



Learning Agreement

A reflective and critical written piece that has been continuously edited during my 2 year architecture masters degree.

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~~A~~ - text edited out from previous submission

A - important quotes from previous submission

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Our ~~urban~~ landscape requires an immediate shift in how spatial practitioners perceive it; ~~space in the city and~~ their methods of practice and research are in need of reform. The production of space addresses a wide group of actors with a diverse range of skills (Awan, Schneider and Till, 2011), there is a need for cross-pollination between disciplines. This notion is one that is not usually considered within most routes of architectural education and practice, instead there is a focus on linear models of time based on ideals of progress and economic growth.

Growth and progress are at the heart of the modern project, situated on a constant upward trajectory (Till, 2021). There is not much motivation to look backwards or to consider the subsequent impact once the desired point has been reached. The modern project allied to extraction becomes a project of exclusion, and one that has served as a tool within the process of establishing and maintaining our current world order. ~~Extraction is not inherently negative when paired with complete reciprocity.~~ The current architectural methods of practice do not achieve this symbiosis, which is why reform is crucial. ~~There are plenty of studies into how built form which stems from traditional practice can evolve to achieve a balance between the needs of a community and the environment it is situated in (Non-Extractive Architecture, 2021).~~

We face the urgency to critically redefine our position as spatial practitioners, and to practice in response to the ecological and environmental threats we experience in the present. This approach should be driven by the ability to develop a solid understanding of the diverse layers of reality and space that go beyond just the material, **while also re-establishing our connection to our material landscape of today.**

Throughout education and going into practice there are certain words and phrases commonly used that become indicators of how a project should be understood. With a clear desired outcome and a path that leads you to the finish, the moments in which you veer off course can be seen as inefficient. I realise now that when undertaking a **project it feels like a walk into an unknown territory**, there is a prescribed path to follow, or you can wander. The act of wandering is a beautiful act of inhabiting a transitory space, one which fascinates me and is often overlooked much like the **space between the city and nature.**

~~I appreciate the skills developed in my undergraduate course, it provided me with strong groundwork and understanding of how design projects can be lead. On reflection there were moments where my design process was altered by tutors with intention to reach a desired result. These were challenging moments in which I felt I could propose a situation or arrangement that met the brief without the direct result being a built form.~~

"GROWTH"



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Experiencing the transition into practice from undergrad took the teachings and set them in stone, with a very comprehensive timescale for each stage (RIBA Plan of Work, 2022). There are programs in place to analyse the progress of each project, how efficient each employee is at delivering and most importantly **what profit is being made**. The issues we face with climate change are the inevitable results of an economic system that praises corporate actors for their commitment to profit, regardless of the broader consequences. My time in practice exposed me to some uncomfortable situations, in particular with a client for whom we had provided a large residential scheme with a mix of flats and townhouses. **The townhouses once built had not been well received on the market, so the developer made the decision to demolish these newbuilt townhouses and to replace them with more blocks of flats in order to max-imise sales.**

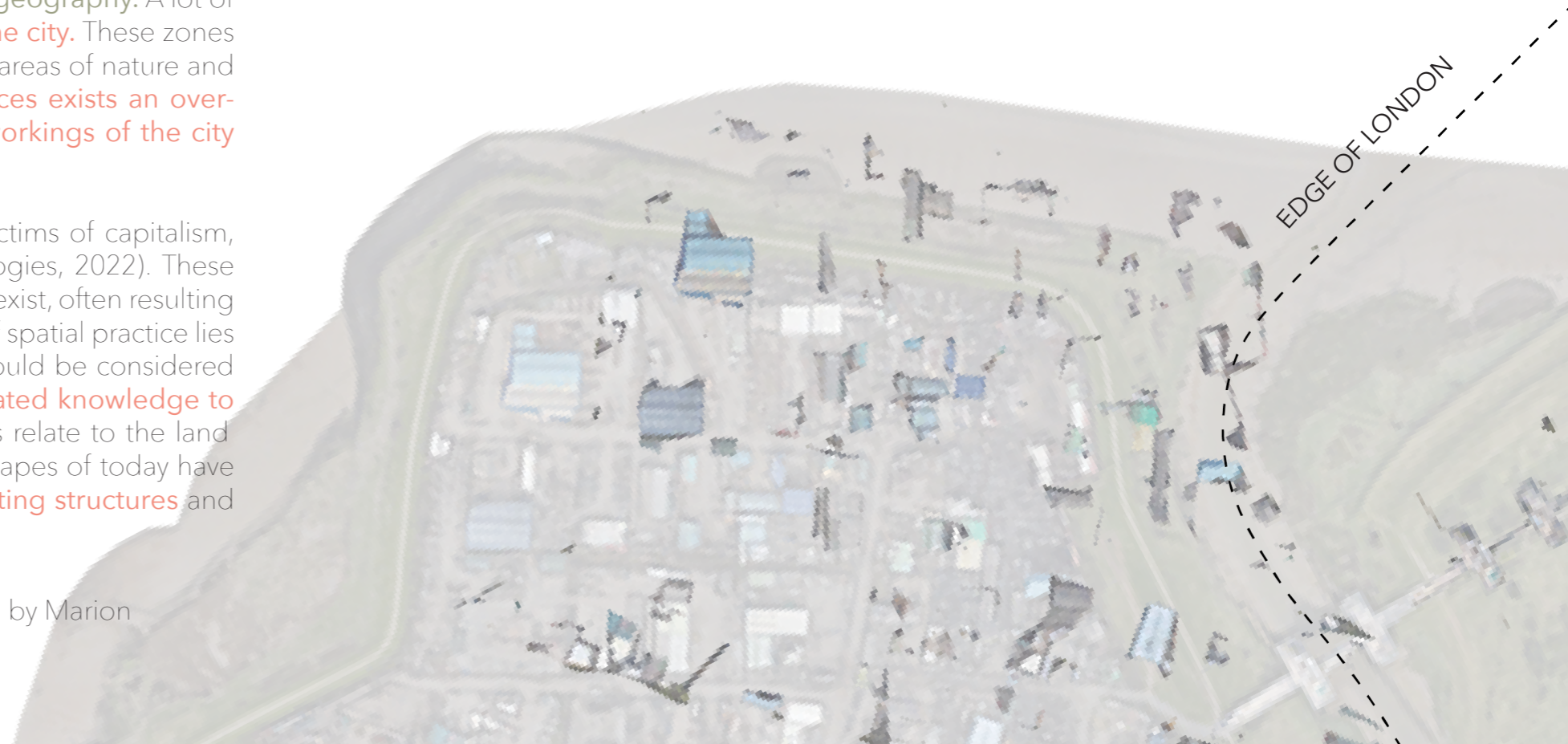
My project focuses on Crayford and Dartford Marshes a site under threat from such development. Berkeley Homes among other developers are buying up cheap fragments up r on the Green Belt in Bexley borough. They hope to lobby for a relaxation of Green Belt policy so that they can go ahead with their housing proposal. **Despite the site being under serious threat from flooding and a site that is home to many rare species, this site is ideal for the developers who look to make profit from housing that is 'so close to nature'**

Throughout my studies I have been drawn towards the dynamics that shape the relationships between people and place and the natural landscape **practice of psychogeography**. A lot of my work has focused on borders, **the edgelands¹ and the periphery of the city**. These zones tend to exist as **transitory spaces** placed between the carefully managed areas of nature and the **creeping effects of our capitalist system spilling out**. **In these spaces exists an overlooked England, complex and unexamined spaces that lay bare the workings of the city (Farley and Roberts, 2011.)**

However, these territories should not be considered as environmental victims of capitalism, they have potential to become **SITES OF RESISTANCE** (Political Geologies, 2022). These spaces distort the normal hierarchies in place while also enabling them to exist, often resulting in surprising arrangements that exist in **silent protest**. Perhaps the future of spatial practice lies hidden in the **extracted landscape of the present**, after all these sites could be considered as the original moulds of our cities. ~~Could we~~ **We need to** develop **situated knowledge to support a regenerative presence in land** and reflect upon how humans relate to the land imagining possibilities beyond ownership and borders. Our urban landscapes of today have more built environment than is used, we must focus on the **reuse of existing structures** and the reframing of their relations to space and other elements.

¹ 'The interfacial interzone between urban and rural', a concept introduced by Marion Shoard in 2002.

"OUR CITY SPILLS"



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~~The first term at CSM has provided a readjustment back into education after working in practice. The element of self-critical review at every stage is valuable in grounding the work being produced, it has allowed me to reflect on my interests and how they can be fed into a process that addresses our immediate environment. The Carnival of Crisis project exposed me to new methods of practice, this challenged me to reposition my understanding of our role as spatial practitioners. Working on a live project in the stagecraft lab has brought reality to the forefront of the design task, helping to understand how work can be produced in a way that addresses the brief and delivers, as well as exploring your methods of practice throughout the process. Creating a project that meets everyone's needs and has a desirable outcome for all is a valuable skill to develop in an education setting. Engaging with the seminar series and the first term has allowed me to reframe my experiences in a new context and begin to analyse what I have learnt and how it can feed into my methods of practice.~~

Developing methods of research **in response to a specific environment** is a skill I find indispensable in the way I would like to practice. ~~In sight of this I feel that taking on a placement which would allow me to consider the value of research led practice,~~ while also actively responding to our present environment would be most beneficial.

~~Throughout my experience of the placement period working with Salvo, I began to explore these methods of research through mapping complex waste cycles and infrastructures. Trying to understand our current relationship with waste and value of objects, space and landscape is a challenging task. We don't understand our infrastructures and our direct impact on the land, any evidence of this is hidden away in the edgelands. We have no real connection to our landscape so therefore its perceived value becomes low especially in places where connectivity and access is difficult.~~ It becomes even more complicated in instances where if threat to our environment and ecology is considered, it is framed in a way that becomes focused purely on the **economy and profit**. Deloitte speaks about natural capital and how nature **loss = business loss**, in reality we need to focus on forming a relationship with nature in order to understand its true value. **My project looks to reform the idea of value through creating more access to Crayford and Dartford Marshes, controlled access results in more engagement creating more perceived value. Currently the marshes are seen as a dump by some people, they are unaware of the value this natural space brings in working against climate change and changing our relationship with our landscapes of the future.**

It is unrealistic to eradicate all profit driven industry, the question is how do we occupy a space in which one can achieve the right balance? The infrastructure of resistance I have designed navigates this threshold attempting to introduce value that benefits the existing landscape and wildlife. I hope this creates enough knowlege and exposure to bring attention to the site but in a way that protects it, and subtly but firmly resists the future commod-ification of marshes with more dominant capitalist approaches to land.

"NATURE
LOSS
=
BUSINESS
LOSS"¹

¹DELOITTE

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