different directions: in the processes of mapping and naming lies a fundamental difficulty in the urbanistic handling of wastelands, as I already alluded to at the beginning¹⁰ – a difficulty which has always existed and is currently being reflected in various artistic projects.¹¹ Thematically, the dark, eerie crime scene on the outskirts of the city is reminiscent of descriptions by Balzac and Hugo, Atget's photographs and, of course, *film noir* – according to Paul Morand's motto 'On tue les gens en voiture, puis on jette les corps dans des *terrains vagues*'.¹² The porous, mysterious, and transitory nature

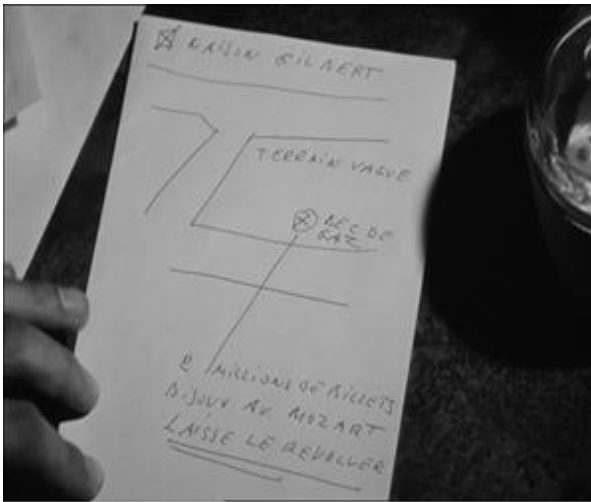
9 Wolfram Nitsch, 'Der Gangster als Spieler', p. 156.

10 See the exposé (cf. p. 17) for my dissertation project, available on the website of our project group: <http://terrainvague.de/sites/default/files/Expose%20Jacqueline.pdf> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

11 See Tom Conley specifically on the relationship between film and cartography: *Cartographic Cinema*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2007.

12 Morand, *New York*, p. 91.

of the wasteland, which stands in contrast to the meticulously planned city, is the reason why the gangster is drawn to this place. It is constantly threatened with destruction and forms a void in the mapped city script. Therefore, the *terrain vague* is very appealing to the gangster as a retreat for seemingly invisible actions and secret operations. Furthermore, the inherent indeterminacy of this unmarked interstitial space attunes the viewer to the opacity of the characters' motives for their actions.



(Fig. 86)

Maria Imhof describes how the expansive *terrain vague* in LE DOULOUS is imbued with aesthetic power and is extricated from its original purposelessness by having a specific kind of occupation inscribed upon it in the sequence.¹³

Diejenigen, die diese Stellen aufsuchen, stellen dem offiziellen Stadtplan einen sekundären entgegen: Die 'Unterwelt' etabliert sich nun nicht in einer Oben-Unten-Struktur, sondern in einer Raumordnung Zwischenraum – Stadtskript. Der Gangster sucht den Zwischenraum auf, sollte aber [...] keine Spuren hinterlassen und den vagen Raum als unmarkierten und ungekerbten Raum erhalten, sonst könnte ihm die Kontrolle über seine Aktionen entgleiten.¹⁴

13 See Maria Imhof, 'Zwischenräume: Topographien des Verbrechers im französischen Gangsterfilm', in Hermann Doetsch/Andreas Mahler (eds.), *Gangsterwelten: Faszination und Funktion des Gangsters im französischen Nachkriegskino*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017, pp. 171–191, at p. 183.

14 Ibid., p. 183 f.

With regard to the scene shown in fig. 85, Michel Chion writes: ‘Maurice a eu le temps de s’éloigner, et disparaître dans un *terrain vague* et de s’arrêter près d’un réverbère au pied duquel il enfouit, tel un chien, le revolver, l’argent et les bijoux, dans un trou qu’il creuse avec ses mains nues.’¹⁵ Chion points to a so-called ‘ellipse perdue’ which occurs in the cutting and editing of a film. This happens, to put it very simply, because during the *découpage* there can be an *escamotage* of time. On the three levels inspired by André Bazin – ‘le réel diégétique’, ‘le réel cinématographique’, and ‘le réel pro-filmique’ – the *ellipses perdues* have different effects on the space-time continuum. They also differ significantly from explicit ellipses, such as in an establishing shot. Michel Chion concludes: ‘Nous avons donc ici, plusieurs niveaux de ce qu’on pourrait appeler un *terrain vague*, niveaux propres au cinéma – et l’un de ceux-ci concerne l’écoulement du temps et le toujours mystérieux passage du jour à la nuit.’¹⁶

Vielleicht ist die Beleuchtung das wichtigste Hilfsmittel des Filmemachers, um die Bedeutung von Form, Linie, Farbe und ihren versteckten Dominanten zu verändern. In den Tagen, als das Filmmaterial relativ unempfindlich war (vor den sechziger Jahren), war die künstliche Beleuchtung unerlässlich, und die Filmemacher machten wie eh und je aus der Not eine Tugend. Die deutschen Expressionisten der zwanziger Jahre entliehen den Code des *Chiaroscuro* aus der Malerei und wandten ihn für dramatische Effekte an – er erlaubte, den Akzent auf Form vor Wahrheitstreue zu setzen. Der klassische Hollywood-Stil strebte einen natürlicheren Effekt an und entwickelte so ein System ausgewogener Führungs- und Füll-Lichter, die eine ausreichende, aber nicht zu aufdringliche Beleuchtung lieferten und so eine minimale Barriere zwischen Betrachter und Objekt darstellten. Bestenfalls konnte dieses komplizierte System einige außergewöhnliche Effekte erzielen, aber es war in sich unrealistisch; wir sehen selten natürliche Szenen mit einer sowohl gleichmäßig hellen Ausleuchtung wie auch sorgfältig ausbalancierten Nebenlichtquellen, was den Stil Hollywoods charakterisiert [...]. Es ist klar, daß alle Beleuchtungs-codes, die für die Fotografie gelten, ebenso für den Film gültig sind. Volle Frontalbeleuchtung läßt das Objekt verschwinden; Oberlicht drückt es hinab. Unterlicht macht es unheimlich, Glanzlichter (Spots) können die Aufmerksamkeit auf Details richten (meistens auf Haar und Augen); Gegenlicht kann das Objekt entweder unterdrücken oder es hervorheben; Seitenlicht kann dramatische *Chiaroscuro*-Effekte erzielen.¹⁷

Melville was very good at focussing highlights on the eyes of the protagonists and working with underlighting and sidelighting to create an eerie, dramatic

15 Michel Chion: ‘Une lampe allumée en plein jour (à propos d’une séquence du DOULOS)’, in *Romanische Studien* 7, 2019, pp. 135–144, here p. 141 f.

16 Ibid., p. 144.

17 Monaco, *Film verstehen*, p. 198 f.

ambience. The coldness of the pertinent locations in Melville's crime films, to once again use Schlögel's terminology, runs parallel to that of the Villa Arpel in Tati's *MON ONCLE*, which was also created during this time.

Avec *LE DOULOS*, Melville atteint la maturité de son style 'noir', associant une grande beauté formelle – un travail d'une profondeur impressionnante, grâce à la complicité de Nicolas Hayer, sur les contrastes du noir et du blanc, sur les jeux d'ombre et de lumière, sur la durée d'une marche, d'un plan, d'une musique, d'un regard, sur la tension organisant une scène ... – à un scénario d'une complexité folle, avec la volonté de défaire la cohérence entre la forme et sa signification. Le spectateur croit tout clair, puis peut faire le constat que tout est ambigu, éphémère et changeant. [...] [L]a mise en scène est capable de faire croire à l'in vraisemblable, cette forme toute-puissante peut forger la vérité. Le monde est une immense duperie où la plupart trichent et volent, la construction des intrigues enchâssées est d'une telle singularité que personne n'y comprend rien, seule la mise en scène ne ment pas: elle fait voir le vrai.¹⁸

It is precisely this ambiguity, transience and changeability that attracts the *terrain vague* in its choice of locations, motifs and themes. Conspiracies and betrayal, love and sex, murder and other atrocities – these are the subjects of *film noir*. Although there were already stories about crime long before Melville's 'polar', *LE DOULOS* is considered the epitome of the genre as a *récit* that combines the various crimes. 'Néanmoins, tout comme la nature a horreur du vide, le cycle noir déteste le crime parfait'¹⁹. As a result, Melville portrays not the perfect crime but rather the failure of criminals who believed themselves to be perfect. Indeed, the seedy aspect of the film is only balanced by the fortuitous confluence of elements that made it possible.²⁰ In *Todesbegegnungen im Film*, Laura Räuber reminds us that recipients are usually agitated when they feel the proximity of death on the screen and at the same time, in resistance to this, know that they themselves are still alive, because we experience such crimes, murder and violence very intensely in the cinema, but we survive them unscathed, although we are physically moved, shaken and at least touched, simply because artificially generated film fiction allows us feel what is supposedly real.²¹ Now let's go to the next crime scene, secure the evidence,²² read signs,

18 De Baecque, *Jean-Pierre Melville, une vie*, p. 137.

19 Paul Duncan/Jürgen Müller (eds.), *Film noir*, Cologne: Taschen 2017 (Bibliotheca Universalis), p. 35.

20 See *ibid.*

21 See Laura Räuber, *Todesbegegnungen im Film: Zuschauerrezeption zwischen Zeichen und Körper*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2019 (Film), p. 354.

22 See Carlo Ginzburg, *Spurensicherung: Die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich selbst*, translated by Gisela Bonz and Karl F. Hauber, Berlin: Wagenbach 1983 and

harbour suspicions, look at clues, question, solve puzzles and plots.²³ Let us remain critical and continue our research on the *terrains vagues* of cinematic crime narratives.

5.2 LA FILLE INCONNUE (FRERES DARDENNE, 2016)

In LA FILLE INCONNUE (2016) by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, the doctor Jenny Davin, feels guilty about the death of a young African woman because she had rung the doorbell at Jenny's practice the evening before her death, but Jenny and her assistant did not open the door due to the late hour. When the police inform Jenny of this, she is shocked and wants to find out how the young woman could have died. During her enquiries, Jenny also has a conversation with Lambert junior, whom she encounters in front of an urban wasteland that houses his caravan. To enter the *terrain vague*, they pass through an electronically secured gate with a sign saying 'Propriété privée'. As the two figures move towards the caravan, the camera follows them with a hand-held pan through the closed gate until a cut takes them into the caravan. The viewers are therefore excluded for the time being but have the same level of information as Jenny. Lambert junior thinks the whole time that Jenny wants to buy his caravan, she replies: 'Je ne suis pas venue pour l'acheter! Je cherche le nom de la jeune fille qu'on a retrouvée morte vendredi matin près du fleuve. Elle n'avait pas de papiers sur elle, on ne sait pas qui c'est. Quelqu'un m'a dit de l'avoir vue dans votre *mobile home* le soir, jeudi. Elle aurait fait une fellation à un homme âgé et puis, elle serait partie. Voilà, c'est elle!' Jenny shows Lambert junior a photo of the deceased woman but doesn't want to tell him who saw her come out of his caravan on Thursday evening, even after asking several times.

Carlo Ginzburg: *Faden und Fährten – wahr falsch fiktiv*, translated by Victoria Lorini, Berlin: Wagenbach 2013.

23 See Luc Boltanski, *Énigmes et complots: Une enquête à propos d'enquêtes*, Paris: Gallimard 2012 (nrf essais).



(Fig. 87)

Jenny suspects that Bryan knows even more about the cause of death and follows him and his friend as they head for another *terrain vague*, where an industrial ruin is located. The site is surrounded by a construction fence and once again the camera remains outside, even when Jenny distances herself from it and walks towards the hall.



(Fig. 88)

In a semi-close-up shot, there is a scuffle in which Bryan insults the doctor and pushes her into a pit. He lies to his friend and wants to leave the premises as quickly as possible: 'Viens, il faut qu'on bouge. C'est une salope. Elle a pris mon père à ma mère!'



(Fig. 89)

The hand-held camera follows the two young people as they leave the premises, literally running after them, their steps are imitated until Jenny calls after him and he turns round again. Because he feels guilty, he briefly pauses due to Jenny's screams from off-screen, then returns and hands her a fence element with which she will be able to free herself from the pit on her own. The camera captures Jenny's predicament, and through a pan upwards, it leaves the confined space represented by the pit, highlighting her situation. The vastness of the now empty area sensitizes the viewer to the nature of the space in this film scene, which is made perceptible by rotating it through almost 360°. Even objects blocking the view, such as the tank, do not prevent the camera from moving in a circle.



(Fig. 90)

Shortly before the camera pans to Jenny, who accepts the fence element, it captures the open space in the background, which indicates that Jenny can free herself from the pit using her own strength. Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne deliberately leave a blank space when they don't show Jenny climbing out, while we hear the sound of the scooters' engines as the two teenagers move away.

Later in the film, Jenny finds out that the young African woman who prostituted herself in the caravan for Lambert junior's father, i.e. Lambert senior, was called Felicy Kumba, but that no violent crime took place there. Felicy left the *terrain vague*, bumped into another punter, accidentally fell, suffered a serious head injury and bled to death. *Cinéma social*, especially *drame social* such as *LE GAMIN AU VÉLO* (2011), also by the Belgian directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, would offer many more starting points for the investigation of urban wastelands in film.

Les frères Dardenne ont trouvé leur style, leur façon de filmer et de raconter des histoires; ils sont libres. Toutefois, cette liberté peut parfois donner le vertige ou, au contraire, pousser à l'autosatisfaction. Ils décident de se renouveler en explorant des genres différents et en interrogeant toujours le langage cinématographique. [...] Explorer les bas-fonds de la société, les trafics mafieux qui s'installent dans les villes européennes, chercher quel serait dans ces conditions le prix d'une vie, [...] c'est le pari réussi [...]. [...] Longtemps les frères cinéastes ont dit qu'ils se méfiaient des acteurs professionnels, parce que leur notoriété pouvait faire obstacle à l'identification au personnage ou parce qu'ils auraient tellement l'habitude de jouer qu'ils en oublieraient une forme de spontanéité qui les priverait d'incarner le rôle.²⁴

After many years of making documentary films, the Dardenne brothers have been devoting themselves to the *affaire humaine* since 1986 as part of their *cinéma engagé/social*.²⁵ In this context, they mainly deal with the following

24 Louis Héliot, 'Le cinéma des frères Dardenne', in Christine Plenus, *Sur les plateaux des Dardenne*, Arles/Paris: Actes Sud 2014, p. 9–11, at p. 10 f.

25 'Le terme *cinéma engagé* regroupe un ensemble de films qui incluent les films historiques à savoir politiques, les films à sujets sociaux, les films sur les grèves et les luttes ouvrières. Les films sociaux étudient les problèmes politiques, économiques et sociaux dans leurs répercussions sur les hommes. Le *cinéma social* prend naissance suite à la crise économique déclenchée à New York en 1929 après une grande chute boursière. Les banques font faillite ce qui entraîne une explosion du chômage aux États-Unis et plusieurs personnes se retrouvent sans abri. Cette grande dépression fait émerger un *cinéma social*, évoquant le chômage, la pauvreté et la misère. [...] Les Dardenne font principalement du *cinéma social* avec des personnages en marge de la société vivant le chômage et la pauvreté.' Farah Ben Jaballah: *Réalisme, tension et morale dans les films des frères Dardenne*, Saarbrücken/Mauritius: Éditions universitaires européennes 2018, p. 10 f. See also Luc Dardenne, *Sur l'affaire humaine*, Paris: Seuil 2012, p. 9: '[C]ette *affaire humaine* s'est révélée être aussi une 'affaire de Dieu', une affaire concernant la naissance de cet Éternel dont la mort nous laisse entre nous, entre êtres humains, entre mortels, qui désormais essayons de vivre sans sa consolation multiséculaire.'

topics: 'le travail, la réconciliation, la filiation, la solidarité entre les travailleurs',²⁶ but also with responsibility, guilt, empathy and humanity.

Avec LA FILLE INCONNUE, Luc et Jean-Pierre Dardenne poursuivent leur quête intransigeante d'un cinéma à la fois engagé, percutant et populaire, centré sur les maux de la société contemporaine et la notion de responsabilité individuelle. Depuis 20 ans et LA PROMESSE, leur ligne de conduite n'a pas varié: dénoncer les violences sociales, rendre apparentes nos failles intimes, explorer les conflits moraux produits par les accidents de la vie.²⁷

It is precisely this sense of responsibility and the awareness of the moral implications of her own actions that lead the young doctor Jenny Davin to conduct her investigations in the vacant lot in the drama LA FILLE INCONNUE: 'Elle apprend le lendemain la mort de cette femme et pour surmonter sa culpabilité, entreprend d'enquêter sur elle.'²⁸ Feelings of guilt and the need for redemption consequently lead her to the wasteland, where she questions the trailer owner Lambert about the woman who was last seen there before she died not far from Davin's practice (near Seraing, Liège).

Toute mort, y compris la mort 'naturelle', est une mort violente. La mort qui approche de la fille inconnue est une mort objectivement violente, mettant en scène le quelqu'un dont elle a peur et le quelqu'un en qui elle espère. Jennifer [...] est ce quelqu'un en qui elle espère, elle incarne ce 'principe *a priori* de la mortalité humaine'.²⁹ Elle devrait répondre à l'appel de la fille inconnue, elle ne le fait pas. Elle pourra tenter de justifier son comportement mais le regard de la fille inconnue lui rappellera qu'il est injustifiable. [...] Dans son enquête, Jennifer pourrait découvrir quelque chose d'inattendu qui la concerne, quelque chose qui la changerait à ses propres yeux. Quoi? Si elle a accepté, faute de mieux, le poste de médecin de *banlieue*, si son désir profond est d'avoir un cabinet avec une clientèle d'un autre

26 Ibid., p. 73.

27 See *prière d'insérer/quatrième de couverture*: Vincent Lowy (ed.), *Dardenne par Dardenne: Entretiens avec Michel Ciment*, Lormont/Bruxelles: Le Bord de l'Eau 2016 (La Muette) and further information on p. 127; Yves Alion, 'La Fille inconnue', in *L'avant-scène Cinéma*, n°634, 6/2016; Patrick Saffar, 'La Fille inconnue', in *Jeune Cinéma*, n°374, 7/2016; Vincent Thabourey: 'La Fille inconnue', in *Positif*, n°665–666, 7/2016.

28 Lowy (ed.), *Dardenne par Dardenne*, p. 122. See also Philip Mosley, *The Cinema of the Dardenne Brothers: Responsible Realism*, New York: Columbia University Press 2013.

29 This is a reference to Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'extériorité* (1961), Paris: Le Livre de Poche 1990, p. 93: 'Le médecin est un principe *a priori* de la mortalité humaine. La mort approche dans la peur de quelqu'un et espère en quelqu'un.'

milieu social, plus riche, plus 'agréable', elle pourrait découvrir que soigner les pauvres est sa vocation. Peut-être trop caricatural. À retenir quand même car ça génère un conflit chez Jennifer et ça la fragilise. Peut-être qu'être médecin était pour elle un moyen de sortir de sa condition sociale. [...] Je ne sais pas pourquoi mais le fait que nous ayons situé le cabinet médical de Jenny près d'une voie rapide a donné un rôle important au son du passage des voitures. Une sorte de bruit de fond du monde qui va, va, quoi qu'il arrive. Mettre ce bruit en relation avec le visage de Jenny à la fenêtre ou sur le petit balcon créera ... je ne sais pas quoi mais c'est le film.³⁰

Uncertainty and fears, one's own mortality and the fragility of the lives of others, the transition from one state to the next, responsibility and guilt, threshold phenomena and borderline experiences, the fleeting, temporary and indefinable – all these thoughts on the *terrain vague* in *LA FILLE INCONNUE* evoke the above statements by Luc Dardenne. The unknown girl and the consistent and persistent search for her identity also leads the initially cool, detached, self-disciplined, sober and controlled Jenny Davin to herself. As an *accoucheuse* of truth in person, she confronts her arrogance and self-righteousness, her pain and shock at the death of the patient she rejected, her own negligence and failure, so that as the protagonist she undergoes a significant development towards becoming a caring, attentive, patiently helping and compassionate doctor. She also searches for the truth on the *terrain vague*, which is only revealed to her later on by Bryan, his father, Lambert junior and the victim's sister through their confessions: 'Jennifer mène deux enquêtes: recherche du nom de la fille inconnue et recherche du (ou des) coupable(s). [...] Ne pas oublier la recherche du nom quand nous sommes dans la recherche du coupable.'³¹ The recipients do not see Jenny as a guilty woman, but as one who cannot escape the gaze of the unknown girl. The gaze recorded by the surveillance camera in the medical practice has become the gaze of a lonely, abandoned body, begging Davin to come to its aid.³²

Faut-il que le spectateur sache qui est le meurtrier avant que Jennifer ne le sache? Cela mettrait plus de danger autour de Jennifer et augmenterait le suspense des rencontres de Jennifer avec le meurtrier. Le spectateur identifierait cet individu à un tueur de femmes, donc au tueur potentiel d'une Jennifer sans méfiance, pouvant par exemple l'accompagner dans un lieu isolé où il pourrait commettre son

30 As early as 2012, Luc Dardenne spoke at length about the plot and screenplay of *LA FILLE INCONNUE*: Luc Dardenne, *Au dos de nos images II (2005–2014), suivi de LE GAMIN AU VELO et DEUX JOURS, UNE NUIT*, Paris: Seuil 2015 (La librairie du XXI^e siècle), p. 195 ff.

31 Ibid., p. 200.

32 See *ibid.* p. 199.

meurtre. En écrivant cela je me dis que nous pourrions prendre le parti inverse: Jennifer et le spectateur savent qui est le meurtrier, celui-ci ne sait pas qu'elle le sait et essaie de l'éloigner de la vérité et finalement avoue grâce au travail [...] de Jennifer. Le spectateur serait avec Jennifer dans son travail d'accoucheuse de vérité et vivrait avec elle les diverses manières de résister du meurtrier. Dans la première manière de raconter, il faut écrire une scène révélatrice de la culpabilité du meurtrier où Jennifer n'est pas présente, donc quitter à un moment le point de vue de Jennifer que nous aurons suivi jusque-là. Une rupture qui risque peut-être de donner une scène d'information, sans lien serré avec la nécessité interne avec le récit. On peut aussi imaginer une troisième manière de raconter: ni Jennifer ni le spectateur ne saurait qui est le meurtrier. Jennifer penserait connaître son identité et le spectateur la suivrait dans son intuition qui pourrait d'ailleurs se révéler fausse et créer un rebondissement menant à la découverte du meurtrier.³³

Instead of an information gap regarding the solution to the crime, there is a concordance, because neither Jenny nor the viewers know the 'murderer' at the beginning of the film. As Luc Dardenne explained in 2012, long before the drama was created, the brothers later opted for variant 3 (see quote above), in which the urban wasteland assists in the search for the truth: according to Deleuze, movement (in its relation to space) remains 'eine äußere Bewegung' in relation to actions.³⁴ Both the *terrain vague* that Jenny enters in order to carry out her private investigations with the caravan owner Lambert and the one on which Bryan and his friend engage in a chase with her are important stations, even triggers and points of help in her search for the truth. Close-ups and cropped bodies of the protagonists create *espaces quelconques* according to the 'loi de fragmentation'.³⁵ Inscrutable entanglements, dubious deals, deceit and lies, unsolved crimes and dark secrets³⁶ shadow the *terrain vague* as an

33 Ibid., p. 199 f.

34 See Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen*, p. 157.

35 See Deleuze, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, p. 153.

36 Here, see Wolfram Nitsch: 'Wie die einflussreichen Studien von Carlo Ginzburg und Luc Boltanski erwiesen haben, wird damit die Deutung der wesentlichen Strukturen und Tendenzen des Kriminalgenres zu einem Schlüssel, um die Veränderungen der Wirklichkeitswahrnehmung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert zu verstehen. So überrascht es wenig, dass sich eine Vielzahl von Theorien und Ordnungsmodellen an den Phänomenen Kriminalroman und Kriminalfilm abarbeiten. Ausgehend von Luc Boltanskis grundlegender Studie [lassen sich] verschiedene theoretische Auseinandersetzungen – z. B. marxistische (Brecht, Mandel), existenzialistische' (Kracauer, Porfirio), semiotische (Todorov, Ginzburg, Dubois), psychoanalytische (Copjec, Žižek), kultur- und medienwissenschaftliche (Kittler, Gugerli) – mit den Herausforderungen des Kriminalgenres sondieren und deren Verständnishorizont diskutieren.' available at: https://romanistik.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/sites/romanistik/Mitarbeiter/Nitsch/SS_2019.pdf (accessed on 27 December 2020). Even though LA FILLE INCONNUE is

arbitrary space: 'Le premier moyen fut l'ombre [...]: un espace rempli d'ombres [...] devient espace quelconque. [...] La profondeur est le lieu de la lutte, qui tantôt attire l'espace dans le sans-froid d'un trou noir, et tantôt le tire vers la lumière [...]; mais c'est par une 'inversion des valeurs claires et obscures.'"³⁷

not a classic crime film, the young doctor Jenny Davin carries out her own investigations in order to grasp and process at least parts of reality.

37 Ibid., p. 157 f.

6. The *terrain vague* as a Place of Potential for Creativity and Participation

6.1 LE PONT DU NORD (RIVETTE, 1981)

When you watch a film by Jacques Rivette, you become aware that virtual realities (in the plural) find their way into the film. Other realities are invaluable to Rivette. Just as Jean-Louis Baudry's cinema becomes a basic cinematographic apparatus and dispositive, serving as a kind of apparatus of the imaginary, embodying the last and highest level of artificial magic according to André Bazin and described by Gilles Deleuze as a place where mental and perceptive images become material, Rivette (like Alain Resnais, incidentally) processes such concepts thematically and aesthetically in his films themselves. Not only by staging archaic forms of various 'vies parallèles', but also through illusionistic and theatrical simulations, as well as hallucinogenic and spectral phenomena, which function as correlates of his images. In the following context-sensitive analysis of a representative example, I will focus in particular on Rivette's modelling of the space in and through which other realities emerge. Furthermore, I examine the extent to which the cinematic representation and the differentiation of different levels of reality entail a media-specific distinction between the categories 'imagination' and 'simulation'. The basis for my remarks is my essay 'Rôleuses, vagabondes, arpenteuses: flâner sur les *terrains vagues* de Jacques Rivette (LE PONT DU NORD)'.¹

1 See Jacqueline Maria Broich: 'Rôleuses, vagabondes, arpenteuses: flâner sur les *terrains vagues* de Jacques Rivette (LE PONT DU NORD)', in Jacqueline Maria Broich/Wolfram Nitsch/Daniel Ritter (eds.), *Terrains vagues: Les friches urbaines dans la littérature, la photographie et le cinéma français*, Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal 2019 (Littératures), pp. 181–204.

One dream of the predominantly French auteur cinema-associated, obstinate Jacques Rivette was to shoot at least one film about Paris in every decade from the late 1950s onwards. He first realized this with *PARIS NOUS APPARTIENT* (1960), followed by *CÉLINE ET JULIE VONT EN BATEAU* (1974) and finally with *LE PONT DU NORD* (1981). And the *terrain vague* plays a special role in all of them. In *CÉLINE ET JULIE*, for example, two young women pursue and seduce each other (and others, too) by complicitly creating magical connections where there are none: they venture into the fenced, slightly overgrown, and ambiguously located terrain of a mysterious, ostensibly abandoned house with the address *7 bis, Rue du Nadir aux Pommes* (actually located in the town of Garches, west of Paris), where the principle of improvisation reigns and the infinite possibilities of each moment unfold. There, starting from the most concrete, they create a space of possibility where they imbue the material with a comical autonomy in a miraculous, even fantastic way. Rivette's working method explores a variety of cinematic possibilities and proves his courage by giving a central place to chance, the play(er), to improvisation and to the risk of constant failure: dialogues are developed together with the actors on location, actors (especially women) gain in importance, an omniscient script no longer exists and thus no longer determines the chronology of events. It is only at the editing table that Rivette develops the filmic narrative, especially its duration, from the logic of the filmed material. The intrinsic characteristics of the *terrain vague*, in particular the randomness and the lack of planned design as well as its specific uses, which do not follow any prescribed plan, but happen spontaneously and often in the sense of a *bricolage*, find their exact formal equivalent in the cinematic creation à la Rivette – in something of a *cinématographie du terrain vague*. The wasteland itself is hence a cinematic space of imagination and potential. In addition, Rivette's user figures are not the usual *flâneurs* and strays, but – in constant association with the cat he always symbolizes, which typically points the way to the *terrains vagues* – wandering women. In this respect, Rivette's films also lead to a gendered perspective on the *terrain vague*, which is hinted at even in the surrealist sexualization of the wasteland. And indeed: in his films, Rivette presents a specifically female way of seeing and dealing with the urban wasteland, characterized by high sensitivity, shy playfulness and inexhaustible curiosity.

At this point, I will attempt to outline three prototypes of the *terrain vague*, which result from previous engagement with various theoretical approaches and the topological analysis model that initially emerged through the examina-

tion of literature, photography,² comics, video games, and cinema as a heuristic tool aimed at capturing the characteristics of urban wastelands as accurately as possible. The goal is to then investigate these features as precisely as possible in artistic and media representations of the multifaceted and diverse³ *terrains vagues*, and likewise in the actual places of extralinguistic reality themselves. Consequently, the statements about urban wastelands are not only classified and systematized on the basis of certain criteria, but also made visible as characteristics during the interpretation process:



(Fig. 91)

(Fig. 92)

(Fig. 93)

As we already know, the model takes the form of a two-dimensional matrix, where one dimension reveals the three semantic levels or etymological lines of the adjective *vague*, which have been expanding since François-René de Chateaubriand:⁴

(1) *vacuus* represents emptiness, absence and negation; **(2)** *vagus* represents the indeterminate, random, disordered and diffuse movement; **(3)** *vâgr* represents transformation, transgression and upheaval. These three lines of meaning are projected in a second dimension onto our ontological levels, which are essential for the description of urban, social reality: **(1)** phy-

2 See, for example, the publication by Danièle Méaux, 'Paysages du chaos: À propos de deux séries de Lewis Baltz', *Focales*, n°1, 2017, available at: <https://focales.univ-st-etienne.fr/index.php?id=422> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

3 These three designs were created with reference to the film LE PONT DU NORD using the VectorWorks® drawing program.

4 See François-René de Chateaubriand, 'Génie du christianisme' (1802), in Chateaubriand, *Essai sur les révolutions/Génie du christianisme*, ed. by Maurice Regard, Paris: Gallimard 1978, p. 1054; 'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem (et de Jérusalem à Paris, en allant par la Grèce, et en revenant par l'Égypte, la Barbarie et l'Espagne)' (1811), in Chateaubriand, *Œuvres romanesques et voyages*, ed. by Maurice Regard, Paris: Gallimard 1969, vol. 2, p. 878; Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (1848), ed. by Maurice Levailant/Georges Moulinier, Paris: Gallimard 1951, p. 575.

sics, (2) economics, (3) politics, (4) sociology, (5) ethnology/anthropology, (6) ecology, (7) aesthetics, which together form the structure of the theory chapter,⁵ and (8) practice.

Why was Rivette's *long métrage* LE PONT DU NORD chosen to illustrate the above ideas in practice? This question is easy to answer, because Rivette's film reveals three aspects that I would like to emphasize: firstly, it offers us several types of *terrains vagues*. Secondly, it shows us that the people who frequent a *terrain vague* are not necessarily male – as is so often the case – because contrary to expectations, his protagonists are female, drifters, vagabonds and wanderers. Thirdly and finally, his work manifests that the fact or act of roaming, strolling, 'surveying' and wandering around is so inherent to urban wastelands and so characteristic of the main characters, so peculiar to the protagonists, that their movements in space could be described as 'terrain vaguisme'. 'Chez Rivette, il faut que les films soient longs, que des pistes soient arpentées, qu'un seul fil se déroule, avec ce souhait paradoxal et délicat: *que les détours permettent d'aller plus droit. C'est-à-dire plus vrai, plus exact.*' With Rivette, the paths and trails predominate; the adventure takes precedence over the destination: 'Il faut que ça bouge, que ça se casse, que ça vive. [...] [!] y a l'obstination qua va à l'aventure jusqu'à l'inouï, et ce direct de l'enregistrement';⁶ all this is what makes Rivette's cinema. And what exactly is happening on the north bridge?⁷

As Héléne Frappat puts it in her synopsis: 'Marie Lafée (Bulle Ogier) sort de prison où son passé de terroriste⁸ l'a conduite. Devenue claustrophobe, elle ne supporte plus aucun lieu clos.'⁹ Marie provokes an accident near the *Porte de Montreuil* (in the 20th arrondissement of Paris) by hysterically running between parked cars onto the road where a young woman is riding her moped. Baptiste, played by Pascale Ogier, is an outsider who roams Paris on her *mobylette*, constantly in search of the so-called 'Max', her (imaginary?) enemies or even police

5 See table of contents and structure of the chapter 'Theory of the *terrain vague*'.

6 Stéphane Delorme, 'Jacques Rivette, l'obstiné', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°720, 2016, p. 5.

7 'Le Pont du Nord' is also the title of a medieval chanson that refers to a legend according to which a ball was held on the *Pont du Nord*. Legend has it that all the children who defied their parents' ban on going there to dance drowned.

8 Gaspard Nectoux, 'Bifurcations', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°720, 2016: 'Et la Bulle Ogier du PONT DU NORD, n'est-elle pas la même terroriste que dans LA TROISIEME GENERATION de Fassbinder?', p. 35.

9 Héléne Frappat, *Jacques Rivette, secret compris*, Evreux: Herissey 2001, p. 248.

officers, who sometimes take the form of lions.¹⁰ In between, she devotes herself to her urban outdoor karate training. For four days, Marie and Baptiste wander the streets of Paris, sleeping in the open air, in a car or in the cinema *Le Déjaset*, which is open all night. Marie is keen to meet up again with her former lover Julien (Pierre Clémenti). She succeeds, but Julien is behaving strangely and is inexplicably unsettled. Due to gambling debts, he accepts a briefcase containing clipped newspaper articles about recent political scandals and state affairs, as well as a detailed map of the city. Julien is supposed to return the bag to its original recipient, but – just like the two wanderers – he is followed by at least one ‘Max’. Marie and Baptiste seize the briefcase. While the former spreads out the city map to use it as a board for the *Game of the Goose*, the latter believes she sees ‘Max’ everywhere and must fight them. When Marie returns the documents to Julien, he threatens her again and kills her, declaring that he loves her. Meanwhile, Baptiste and the first ‘Max’ engage in a rather playful karate fight, with one eye watching them closely but secretly, whether through a camera lens or the scope of a rifle, which follows them and lies in wait for them. The two drifters meet by chance as soul mates of the travelling knight (of the sad figure) Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza, also known by Rivette as Doña Qui and Sancha Pan, and are almost inseparable from then on. Together they confront the ‘Max’ conspiracy (for example, the Jean de Broglie affair and the murder of Pierre Goldman in the 1970s), their fear of enclosed spaces, and Marie’s past. The Paris shown is a Paris of wastelands, one of which is also a protagonist of the film,¹¹ ‘dont chaque territoire devient la case d’un jeu de l’oie, les deux alliées mènent un combat qui, pour Marie, sera le dernier et, pour Baptiste, une initiation’.¹²

So how does Rivette model the cinematographic space in his *cinéma rôdeur-arpeur*? How does his film organize and structure the space that is his own? What effect does the space have on viewers and what meanings do they ascribe to it? How is the space perceived by the recipients?¹³

10 See *ibid.*, p. 248.

11 See Alain Bergala, ‘Rivette, Baptiste et Marie’, in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°333, 1982, pp. 5–7. Narratives weave a kind of web of meaning around the two protagonists, but as human beings the latter are never alone in this; it is always a cooperative endeavour and, in this respect, transcends a purely egocentric perspective. Their disguise also refers to an intersubjective perspective, insofar as it goes beyond mere survival.

12 Frappat, *Jacques Rivette, secret compris*, p. 248.

13 See Antoine Gaudin, *L’espace cinématographique: Esthétique et dramaturgie*, Paris: Armand Colin 2015, p. 6.

Le Paris de Rivette est littéralement filmé 'de fond en comble' puisque ses innombrables trajets, déambulations et filatures s'effectuent aussi bien au ras du trottoir (dans *LE PONT DU NORD* ainsi que dans *CELINE ET JULIE VONT EN BATEAU*) que de toits en toits. Défier la ville depuis ses combles est aussi une posture récurrente chez Rivette. [...] Autant de ludiques variations sur 'À nous deux maintenant!', que Pascale Ogier ou Baptiste déforme en 'À nous deux Babylone!' à son arrivée en mobylette à la porte de Montreuil. À l'habituelle dichotomie de la ville (lieux publics/passages secrets), Rivette rajoute celle du théâtre (scènes/coulisses) tout en se plaisant à ne pas tomber dans un jeu de stricte équivalence. Il y a autant de scènes cachées (les chantiers) que de coulisses à ciel ouvert (passages, escaliers, rues borgnes et étroites). [...] [L]es édicules de square ou les marchés couverts sont investis par Pascale Ogier pour ses séances de karaté robotique.¹⁴

Analogous to this method of 'surveying' the terrain, there are works where the main character follows a trail outdoors and must interpret signs for it; similar 'treasure hunts' can be found, for instance, in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865); in Louis Feuillade's *FANTOMAS* und *JUVE CONTRE FANTOMAS* (1913); in Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926); in André Breton's *Nadja* (1928); in Léon-Paul Fargue's *Le Piéton de Paris* (1939); or in the psychogeographic *dérives* of the Situationists. As a method in the critique of urbanism, the *dérive* serves the exploration of urban space insofar as it playfully and experimentally breaks through habitual patterns of perception and movement and thus opens the senses to the influence of the geographical milieu on people's mental and emotional experience of the city.¹⁵

[C]omme y voir une fidélité sans faille aux méthodes de la *Nouvelle Vague* (enregistrer le présent d'une ville et d'une société, c'est aussi capturer les prémices de ses mutations). [...] Les lieux sont pris comme tels, dans leur quotidienneté, voire leur ingratitude, mais souvent désignés avec un décalage poétique. C'est ce qui permet à Bulle Ogier de s'exclamer au sommet de l'Arc de Triomphe: 'C'est bien cette falaise. Tu n'as pas oublié que j'aimais l'air du large'.¹⁶

According to Joachim Lepastier, it doesn't take much more than an actress walking through a male-dominated world, without a written plot, without rehearsed dialogue, even without a fixed intention, to create a state of unsettling strangeness. With the help of a map of Paris, which seems to have been redistributed and restructured and on which the compendium of arrondissements

14 Joachim Lepastier, 'Paris, bords de scènes', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°720, 2016, p. 32.

15 On the concepts of *dérive* and *psychogéographie*, see the works of the Situationists, especially Guy Debord, 'Théorie de la dérive', pp. 251–263.

16 Lepastier, 'Paris, bords de scènes', p. 32.

is marked in the shape of a snail, the lines and ‘borders’ suddenly seem more like open doors than fences or enclosures:

Elles sont un espace-temps où faire l’expérience d’un ailleurs, d’une suspension, d’une parenthèse, en un mot de limbes. [...] Le territoire des limbes, c’est surtout celui d’où semble revenir le Paris du PONT DU NORD tout en friches et en chantiers, un Paris à la fois concret et mental, délabré mais appropriable par et pour le jeu (de piste, comédie et même karaté conclusif). Le dernier plan – sur les abattoirs de la Villette, en destruction, mais dont la façade semble encore tenir en suspension – a d’ailleurs des allures de rideau de scène qui refuse de tomber.¹⁷

One could name many triggers for these serious urban developments: after the Second World War, France experienced an economic boom known as the *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–75). There was massive peri-urbanization in and around Paris; in 1975, the metropolitan area already had almost 9 million inhabitants. The *boulevard périphérique* is known to have been built on the site of the former *zone*. In the 1960s, thanks to the automotive sector, the first satellite cities and many large prefabricated housing blocks began to emerge, almost all designed on the drawing board; the birth of the *banlieue* – revered and reviled. At the same time, the capital is being modernized to such an extent that one could speak of a second Haussmannization. The trend in this respect is for the city centre to open up to (international) capital, which in turn leads to the construction of large supermarkets and shopping centres, shopping streets and high-rise office buildings, i.e. the standardized, transitory and mono-functional *non-places* multiply (according to Augé) – including increasingly museified buildings – while the city centre becomes homogenized. Paris, caught between the urban changes (provoked by the scandals at the end of the Giscard d’Estaing era in the winter of 1980 and the election of Mitterrand in May 1981), is seen as neglected rather than as awaiting major construction projects:

Cet état de la ville a des allures de table rase paradoxale, stimulant autant la désorientation qu’une possibilité de nouveau départ. [...] C’est un Paris qui a même d’étranges accents borgésiens de ‘dédale désert’, comme l’atteste le dialogue [entre Marie et Baptiste sur le *terrain vague*, chantier]: ‘C’est ça, ton labyrinthe?’ – ‘Ils l’ont détruit’. – ‘Ou alors, ils sont en train de le reconstruire’. PARIS S’EN VA, c’était déjà le titre du court métrage ‘préparatoire’ au PONT DU NORD, installant le principe du jeu de l’oie et des sauts de puce de lieu en lieu.¹⁸

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 33.

For Rivette, this means creating a space of dreams that was never previously envisaged, one that also bears the name 'la vie parallèle'. According to Stéphane du Mesnildot, this 'parallel life' or 'other reality' is necessarily secret, through the practices that are carried out there, but also through the opening up of other interstitial spaces through which viewers can slip into the film:

[Marie] ne peut plus entrer dans un lieu clos sans suffoquer, comme si tel un corps étranger elle était rejetée et que la circulation entre les mondes devenait impossible. On a l'impression que les interstices ont été colmatés et que la vie parallèle prend désormais le triste nom de 'marginalité'. [...] Rivette confie le rôle de Julien, l'homme qui assassine [Marie] pour une sordide affaire de chantage, à Pierre Clémenti, icône de la contre-culture des années 70. Les destructeurs de la vie parallèle, qui l'ont transformée en une périphérie invivable rongée par la drogue et la souffrance, sont ceux-là même qui en étaient auparavant les héros. LE PONT DU NORD est le pont vers le froid, celui qui glace la société des années 80. Cependant, un passage de relais s'effectue entre Marie, la fée en robe rouge, et Baptiste, jeune guerrière en armure de cuir. Si, tel don Quichotte, elle est prête à affronter le dragon, Rivette l'enserme impitoyablement dans l'écran d'une télévision de surveillance.¹⁹

In terms of editing and montage, Stéphanie Pélissier considers the film editor, cutter, or editing master in general as the image author, more precisely, the creator of the images, since their work has already begun at the filming stage. The film editor Nicole Lubtchansky attempts to literally 'write' the film based on the filmed material, aiming to move towards its initial intention by always respecting the decisions of the director and those of the actors. Sometimes she fundamentally modifies the film through the editing, especially with regard to the improvisation that is so important to Rivette, but in any case, Lubtchansky helps the director to bring the film to life at least as he had imagined it, or even better. In a way, the editing is the third signature of the film, directly after the script and the recording/actual shooting. According to Stéphanie Pélissier, editing often goes beyond the script: if the *montage* is good, it is even better than the script, because there is a phenomenological relationship between the two, obviously because of the acting, the staging and because each technician brings their own artistic, rarely disappointing touch. François Truffaut is said to have said that one usually shoots against the script and cuts against the shots. But in fact, it is not a question of 'against', but of 'with', because with Rivette it is evident that we are 'with'. He uses the filmed material extensively,

19 Stéphane du Mesnildot, 'Nadja cinéma', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°720, 2016, p. 34.

mais Nicole Lubtchansky est aussi très castratrice en jetant beaucoup pendant le premier bout-à-bout des 'rushes' sélectionnés dans l'ordre du découpage technique qu'on appelle 'l'ours'²⁰ qui sort de la toute première salve de montage après le tournage. Parfois, il y a la volonté de 'dérushage'²¹, en faisant une sélection dans les morceaux (de film) enregistrés, pendant lequel l'équipe regarde ensemble les 'rushes', c'est-à-dire des épreuves de tournage.²²

Accordingly, Rivette's way of imagining the film, imagining it without a previously written script, letting the principle of improvisation reign during shooting, then selecting the filmed material during editing and assembling it in the form of an aesthetic act, inscribes itself in the mode 'aux airs de terrain vague'.

(1) The selected scene takes place on a large, abandoned building site. While the dark-haired Baptiste enjoys her music through headphones, Marie Lafée, the blonde, crosses the construction site and walks everywhere between the excavators and the old buildings that are still standing, as if she were looking for something or someone. When she returns, two businessmen appear on the *terrain vague*. Marie sees them but doesn't react in any way. The scene gives us a surreal impression of loneliness. Due to the destroyed buildings, the absence of any living creatures and the recapture of the ruined side building by nature, the scene even has a post-apocalyptic feel to it, also because the colour grey, which symbolizes desolation, wasteland and indeterminacy, dominates in this shot and thus colours our first impression. The scene also represents the absurdity of existence, as the actions of the two protagonists seem to have neither intentions nor consequences. In addition, the viewer only perceives destruction, dreariness and hopelessness on this wasteland. Considering Marie's past, this concrete construction site on one hand reminds us of her time in prison, while, on the other hand, the emptiness of the terrain and the ruins of the lighthouse symbolize a certain sense of liberation. Perhaps the waiting Baptiste leaves Marie alone to give her time to think and explore this strange place. In more abstract terms, this building site could also symbolize the thoughts of the two stray women: Marie's own inner turmoil distresses her deeply, as it is marked by despair and isolation, stirring her to the core. At the

20 Yannick Vallet, *La Grammaire du Cinéma – De l'écriture au montage: les techniques du langage filmé*, Paris: Armand Colin 2016, p. 180.

21 See Vincent Pinel/Christophe Pinel, *Dictionnaire technique du cinéma*, Paris: Armand Colin 2016.

22 Broich, 'Rôleuses, vagabondes, arpenteuses: flâner sur les *terrains vagues* de Jacques Rivette (LE PONT DU NORD)', p. 191.

same time, the wide-open space where her gaze can wander into the distance expresses a certain freedom of thought, which is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the two businessmen. The space represented by the film, also known as 'l'espace représenté par le film',²³ is this concrete *terrain vague* construction site, recognizable through the medium-specific impression of reality, yet not particularly hospitable:



(Fig. 94)

Like some radical filmmakers, Rivette also uses *décadrages*, which are 'cadres insolites et frustrants qui perturbent l'espace dramatique en y installant une

23 Gaudin, *L'espace cinématographique*, pp. 64–67: 'il y a d'abord l'espace 'représenté par le film'; c'est l'espace-objet, concret, reconnaissable et 'habitable' que nous sommes culturellement éduqués à percevoir. Nous sommes *a priori face à cet espace*, dans un rapport d'identification-projection encouragé par l'impression de réalité propre au médium. Cette dernière ouvre également à une relation phénoménale approfondie vis-à-vis du monde représenté sur l'écran. Mais il y a également l'espace 'inscrit dans le corps du film', qui est le principal enjeu d'une approche en termes d'image-espace. Nous sommes à cet espace-signal, *en situation* de co-présence. Ce qui est visé ici, c'est un rapport direct et charnel avec le phénomène spatial que constitue le film *en lui-même*. À ce niveau-là, l'image de cinéma n'est plus considérée comme une fenêtre ouverte sur un monde constitué par des corps disposés dans un espace référent, mais comme une structure organique primordiale au sein de laquelle s'inscrivent des rapports spatiaux, sous la forme d'une pure organisation abstraite/évolutive des volumes de plein et de vide, en mouvement permanent. [...] Bref, l'espace *représenté par le film* et l'espace *inscrit dans le corps du film* composent ensemble un système dynamique, fondé sur le mouvement et la variation: [...] 'image-espace'.'

scénographie lacunaire, vectrice des tensions',²⁴ to illustrate the relationship between his protagonists and the recorded *terrain vague*. According to Pascal Bonitzer, this is a dynamic use of the edges of the picture frame, in complete contrast to the centring of classical cinema, which attempts to blur, ignore or even forget the edges. In other words, it is more about *cadrage émancipé* than *décentrage systématique*. Antoine Gaudin explains as follows: 'Les décadrages, quelles que soient leurs natures, introduisent dans le film une sorte de dissonance spatiale, qui s'oppose à l'harmonie classique.'²⁵ Jacques Rivette, whose staging principles are also based on proximity to the actors, improvisation and the hand-held camera, uses this shift or displacement of essential elements to the edges of the image frame to maintain a visual tension that is provoked by an imbalance in the image composition. Its *décadrage* can be attributed to diegesis as soon as one of its protagonists, Marie or Baptiste, expresses their own standpoint, thereby determining the direction and focus of the gaze. This happens in the form of a subjective camera movement that corresponds with the character's eye movements and thus gives perspective to the film image. In the spirit of a poetics of destruction, the ruin serves as an iconographic emblem, a narrative décor or a fantastic symbol. Furthermore, the ruin – in our case, the lighthouse or the industrial hall of the former factory next to the railway tracks – oscillates between incompleteness, decay, destruction, and reconstruction, alluding to a period of the past that encompasses all these aspects, processually uniting and esteeming them. At times, Rivette also leaves us with signs and traces by allowing Marie and Baptiste to stroll through urban wastelands.

(2) This is also the case in our next film sequence, in which we look 'inside' a gap between buildings: Marie and Baptiste stroll along the railway tracks and amuse themselves. The viewer sees building façades until the two women reach a closed front door, whose house number is recognizable on a small sign hanging on the wall. They open the door very carefully, enter and find a neglected, unkempt 'garden', which at first glance looks like a courtyard or a gap between buildings. It is therefore an abandoned, neglected property surrounded by built-up areas. In this case, the urban regeneration measures in place at the time would normally have favoured urban densification over the preservation of natural spaces.

24 Pascal Bonitzer, *Décadrages: peinture et cinéma*, Paris: Étoile 1985.

25 Gaudin, *L'espace cinématographique*, p. 40.



(Fig. 95)

On the ground, Marie and Baptiste discover a male corpse lying near a large stone slab that looks like a gravestone. Instead of being surprised or shocked at the sight of the carcass, they behave indifferently, almost disrespectfully, placing newspapers, the map of Paris and their version of the *Game of the Goose* on the victim's head. The recipients immediately gain the impression that a gruesome crime must have been committed beforehand; the viewers therefore have an information deficit, because they wonder whether the stray, wandering women were aware of the crime, whether they are perhaps complicit, at least as accomplices. Once again, Rivette succeeds in creating an atmosphere of oppression that prevails because of the deep abysses of the human soul. '[Comme] la couleur apporte un réalisme supplémentaire à l'image [...], elle permet de jouer sur les effets symboliques, sur les citations picturales; en cela, elle est essentiellement un moyen d'expression supplémentaire pour un projet esthétique',²⁶ as with Jacques Rivette. Although the gap between the buildings naturally does not have a roof, so the sky seems open, this *terrain vague* remains grey and dark and has an oppressive, disturbing and even threatening effect on us.

26 Marie-Thérèse Journot, *Le vocabulaire du cinéma*, Paris: Armand Colin 42015, p. 39.



(Fig. 96)

(3) Let us now move on to the railway tracks and industrial wastelands. '[Comme] narration et représentation se produisent ensemble, il n'est pas toujours évident de distinguer l'une de l'autre dans un film'²⁷ – this sounds simple and is true, and not only according to Jacques Aumont and Michel Marie. In the next film sequence, Marie and Baptiste sit on a former railway platform right next to the tracks and philosophize together about life: 'Qui sommes-nous? D'où venons-nous? Où allons-nous?' Once again, the atmosphere created by Rivette in this scene, set in an urban industrial wasteland, whether in the *banlieue* or the centre of Paris, evokes a dark, sombre effect. From the perspective of the women, the atmosphere initially appears somewhat slow and neutral, as they express themselves thoughtfully and reflectively against the backdrop of the abandoned old buildings. In this context, it feels somewhat melancholic, yet also visionary, as they discuss their future together. It almost seems as if Rivette used a monochromatic filter to make the shots more colourless:

Il est assez difficile de concevoir, par exemple, une analyse de la perspective dans les images d'un film: celle-ci est en principe toujours présente par construction (de l'objectif de la caméra), et on ne pourra que le vérifier indéfiniment. Cela devient intéressant si ce jeu de la perspective est troublé ou souligné. C'est ainsi que les films des années 1960 d'Antonioni [en pensant, par exemple, à son long métrage *IL DESERTO ROSSO* de 1964] ont donné lieu à d'assez nombreux commentaires en termes de représentations de l'espace et de l'architecture, mettant en valeur un usage particulier de perspectives profondes dans des espaces fortement géométrisés et assez vides. [...] Il en va de même des analyses de la couleur, qui se

27 Jacques Aumont/Michel Marie, *L'analyse des films*, Paris: Armand Colin ³2015, p. 115.

sont presque toujours focalisées sur des films où l'usage des couleurs est frappant et significatif, et s'écarte d'un simple rendu réaliste.²⁸

In this case, I am not only referring to the unreal dramaturgy of colour, which is also reflected in the red skirt Marie wears throughout *LE PONT DU NORD*, but also to the fact that Rivette composes spaces simply by making 'un tout avec des éléments divers'²⁹ out of them, thus composing them out of different elements, in keeping with Aumont and Marie's definition of image composition.³⁰ The two protagonists could change their lives, symbolically get back on track with the help of the tracks and take the first step in the 'right' direction. In Rivette's cinema there are always other possibilities and alternatives on offer: the bridge could also represent a connection between different ways of life, it could stand for the past, the future and the in-between, it could be the railing between the no-longer and the not-yet:



(Fig. 97)

(4) Shortly before, Baptiste is isolated by a 'Max' who uses a hot glue gun to wrap her in a spider's web inside the industrial ruins at the edge of the tracks, leaving her resembling a cocoon for pupation. She has difficulty getting rid of

28 Ibid., p. 117 f.

29 Ibid., p. 118.

30 See *ibid.* p. 118.

her shackles and freeing herself alone, so she waits for Marie, who rushes to rescue Baptiste from her symbolic 'prison'.



(Fig. 98)

Strictly speaking, Marie has to force herself to enter the industrial ruin, because the cinema auditorium shown in *LE PONT DU NORD* is the only truly enclosed space that the claustrophobic Marie actually enters. Since her imprisonment, Lafée has been afraid of not getting enough air, i.e. of suffocating. The *Game of the Goose* helps her by extending the cinematographic space; it gives her room to manoeuvre and air to breathe. It is a board game and a pure game of chance with a course on which the game pieces advance according to the result of the roll of two dice. The game board usually consists of 63 squares, which are wound inwards in a spiral. It also contains a certain number of *cases bénéfiques*, beneficial fields where one gains advantages, as well as a multitude of *cases-pièges*, traps that result in disadvantages (a bridge, a hotel, a fountain, a labyrinth, a prison etc.), much like the *Wheel of Fortune*, which decides over life and death. The aim is to be the first to reach the last square: 'Nombreux auteurs ont illustré leurs œuvres par un jeu de l'oie, entre autres, Ésope, Jean de la Fontaine, Miguel de Cervantes, Charles Perrault, Eugène Sue, Jules Verne, Jacques Offenbach, Laurent Kloetzer etc. Il y a aussi des variantes de ce jeu: *Serpents et échelles*.'³¹

31 Broich, 'Rôdeuses, vagabondes, arpenteuses: flâner sur les *terrains vagues* de Jacques Rivette (*LE PONT DU NORD*)', p. 198.



(Fig. 99)

It is obvious that the *Game of the Goose* is still a game and remains so, at least in most cases, but sometimes signs and symbols do indeed refer to reality. The 'game board' in *LE PONT DU NORD* creates its own space because it is superimposed and combined with the map of Paris, such that the maps overlap: 'une représentation topographique schématique et simplifiée, sur laquelle on constitue bien les différents arrondissements, autant dire que le plan de Paris sert de plateau pour le jeu de l'oie à Marie et Baptiste.'³² Furthermore, the game dissolves the referential legibility of the map. This overlap or intersection characterizes the film by providing a reason for an apparent separation between the reality and fiction of the *récit cinématographique*. The two wanderers search for clues on the *terrains vagues* in order to master the course of their search for meaning in the best possible way. For them, this type of search remains the only possible way out, characterized by continuous circular movements along the outskirts of Paris. The viewers know very little about Marie and nothing at all about Baptiste, but:

[à] partir d'elles, se met en place une machine de fiction et de l'aléatoire. Pur jeu, pur fantôme, mais qui va peu à peu rencontrer la réalité, jusqu'à cette preuve irréfutable de la vérité de la fiction: la mort de Marie. Le complot universel et imaginaire était vrai. [...] La carte correspond au territoire. Les cases du jeu de l'oie se retrouvent sur le terrain. Et la mort de Marie transforme sa vie en destin. Mais

32 Ibid.

d'où vient le caractère profondément dérangeant et angoissant du PONT DU NORD? C'est le passage d'une civilisation à une autre. Une mutation, métaphorisée par le décor de destruction, de désertification de la seconde moitié du film. Les deux femmes suivent le chemin de fer de la rue d'Hautpoul au parc de la Villette, aux anciens abattoirs. Il faut qu'un monde se détruise (que meure Marie), s'auto-détruise, pour que le monde nouveau puisse apparaître.³³

Chance and determinism are just two sides of the same rationality. Our wanderers stroll through various districts of Paris, cross the *Place Denfert-Rochereau* (the former *Place d'Enfer*, which is certainly no coincidence and on which a copy of the *Lion de Belfort* stands) and then walk over the bridge of the former slaughterhouses in the *Parc de la Villette*. As far as the relationship between the map and the territory is concerned, there are very tangible equivalences: the spider's web in the industrial ruins corresponds to the prison in the *Game of the Goose*; the stairs that Marie and Baptiste climb and descend endlessly correspond to the labyrinth of the game.

Let us now follow another track to and across the *terrain vague*, namely the *piste/bande sonore/bande-son*. It's a commonplace for music to add value to a film. In general, there are two ways to create a cinema-specific emotion in relation to the situation depicted. On the one hand, 'la musique exprime directement sa participation à l'émotion de la scène, en revêtant le rythme, le ton [...], cela évidemment en fonction de codes culturels de la tristesse, de la gaieté, de l'émotion et du mouvement' – in this case we speak of empathic music, in the sense of empathy as a 'faculté de ressentir les sentiments des autres'.³⁴ On the other hand, 'la musique affiche au contraire une indifférence ostensible à la situation, en se déroulant de manière égale, impavide et inéluctable [...] and c'est sur le fond même de cette indifférence que se déroule la scène, ce qui a pour effet non de geler l'émotion, mais au contraire de la redoubler, en l'inscrivant sur un fond cosmique' – this is what we call non-empathic music.³⁵ Michel Chion explains:

que fait la *musique anempathique*, sinon en dévoiler la vérité, la face robotique. C'est elle qui fait surgir la trame mécanique de cette tapisserie émotionnelle et sensorielle. [...] *L'effet anempathique* concerne le plus souvent la musique, mais il peut aussi être utilisé avec des bruits: lorsque, par exemple, dans une scène violente, après la mort d'un personnage, un processus quelconque (bruit de

33 Joël Magny, 'Le Pont du Nord', in *Cinéma 72*, n°280, 1982, pp. 76–78.

34 Michel Chion, *L'audio-vision: Son et image au cinéma*, Paris: Armand Colin 2008, p. 11.

35 Ibid.

machine, ronronnement d'un ventilateur, jet d'une douche etc.) continue de se dérouler *comme si de rien n'était* [...].³⁶

These effects are usually used by filmmakers to paraphrase the moving images or provide a counterpoint. In our film sequences from *LE PONT DU NORD*, the *terrains vagues* are by no means emphasized by empathic or non-empathic music. You only hear the sounds of what is happening in the scene and what the protagonists are doing, more precisely, the sounds of moving cars, running machines, human footsteps on the floor. Every sound (here empathic) plays a significant role in the sound universe of this Rivette film, because every movement contains several significant components. The *Game of the Goose*, experimented with and lived by Marie and Baptiste, doesn't hide behind non-empathetic, interchangeable music. Since Rivette has complained countless times about film music, it is clear that he frequently opts for a *son direct*; as an exception, he inserts two tangos by Astor Piazzolla into his work afterwards, perhaps to fill a blank space or a gap, perhaps out of a *horror vacui*. Nevertheless, the quasi-absence of film music does not help us to interpret the *terrains vagues* sequences on an emotional level or to make categorical sense of them unambiguously.

As we have seen, with Rivette it is the *rôdeuses*, *vagabondes* and *arpenteuses* who slip through the small hole in the fence, through the *entrée des artistes*, to enter the empty, neglected grounds. Is this film therefore a feminization of the *flâneur*? Marie and Baptiste are not really *flâneuses* who stroll around without a specific goal, but rather players in search of the next challenge and the adventures that come with it, collectors for whom everything serves as an object of contemplation, both the beautiful and attractive and the ugly and repulsive, and yes, even the ugly and therefore attractive. Because they obviously have time. Time to experiment with various movement modes, truly acting out the life of the *flâneur*: they stroll and roam, wander around, comb the city, leave their way to chance, stagger, limp³⁷, hop and jump, they take detours, take shortcuts, move along gropingly, scramble, whirl around, run hairpin bends, leave no corner unturned and 'survey' the terrain. From time to time, they look at their wristwatch and consult the map (which also contains the *Game of the Goose*), to find out which tracks and signs might influence,

36 Ibid., p. 12.

37 See du Mesnildot, 'Nadja cinéma', p. 34: 'Si l'on marche dans les films de Rivette, c'est forcément en boitant: un pas dans notre monde et un autre dans la vie parallèle.'

attract or deter them. Sometimes they move linearly through the urban space, sometimes they follow the snail-shaped spiral on the *Game of the Goose's* board. Our two main characters experience everything they see and hear, all their intense impressions in parallel, ergo synaesthetically. In this way, they also perceive the incoherent, with the aim of creating connections between things that do not actually fit together and making a kind of collage out of them. Instead of a logical *récit cinématographique*, i.e. a stringent cinematic narrative, we find in LE PONT DU NORD, as so often with Rivette, only a patchy web of episodes. As a result, Marie and Baptiste have a sense of simultaneity. Contrary to what the flâneurs are accused of, our female protagonists are by no means superficial: they read between the lines, make not the slightest distinction between the important and the supposedly insignificant, and devote themselves to dialogues about the essential and the witty on the former platform next to the old tracks.

Être femme dans un univers essentiellement régi par des hommes n'est certes pas chose aisée. Le monde de l'art n'échappe nullement à pareil constat. En son sein, le rôle des femmes a souvent été réduit à celui de médiatrices, qu'il s'agisse de se faire muse [...]. Pendant longtemps, pour les femmes artistes, endosser le rôle de créateur à l'égal des hommes n'est donc pas allé de soi. Cette situation les a fréquemment conduites à avancer masquée. L'une des stratégies privilégiées en la matière a consisté à recourir au pseudonyme. Sur un plan fonctionnel, l'usage d'un autre nom [...] est un moyen fréquent pour garantir un certain anonymat.³⁸

Such a masculine bohemia often produces female protagonists, at least in Rivette's universe, such as the androgynous Baptiste: she apparently chooses a pseudonym and a black leather motorbike jacket of the subcultural *blousons noirs* to survive her everyday life, in which she also has to fight against windmills. Compared to other films,³⁹ in which Jacques Rivette also expresses his passion for experimentation, improvisation (according to the director's principle: 'laisser le film se faire au fur et à mesure') and arbitrary editing, the complex feature film LE PONT DU NORD is highly authentic, blunt and free of cliché, but at the same time it is full of (childlike) wonder and fantasy. For this very reason, the film requires the viewer to participate extensively in the creative process.

38 See the following article by David Martens: 'Femmes artistes au miroir du pseudo-nyme', available at: https://www.academia.edu/25715040/Femmes_artistes_au_miroir_du_pseudonyme (accessed on 27 December 2020).

39 See Mary Margaret Wiles, *Jacques Rivette*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012 (Contemporary Film Directors), pp. 61–77; Wiles compares DUELLE, NOROIT and MERRY-GO-ROUND with LE PONT DU NORD.

Pour qu'un film existe, il faut des zones où la fiction s'accumule jusqu'à l'absurde – des scènes, mais aussi des espaces. [...] Il a une vision topologique des scénarios, non pas parce que certains récits seraient réservés à certains espaces, mais parce qu'il y a comme des intensités de fiction qui se modulent entre des lieux et parfois dans la profondeur de champ ou au fil des mouvements, des traits qui dessinent les séquences.⁴⁰

Could the rebellious filmmaker Rivette be described as an explorer, guide and indicator of *terrains vagues*? Yes indeed! In *LE PONT DU NORD*, especially in the film scenes shot almost exclusively outdoors, the aesthetic of openness towards the new (motivated by the director) destabilizes any univalent attribution of meaning. Speaking in terms of Saussure, the *signifiant* emancipates itself from the *signifié*, inevitably leading to a disappointment of expectations regarding clarity and continuity. A vagabond is also always something or someone else; in other words, Rivette is also free in the creation of his characters and their configuration. In terms of time, Rivette's *terrains vagues* also sprout within the urban fabric in the interval between what is no longer there and what is not yet there. The external appearance of the areas is characterized by disorder and neglect: for example, Marie and Baptiste find empty bottles, rubbish and worn tyres right next to the railway tracks, which are reclaimed by ruderal vegetation, such that various layers of time accumulate there and manifest themselves to the outside world. In the period of transformation and social change, in our case around 1980, thus after the 30 glorious years of the post-war boom, the *terrains vagues* proliferate in Paris. The two 'land surveyors' need the *délaissés urbains* offered to them by Rivette for their informal activities. They climb through a hole in the construction site fence and enter the supposedly abandoned areas and the empty buildings on them, ignoring the no-entry sign (*Défense d'entrer!*). Because the *terrain vague* is considered a favoured place for transgressive and subversive activities, it is not at all surprising that Marie and Baptiste discover a corpse on the floor of the vacant lot. The two stray, wandering women are not only marginalized urban nomads who go to such empty areas because they otherwise have no 'residence permit' and are hence less welcome in the rest of the urban space, but also childlike characters who use the *terrains vagues* as a field for experimentation and a place for daydreaming. Furthermore, bridges are seen as transitional spaces, passages and starting points for new paths; they function as generators, so to speak.⁴¹ In this context, the *terrains vagues* in *LE PONT DU NORD* can be equated with

40 Cyril Béghin, 'Tout l'univers', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n°720, 2016, p. 36.

41 See Susanne Röckel, 'Le Pont du Nord', in *Filmkritik*, n°309, 1982, p. 399.

potential spaces in which our *rôdeuses*, *vagabondes* and *arpenteuses* can express themselves creatively, transgressively, actively and participatively.

This auteur film, difficult to categorize, experiments formally with the practices of its characters on the *terrain vague* as a space of experience and possibility. It places special emphasis on highlighting the subjective viewpoints of the protagonists, accompanying them through their transformations, and thus creating indefinite, purposeless interstitial spaces that open up as potential aesthetic spaces to all conceivable interpretations: in *LE PONT DU NORD*, the viewer follows the two city wanderers who, sometimes on the run, sometimes strolling through Paris – like a round of the *Game of the Goose* – primarily ‘survey’ the neglected flip side of the city. The *terrain vague* in the film is not only an aesthetic but also a media-reflexive place, as its emptiness and lack of structure reminds us of the screen, which wants to be filled with characters, actions and free imagination.

Final Considerations and Outlook

Our project, funded by the *German Research Foundation* and entitled '*Terrain vague. Aesthetics and Poetics of Urban Interspaces in French Modernism*' ('*Terrain vague. Ästhetik und Poetik urbaner Zwischenräume in der französischen Moderne*') began in April 2014 and ended in March 2018 after a term of three years and a one-year extension. The present work, entitled '*Terrains vagues. Urban Interspaces in French Cinema*' fits thematically into this research project and can be considered one of its results.

The starting point of the project was the observation that the French term for urban wasteland, *terrain vague*, has played an important role in cultural studies' and architectural theory's description of the corresponding phenomenon since the 1990s and also enjoys great popularity in the field of various arts, but has not yet been examined in detail from these sides, neither in terms of its historical depth nor its semantic complexity. In particular, its 200-year literary history and its spillover (as a concept and motif) into other media, above all photography and French cinema, have remained largely unexamined to date.

The resulting investigation of a literary and filmic corpus, which was created and constantly expanded in the course of the project, was guided by the thesis that the concept of *terrain vague*, unlike its equivalents in other languages (such as *Brache* in German), puts the phenomenon into perspective from a decidedly subjective point of view, which explains the primarily aesthetic and poetic treatment of urban wasteland under this term. To investigate the question of the various meanings attributed to the *terrain vague* as a unique urban space and its evolution throughout the history of the European city since the early 19th century, a historical and a systematic approach were juxtaposed.

The goal of the first approach was to identify and analyse epoch- and genre-specific paradigms of the depiction of *terrains vagues* in French literature and cinema. The fact that the *terrain vague* regularly appears as a 'prism space' is one of the constants in this history: it does so by revealing the transformations of the urban environment from within the city's emptiness; as an 'ex-

periential space', which, due to its inherent indeterminacy and vagueness, evokes unique, aesthetically processed experiences of the unknown, the foreign, the uncanny, or the abyssal; or as a 'space of possibility' which, due to its openness, is continuously reimagined and utilized practically or imaginatively, occupied as a social counter-site and resistance-oriented free space invested with utopian qualities.

The aim of the second field of work, on the other hand, was to combine the analysis of the *terrain vague* against the background of this history with the findings of urbanistic disciplines in such a way that a systematic descriptive model is created that does justice to the complexity of the phenomenon. The result is a model that for the first time brings together and organizes the various theoretical approaches (architecture, economics, politics, sociology, ethnology/anthropology, ecology and aesthetics), which are individually represented by the respective disciplines in urban research, into a unified picture. In this respect, the project was able to close gaps within the academic discourse in both Romance studies and urban studies and also make a contribution to interdisciplinary networking. In particular, it has been shown that the fascinating power of the *terrain vague*, which has led to a wealth of literary and cinematic descriptions, as well as to a cultural-studies examination of the phenomenon of the urban wasteland, opens up numerous possibilities for interdisciplinary investigations that can shed new and further light on the real contextual structures of literary texts and films on the one hand and on the subjective structures of the experienced space on the other.

The analysis model, which I have already outlined in Chapters II.3 and IV.6, has the task of systematizing the characteristics of the *terrain vague*. However, it is not only a scheme that organizes everything that can be said about the *terrain vague* according to certain criteria, but also a kind of heuristic instrument for visualizing precisely those characteristics in the process of interpretation – be it artistic representations or concrete places of reality. This matrix-shaped, two-dimensional model can be described as follows:

In the one dimension, the three levels of meaning of the vague, which fan out even in the early literary history of the *terrain vague*, are depicted with the help of the three etymological lines of the word *vague* presented at the beginning: **(1) *vacuus*** represents emptiness, absence and negation; **(2) *vagus*** represents the indeterminate, random, disordered and diffuse movement; **(3) *vâgr*** represents transformation, upheaval and transgression. These three semantic levels are now projected onto different ontological levels, which are essential for the description of social and especially urban reality, in which social relations are spatialized in material situations and inscribed in sign

systems. The ontological levels are as follows: (1) physics, (2) economics, (3) politics, (4) sociology, (5) ethnology/anthropology, (6) ecology, (7) aesthetics and (8) practice.¹

(1) Physics: (1) Relative to their densely built-up surroundings, the *terrains vagues* are characterized spatially by a material emptiness and temporally by their existence in the interval between no-longer and not-yet. (2) Their appearance is characterized by a disorder that contrasts with the image of the ordered city; *terrains vagues* on the outskirts of the city elude the traditional opposition of city and countryside. Different times are layered on top of them and exist side by side. (3) They are the result of massive spatial reorganizations; they appear cyclically as well as more frequently in times of social upheaval.

(2) Economics: (1) The very definition of *terrains vagues* as wasteland is the lack of current utilization. (2) In contrast to the functional determination of urban spaces, they are undefined and thus open to informal uses. (3) They are a symptom of economic crises and transformation processes; they cease to be *terrains vagues* when a new use is established on them.

(3) Politics: (1) They form seemingly ownerless, powerless zones without utilization specifications and controls. As a result, they often become spaces of refuge, hiding and crime. (2) Their power and ownership structures are regularly opaque; their status fluctuates between the public and private spheres. (3) They are the favoured space for transgressive activities; through subversive uses they also become spaces of resistance.

(4) Sociology: (1) *Terrains vagues* are frequently abandoned and neglected spaces, often located in marginalized areas. (2) Urban nomads such as drop-outs, homeless people, vagabonds and refugees find temporary refuge on them. (3) They are the nuclei of new urbanity and the experimental field of urban culture.

(5) Ethnology/Anthropology: (1) They have no stable cultural significance. (2) At the same time, however, they are not faceless, standardized non-places.

1 This system goes back to a lecture that Daniel Ritter and I gave at an interdisciplinary colloquium on 25 April 2015. It is also included in the conference report, which is considered a subpublication and is available at <http://www.romanischestudien.de/index.php/rst/article/view/64> (accessed on 27 December 2020).

(3) As zones of transgression and excess, they bear traits of sacred places in a modern society.

(6) Ecology: (1) A non-planned nature proliferates on them. (2) These are anthropogenic spaces where nature is left to its own devices; they are hybrid zones between nature and culture. (3) They become a refuge for endangered species in the city.

(7) Aesthetics: (1) Their temporal and functional nothingness frees them up for an aesthetic of the ruin. (2) Their indeterminacy makes them a kind of *je ne sais quoi* of urban space. (3) They are often places for experiences of the *étrange*.

(8) Practice: (1) They lack utilization specifications and rules of conduct. (2) Their indeterminate purpose not only opens them up to unforeseen uses, but also as projection surfaces for fantasy and *rêverie*; children's play in particular shows how they can in principle become any space through symbolic appropriation. (3) Citizens' initiatives and artists' interventions, which often make use of the principle of misappropriation and appropriation, transform them into participatory, self-organized spaces for alternative lifestyles.

In the monograph *Stadt als Möglichkeitsraum*, Sacha Kagan, Volker Kirchberg and Ursula Weisenfeld raise many questions, which they endeavour to answer:

Gibt es eine Ethik der nachhaltigen Stadtentwicklung und welche Werte würde diese umfassen? [...] Welche Formen haben diese Räume, um als Katalysatoren für experimentelles Gestalten wirken zu können? Wie tragen solche Räume zur Förderung der Vorstellung realer Utopien, zur Imagination einer besseren nachhaltigen Zukunft bei? [...] Welche Bedeutung haben künstlerische und ästhetische Erfahrungen dabei? Wie können solche Räume des freien kreativen Spiels dahingehend gestaltet werden, dass sie 'funktionieren', trotz oder gerade wegen ihrer ungewissen Serendipität, ihrer vorgegebene Ordnungen vermeidenden, komplexes Chaos präferierenden, neue Ideen fragmentierenden und idiosynkratische Eigenarten fördernden Merkmale? Wie können ihre heterotopischen und heterochronischen Qualitäten [...] für die ganze Stadtgesellschaft eingesetzt werden, d. h. nicht (nur) in kleinen Nischen kurzfristig ihre Ziele erreichen? Wie tragen Möglichkeitsräume zur Urbanität in ihrer ganzen Diversität und Vielfalt bei? [...] Inwieweit begrenzen Institutionen, also alltägliche und unbewusste Routinen, unhinterfragte Konventionen, mächtige Regularien der Politik (*policy* und *polity*) und dominante, hegemonia-

le Gruppen (aus Wirtschaft, Zivilgesellschaft, Klassen und/oder Milieus) den Willen und die Fähigkeit der Akteur*innen vor Ort zur [...] Umsetzung [...]?²

Without wanting to present recommendations for action, the hopefully obsolete logic of efficiency and market-oriented growth imperatives is being replaced by a new logic of innovative urban, cultural practices. This new logic enables change agents to critique structures through and on the *terrains vagues*, to question systems and rules that stabilize authority, to experience diversified creativity, transformative everyday routines and eccentricities, to practice knowledge and experience exchange, networking, and diffusion at higher levels, to initiate strong and diverse resilience processes, to formulate utopias and dystopias for themselves in order to face the challenges of the times, such as climate and value change, globalization and mobilization, and individualization in the sense of mindfulness attuned to one's own subjective needs and the associated turn towards the collective, the community, and the other.³

In accordance with the principle of serendipity, the urban wasteland can also be seen in its media representations as a discovery that was not sought out by chance, but is nevertheless a significant discovery: While *terrains vagues* are often simply used as a motif in photography and, in combination with the people photographed, already hint at what is possible on them, and in comics they are embedded in the narrative both as a real place in extra-linguistic reality and figuratively reflect the states of mind of individual characters, video games use them specifically as a setting and location for the plot, where, under certain circumstances, decisive storylines for the progress of the game can take place. Even if this does not focus on a specifically French tradition, *terrains vagues* are of particular motivic relevance in video games. At the same time, the video game can be considered the most interactive and participative of all the media discussed here. In documentary film urban wastelands appear, on the one hand, as a phenomenon being discussed. In this regard, they are indeed a subject but not necessarily relevant for the *récit cinématographique* or its *discours*. On the other hand, they can also be captured on film under the premise of being a theme or through their revealing functions, forming a more

2 Sacha Kagan/Volker Kirchberg/Ursula Weisenfeld (eds.), *Stadt als Möglichkeitsraum: Experimentierfelder einer urbanen Nachhaltigkeit*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2019 (Urban Studies), p. 22 ff.

3 Compare the recommendations for action by Kagan, Kirchberg, Weisenfeld, *ibid.*, pp. 386–391.

or less relevant part of the diegesis. The characteristics of the *terrains vagues* manifest themselves through the actions performed by the characters on them.

Apart from the fact that, regardless of genre, a golden age of the *terrain vague* emerged from the 1940s to the 1960s, where urban wastelands particularly captured aesthetic interest in the post-war period, there are trends specific to certain genres that are especially attuned to the *terrains vagues* and their representations in French cinema. Comedy, crime and gangster films, social dramas, and art/auteur cinema particularly like to make use of urban wastelands, their functions and effects. In the case of Jacques Rivette, I would like to point out that *LE PONT DU NORD* is difficult to categorize, which suggests that it is a high '*terrain-vague*-esque' film. What exactly does this mean? The way Rivette shoots a film, the choice of his motifs, his space and his locations (both on the level of the map and the territory, topologically and topographically), the selection of his actors, his *découpage* and *montage* and his film aesthetic and linguistic means, dialogues and improvisations, prove that he is also fascinated by these gaps in the urban city fabric, that he appreciates their potential and therefore works with them in his films.

Instead of accelerated *montage*, artificiality and an objective camera, there are more decelerated film scenes with plan sequences, hand-held cameras, close-ups and detail shots that, for example, detach a character's face from any space-time coordinate, as well as '*la loi de cet espace est fragmentation*', very much in the spirit of Bresson. '*D'où le rôle spécial des décadrages.*'⁴ Figures can also be decentred and truncated, as they themselves are on the margins of society. The camera is mostly subjective. If the film sequences are illustrated or commented on by film music, this often has an empathetic, emotionally appropriate, sometimes even meditative effect. Many representations of media wastelands in French cinema use a *son direct*, parallel, i.e. current, synchronized and connected to the image. According to Michaela Ott, Mirjam Schaub, and Laura Frahm, who have extensively studied movement and time, *movement* and *time-images*, *perception*, *affection*, and *action-images*, as well as the *espace quelconque* ('any-space-whatever') of Gilles Deleuze, the off-screen space plays, as an infinite cinematic realm, a central role in relation to urban wastelands, which are actualized within the confined image space of the finite cinema screen. The *espace quelconque* emerges as a *terrain vague* precisely where the '*Wiedergabe äußerer Raumkontinua und auswendiger Bewegungsabläufe durch filmische Konstruktion neuer Raumzeitformationen durch-*

4 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma I. L'image-mouvement*, p. 153 f.

brochen wird'.⁵ Rather flat-appearing settings, unusual connections between foreground and background, indiscernible proportions, close-ups and detailed shots with genuine affective value often set against a blurry background, and a continuum of overlapping layers of past, present and future characterize the *terrain vague* as an *espace quelconque* of pure potential, highly heterogeneous and unstable. The choices mentioned by Deleuze and the conscious decision to choose are just as relevant as the elements of light and shadow, their alternation and the break with traditional plots and concepts, also because the *terrain vague* as *espace quelconque* is a correlate without reference points, one that seeks to achieve a perception of space that is detached from the subject (as in the case of deserts, including urban ones, beaches, the sea, but also open spaces with isolated containers and caravans, functionless gravel sites, supposedly ownerless gaps between buildings and disused railway tracks). Various facets of the *espace quelconque* coexist as loopholes of the possible on the urban wasteland, constantly transforming themselves so that, in accordance with the dual nature of the image, the actual and virtual parts are illuminated.⁶

Pursuant to Ritter, the urban interspaces in French cinema can be *xenotopias*; they certainly have heterotopic and heterochronic traits. The structure alone makes it clear that they can be divided into different areas, which are intersections of individual films, i.e. essences: (1) the *terrain vague* as a playground and space of possibility (*ludotopia*), (2) the *terrain vague* as a place of (social) exclusion and the abject (*stigma(to)topia*), (3) the *terrain vague* as a place of (first/secret) love (*ero(to)topia*), (4) the *terrain vague* as a place of crime (*biatopia*) and (5) the *terrain vague* as a place of the potential for creativity and participation (*demiurgiatopia*).⁷ With reference to Plato's *Symposium*, one could even speak of the *terrain vague* as a *metaxytopia*, a place of the in-between.⁸ Finally, the relationship between the five areas above is of great importance. What is their unifying element? The *terrain vague* is a space of autonomy that makes the subject capable of acting, as it gives to this person (the lover, the gambler, the criminal, the outcast etc.) a certain agency. It is likely for this reason that it is so appealing.⁹

5 Ott, 'L'espace quelconque', p. 154.

6 See Schaub, *Gilles Deleuze im Kino*, p. 232.

7 The ancient Greek terms were identified in dialogue with Georg Petzl and Bernhard Scholz-Mönkemöller.

8 Thank you to Jens Knipp for making me aware of this.

9 My very special thanks go to Daniel Ritter.

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THE IDEA OF *TERRAIN VAGUE* IN ART AND CULTURE

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Autrefois, ils avaient rêvé de vivre ensemble
et de faire de grands voyages,
ils étaient complémentaires,
chacun savait voir le monde avec ses yeux et les yeux de l'autre,
et parler et entendre comme l'autre parlait et entendait.
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