

GUIDE TO EXPLORING MAP

A Spatial Walk in Search of the Marginal: Spatial Perambulations

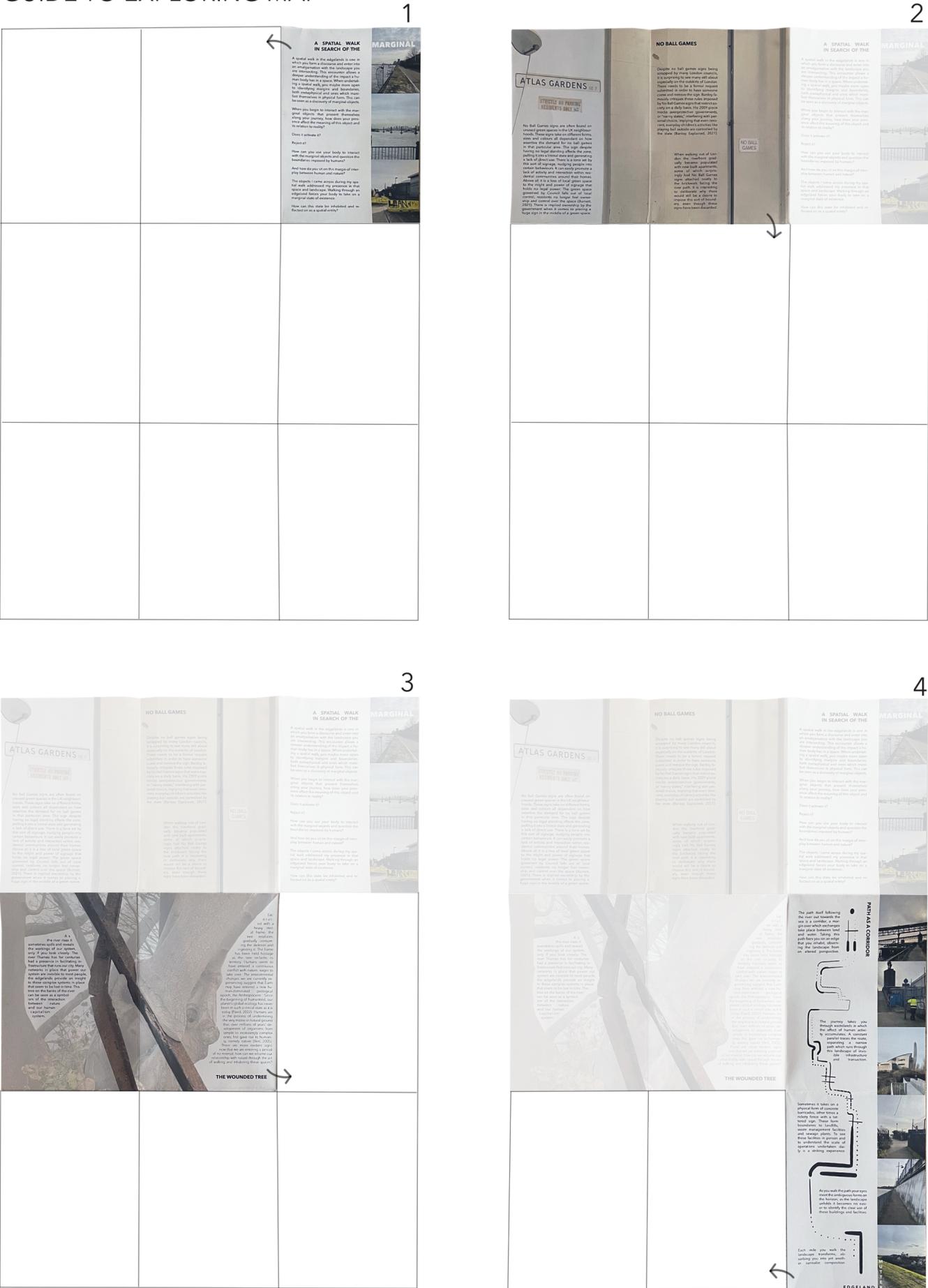
Abstract:

A folding map produced as a result of a 15-mile solo walk, beginning in the city at the Thames Barrier and heading out into the edgeland, finishing at Dartford. The map works on two scales presenting investigations that reflect on the walk as one whole experience and also exploring marginal objects of significance and their stories. The document is free to be read in any order, each reader can form their own path and is encouraged to wander through the text. The themes in the text explore the importance of the River Thames as a margin and constant flow through the city. The riverbank itself can be seen as an edgeland, what does it mean to place yourself on a trajectory that leads you into an edgelands crossroads. There is a sort of disobedience that exists in the edgelands and periphery of the city, these territories possess qualities that challenge our system and are indicative of change. Taking an adventure and moving through the city and into the edgelands became a starting point and a platform for the discussions I would like to initiate. The practice of walking is a methodology that can be viewed as a true form of resistance to the speed and growth of the modern project. It allows us to form a relationship with a space and it introduces a vulnerability. There is often a desire to search for solitude in the edgelands, however this search for self-discovery in many ways mirrors that of the conventional lonely male wanderer. I wanted to understand what it really means for a woman to take the lonely path, to experience the marginal, can it be seen as a stand against gendered conventions?

Description:

The media project was a personal reflection on a walk I had wanted to take for a while. I have always had this desire to take on solo adventures, but for some reason have always been discouraged or questioned. It not only challenged me physically but also encouraged me to further my interests in these areas known as edgelands. The map is intended for any lone wanderer interested in investigating these rich landscapes, it provides a chance to reconnect with areas of unique nature even for people who live in the city. The format was important in encouraging a different way of reading the landscape. Identifying your route through discovering marginal objects can take you on an unexpected journey of discovery and reflection. I wanted the map to work on different scales, addressing the stories of miniscule details as well as reflecting on wider themes. I have always been interested in invisible infrastructures and the significance of human interaction with the material and the landscape behind the scenes. There has been a huge focus on invisible processes in the Lab work I have produced for the MA Fashion Show. As a group we wanted to use materials available to us in the college, and to transform them temporarily for the use of the show. The show similarly to my walk was a fleeting moment, but a rich moment which can be reflected on and documented. There was also a focus on shifts in scale in both projects, understanding the significance of small details that feed into an overall message. There is a challenge in trying to make smaller elements work as a singular entity while also fitting into a larger arrangement. The methodologies explored in the Media Project are both a continuation and expansion on the skills I have used previously and in Lab C.

LINK TO VIDEO OF MAP: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l60FVsdFTQ>



ATLAS GARDENS SE 7

STRICTLY NO PARKING RESIDENTS ONLY

No Ball Games signs are often found on unused green spaces in the UK neighbourhoods. These signs take on different forms, sizes and colours all dependant on how assertive the demand for no ball games in that particular area. The sign despite having no legal standing affects the zone pulling it into a liminal state and generating a lack of direct use. There is a tone set by this sort of signage, nudging people into certain behaviours. It can easily promote a lack of activity and interaction within residential communities around their homes. Above all it is a loss of local green space to the might and power of signage that holds no legal power. The green space governed by Council falls out of local control, residents no longer feel ownership and control over the space (Burnett, 2021). There is implied ownership by the government when it comes to placing a huge sign in the middle of a green space.

NO BALL GAMES

Despite no ball games signs being scrapped by many London councils, it is surprising to see many still about especially on the outskirts of London. There needs to be a formal request submitted in order to have someone come and remove the sign. Banksy famously critiques these rules imposed by No Ball Games signs that restrict society on a daily basis. His 2009 piece mocks overprotective governments, or "nanny states," interfering with personal choice, implying that even innocent, everyday children's activities like playing ball outside are controlled by the state (Banksy Explained, 2021).

When walking out of London the riverfront gradually became populated with new built apartments, some of which surprisingly had No Ball Games signs attached neatly to the brickwork facing the river path. It is interesting to deliberate why there would still be a desire to impose this sort of boundary, even though these signs have been discarded.



A SPATIAL WALK IN SEARCH OF THE MARGINAL

A spatial walk in the edgelands is one in which you form a discourse and enter into an amalgamation with the landscape you are intersecting. This encounter allows a deeper understanding of the impact a human body has in a space. When undertaking a spatial walk, you may be more open to identifying margins and boundaries, both metaphorical and ones which manifest themselves in physical form. This can be seen as a discovery of marginal objects.

When you begin to interact with the marginal objects that present themselves along your journey, how does your presence affect the meaning of this object and its relation to reality?

Does it activate it?

Reject it?

How can you use your body to interact with the marginal objects and question the boundaries imposed by humans?

And how do you sit on this margin of interplay between human and nature?

The objects I came across during my spatial walk addressed my presence in that space and landscape. Walking through an edgeland forces your body to take on a marginal state of existence.

How can this state be inhabited and reflected on as a spatial entity?



PATH AS A CORRIDOR

The path itself following the river out towards the sea is a corridor, a margin over which exchanges take place between land and water. Taking this path fixes you on an edge that you inhabit, observing the landscape from an altered perspective.

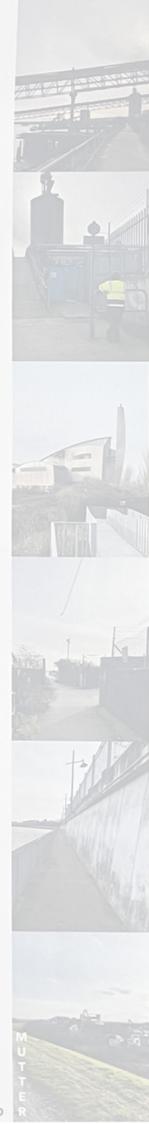


The journey takes you through wastelands in which the effect of human activity accumulates. A constant parallel traces the route, separating a narrow path which runs through this landscape of invisible infrastructure and transaction.

Sometimes it takes on a physical form of concrete barricades, other times a rickety fence with a tattered sign. These form boundaries to landfills, waste management facilities and sewage plants. To see these facilities in person and to understand the scale of operations undertaken daily is a striking experience.

As you walk the path your eyes meet the ambiguous forms on the horizon, as the landscape unfolds it becomes no easier to identify the clear use of these buildings and facilities.

Each mile you walk the landscape transforms, absorbing you into yet another surrealist composition.



MATTER



THE WOUNDED TREE

NO TRESSPASSING

The language used on signage shifts in tone as you move further from the city and further out into the edgelands. The city has a display of direct and quite threatening signs, whereas the signs and surveillance become less assertive as you move further into the edgelands and out to the countryside. The issue regarding trespassing privately owned land tends to be widely experienced in the edgelands, and less so in the city. There are more opportunities in the edgelands to find yourself trespassing due to the qualities of the blurred margins and boundaries that exist in these spaces. By law of trespass, the public are banned from interacting with a high percentage of places of nature in England. In 2000, the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act gave a partial Right to Roam over about 6% of England. Nature should be accessible to all, and our freedom to roam should be expanded. The Green Belt land and the edgelands could give so many more people in towns and cities easier access to nature. The Right to Roam is an ancient custom that allows anyone to wander in open countryside, whether the land is privately or publicly owned. In countries such as Norway, Sweden, Estonia and Scotland it has existed as a common right, and has only recently been codified into law. In all but one tenth of the English landscape, to wander off the footpath, to swim in a river, to explore and educate ourselves about our countryside, can leave us branded a trespasser and axed from the land (Right to Roam, 2022). We have forgotten what we have lost: how can we be expected to care about the environment when for so long we have been disconnected from it? Can we fight for our right to reconnect through the act of walking and trespassing?



EDGELAND

MARGINAL OBJECTS

The nature of the edgelands provides a rich display of marginal objects, the landscape being in constant flux and change lays bare the workings of this liminal space.

Marginal objects are ones that are a result of the constant interplay between human perception of margins and their subsequent construction. This leads a structure of margins which impose further margins.

A margin indicates a border area, a primary element of the relation between human and nature. We use margins to perceive and form the reality around us and subsequently our immediate environment (Zecchin, 2011). We can define our existence on the Earth as a continuous process of interpretation and addition of margins, which is realized through perception and construction.

THAMES BARRIER TO DARTFORD

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This spatial walk was an activity of discovery, archival and reflection. The river Thames is a constant flow through the landscape of the city moving out towards the edge of Britain. It is symbolic in its function as an area of transaction and infrastructure. There is a value in forming a relationship with a space through walking, it introduces a vulnerability and exposure. Our urban landscape requires an immediate shift in how spatial practitioners perceive space and their methods of practice and research. There is a richness and sort of disobedience that exists in the edgelands and periphery of the city, a developed contextual knowledge of these spaces could become indicative of change. These territories should not be considered as environmental victims of capitalism, they have potential to become sites of resistance (Political Geologies, 2022). Taking an adventure and moving through the city and into the edgelands became a starting point and a platform for the discussions I would like to initiate.

There is often a desire to search for solitude in the liminal, this search for self-discovery in many ways mirrors that of the conventional lonely male wanderer. There are so many stories of self-discovery and exploration, journeys of discovery are written primarily by white, middle-class men (Hubbard and Wilkinson, 2018). These stories are important in shifting the focus of landscape appreciation towards the vernacular and the marginal, however this can be seen as insufficiently critical, and neglecting questions of class, race and gender. What does it really mean for a woman to take the lonely path, can it be seen as a stand against gendered conventions and obligations? There are many women who use walking in their practice, however it is not as widely recognised as the work of their male counterparts. In response to this artists Amy Sharrocks and Clare Qualmann organised an event known as 'WALKING WOMEN' in 2016. The project had a personal and political significance, it aimed to address the absence of female artists within the canon of walking art (Kozserek, 2016).



EDGELAND

The edgelands are considered an interfacial interzone between urban and rural (Manon Shoard, 2002). These are areas on the periphery of cities, they are a treasury of uprightly but necessary buildings and a haven for rare species of nature. In these spaces exists an overlooked England, complex and unexamined spaces that lay bare the workings of the city (Farley and Roberts, 2011). You can observe London's edgelands by following the river Thames out and towards the sea, the landscape changes gradually. As Canary Wharf fades, glitzy riverfront apartments populate the banks along with empty public spaces, sterile and orderly not one person in sight. An exquisite miscellany revealing itself in a landscape which unfolds slowly presenting a complete sensory experience. There is a unanimous feeling of anticipation and serenity as your eyes continuously meet curious silhouettes on the horizon. The river then begins to grow wide to a point where only the last crossing can be made, this is now the Thames Estuary.

MATTER

The river Thames represents a sort of rebellious presence beyond the control of human actions. It exists as a liminal space within which normal conditions are suspended, it is in constant flux. Charles Dickens in his work looked at the river Thames as a boundary and the consequent symbolic importance of river crossings. It is unpredictable as a space often used as a symbolism in literature, exploring ideas of rebirth and death, as well as change in identity (Bouvard, 2012). The river itself can be considered as an edgeland, a fluctuating boundary between human and nature. Following the river out into the Estuary towards the last crossing at Dartford presented itself as a walk through an edgelands crossroads. The edgelands are spaces that distort the imposed hierarchies in place while also allowing them to draw breath, often resulting in unusual arrangements that exist in silent protest. Is it possible to develop a regenerative presence in this space? We should reflect upon how humans relate to the landscape of the edgelands, perhaps even envisioning possibilities beyond ownership and borders (Kabo, 2014).

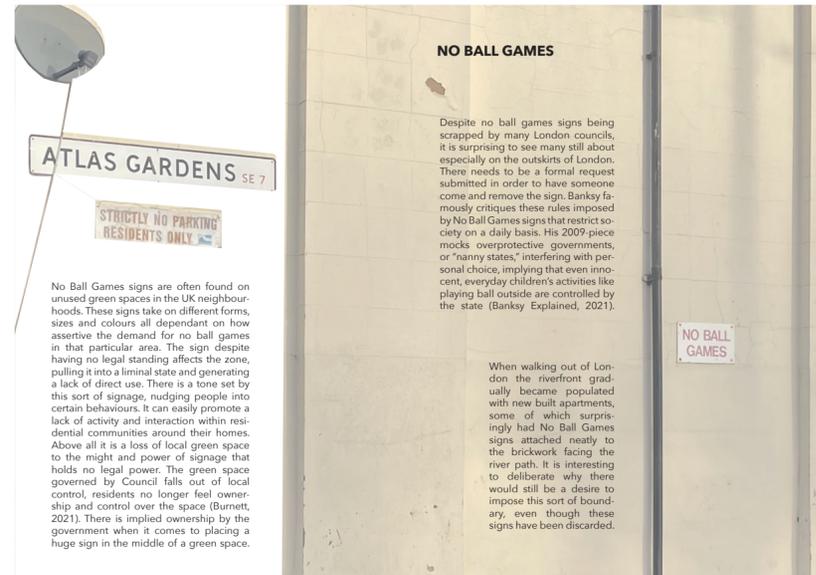
SPATIAL PERAMBULATIONS

When we begin to move through a space the environment around us is altered, shifted and transformed. Space in many ways defines the form and function of the built environment and there are ways in which walking complicates this notion of space. Walking is a fleeting act, whether planned or not it is almost always improvised, evolving and changing to accommodate to the environment and experience (Anderson and Karmon, 2015). Once done, the act of walking disappears, leaving a memory of the experience, but not the physical experience itself. This state of mind in which one recalls this physical act is unique, always personal and diverse, each one of us captures the sensual experiences differently. Henri Lefebvre in Production of Space (1974) famously explored the notion of space as a direct result of activity, there is not only one social space but many and all can be interpreted differently. From the perspective of the 21st century, the practice of walking can be viewed as a form of resistance to the speed and growth of the modern project (Poteka and Doupoua, 2021). It offers an alternative template for discussion, allowing us to experience the unfolding of a landscape through slow movement.

ALISTAIR SOULIAC WALK FROM THE CITY TOWARDS THE EDGELANDS

THAMES BARRIER TO DARTFORD

DIGITAL VERSION



NO BALL GAMES

Despite no ball games signs being scrapped by many London councils, it is surprising to see many still about especially on the outskirts of London. There needs to be a formal request submitted in order to have someone come and remove the sign. Banksy famously critiques these rules imposed by No Ball Games signs that restrict society on a daily basis. His 2009-piece mocks overprotective governments, or 'nanny states', interfering with personal choice, implying that even innocent, everyday children's activities like playing ball outside are controlled by the state (Banksy Explained, 2021).

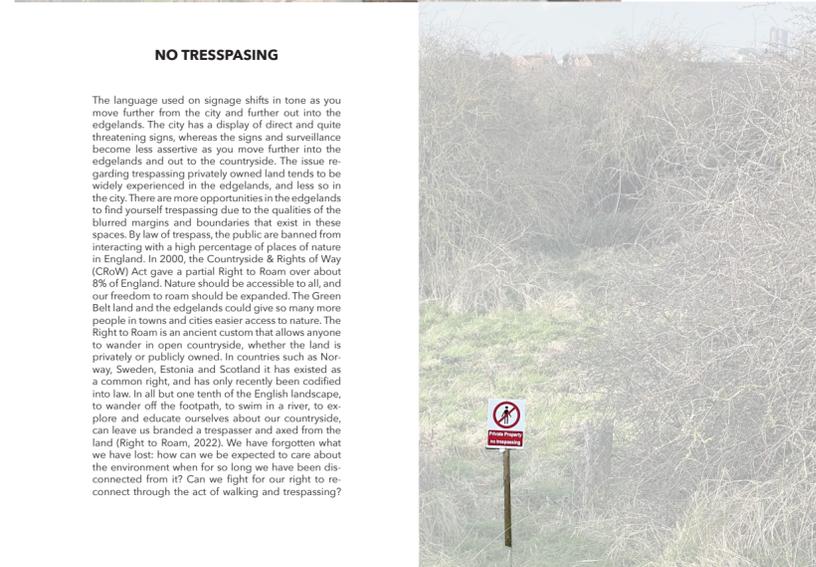
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As the river rises it sometimes spills and reveals the workings of our system, only if you look closely. The river Thames has for centuries had a presence in facilitating infrastructure that runs our city. Many networks in place that power our system are invisible to most people, the edgelands provide an insight to these complex systems in place that seem to be lost in time. This tree on the banks of the river can be seen as a symbolism of the interaction between nature and our human capitalism system.

THE WOUNDED TREE



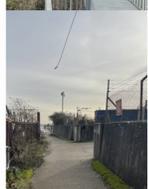
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Front



MARGINAL



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When you begin to interact with the marginal objects that present themselves along your journey, how does your presence affect the meaning of this object and its relation to reality?

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How can you use your body to interact with the marginal objects and question the boundaries imposed by humans?

And how do you sit on this margin of interplay between human and nature?

The objects I came across during my spatial walk address my presence in that space and landscape. Walking through an edgeland forces your body to take on a marginal state of existence.

How can this state be inhabited and reflected on as a spatial entity?

The path itself following the river out towards the sea is a corridor, a margin over which exchanges take place between land and water. Taking this path forces you on an edge that you inhabit, observing the landscape from an altered perspective.

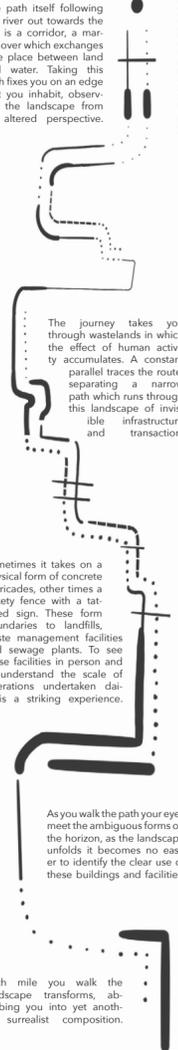
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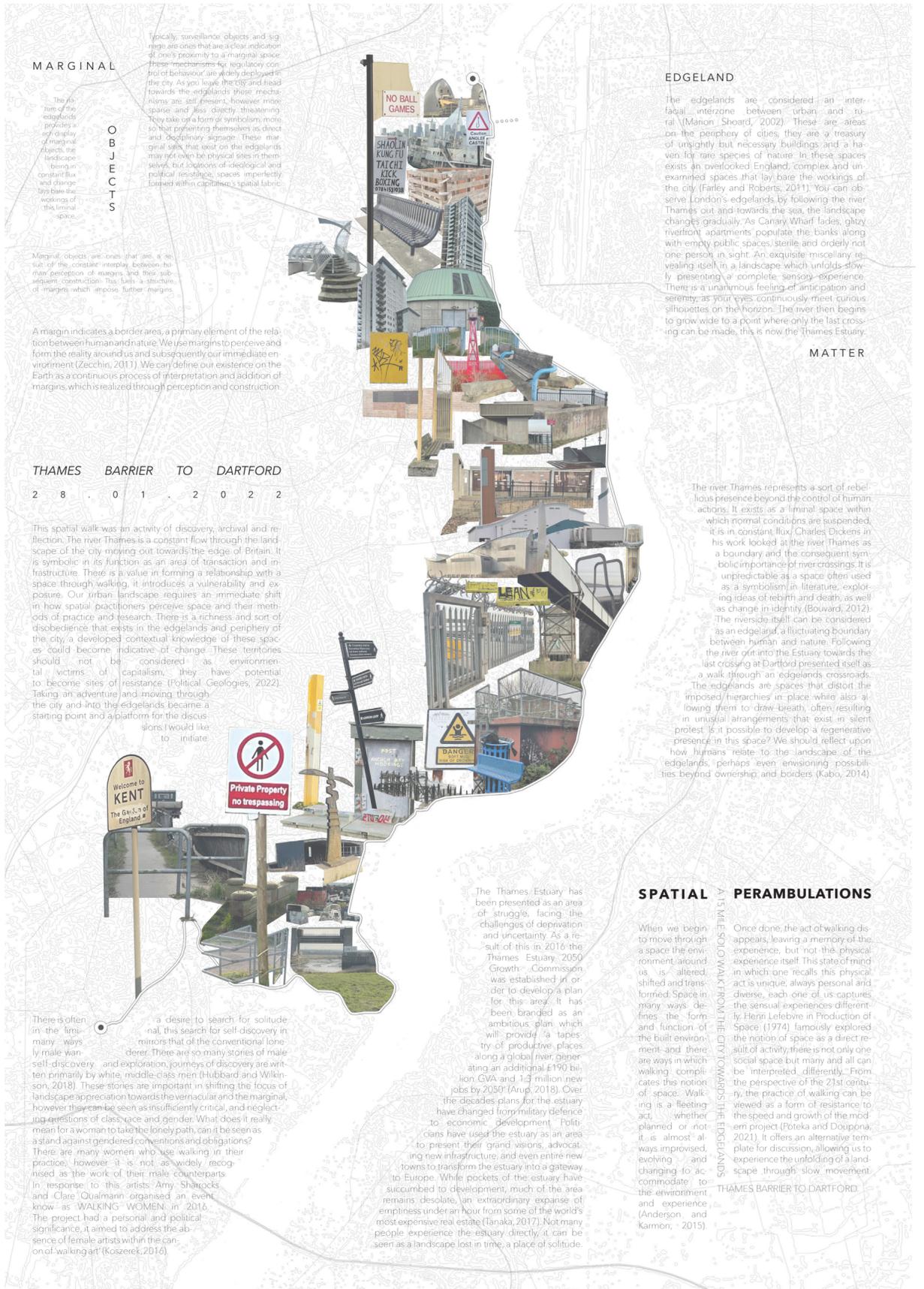
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PATH AS A CORRIDOR



EDGELAND

Back



MARGINAL

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Marginal objects are ones that are a result of the constant interplay between the main perception of margins and their subsequent construction. This fuels a structure of margins which opposes further margins.

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THAMES BARRIER TO DARTFORD

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NO BALL GAMES

Typically, surveillance objects and signs are ones that are a clear indication of one's proximity to a marginal space. These mechanisms for regulatory control of behaviour are widely deployed in the city. As you leave the city and head towards the edgelands these mechanisms are still present, however more sparse and less directly threatening. They take on a form of symbolism, more so not preventing themselves as direct and disciplinary signage. These marginal sites that exist on the edgelands, many of the physical sites in themselves, but locations of ideological and political resistance, spaces imperfectly formed within capitalism's spatial fabric.

EDGELAND

The edgelands are considered an inter-facial interzone between urban and rural (Marion Sheppard, 2002). These are areas on the periphery of cities, they are a treasury of untidy but necessary buildings and a haven for rare species of nature. In these spaces exists an overlooked England, complex and unexamined spaces that lay bare the workings of the city (Farley and Roberts, 2011). You can observe London's edgelands by following the river Thames out and towards the sea, the landscape changes gradually. As Canary Wharf fades, glitzy riverfront apartments populate the banks along with empty public spaces, sterile and orderly not one person in sight. An exquisite miscellany revealing itself in a landscape which unfolds slowly presenting a complete sensory experience. There is a unanimous feeling of anticipation and serenity as your eyes continuously meet curious silhouettes on the horizon. The river then begins to grow wide to a point where only the last crossing can be made, this is now the Thames Estuary.

MATTER

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SPATIAL PERAMBULATIONS

Once done, the act of walking disappears, leaving a memory of the experience, but not the physical experience itself. This state of mind in which one recalls this physical act is unique, always personal and diverse, each one of us captures the sensual experiences differently. Henri Lefebvre in Production of Space (1974) famously explored the notion of space as a direct result of activity, there is not only one social space but many and all can be interpreted differently. From the perspective of the 21st century, the practice of walking can be viewed as a form of resistance to the speed and growth of the modern project (Poteka and Doignon, 2021). It offers an alternative template for discussion, allowing us to experience the unfolding of a landscape through slow movement (Anderson and Karmon, 2015).

The Thames Estuary has been presented as an area of struggle, facing the challenges of deprivation and uncertainty. As a result of this in 2016 the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission was established in order to develop a plan for this area. It has been branded as an ambitious plan which will provide a tapestry of productive places along a global river, generating an additional £190 billion, GVA and 1.3 million new jobs by 2050 (Anup, 2018). Over the decades plans for the estuary have changed from military defence to economic development. Politicians have used the estuary as an area to present their grand visions, advocating new infrastructure, and even entire new towns to transform the estuary into a gateway to Europe. While pockets of the estuary have succumbed to development, much of the area remains desolate, an extraordinary expanse of emptiness under an hour from some of the world's most expensive real estate (Tanaka, 2017). Not many people experience the estuary directly, it can be seen as a landscape lost in time, a place of solitude.

THAMES BARRIER TO DARTFORD

When we begin to move through a space the environment around us is altered, shifted and transformed. Space in many ways defines the form and function of the built environment and there are ways in which walking complicates this notion of space. Walking is a fleeting act, whether planned or not, it is almost always improvised, everchanging and changing to accommodate to the environment and experience (Anderson and Karmon, 2015).

ONE MILE SOUTH OF WALK FROM THE CITY TOWARDS THE EDGELANDS

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