

Entangled Openness. Revisiting Open Space through Landscape and Design Agency

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Abstract

This article reclaims open space as a critical category for landscape architecture, challenging its reduction to a void to be programmed amid socioecological crisis. It theorises open space as a contested dynamic assemblage where ecological processes, colonial histories and more-than-human agencies intersect with design's technocratic impulses. Drawing on relational spatiality, we argue for a pluriversal theoretical framework that is attentive to overlaps, tensions, and entanglements, interrogating how this construct supports design agency amid complexity and inequality. Using the Puente Hills Landfill as a case study and boundary object, we examine how openness manifests across temporal, material and social registers, predicating open space as a generative, open-ended system and performative terrain where ecological subjectivities, cultural inscriptions, and socio-political claims converge, demanding a radical reorientation of design agency and landscape architecture's epistemic boundaries.

Questo articolo rivendica lo spazio aperto come categoria critica per l'architettura del paesaggio, opponendosi alla sua riduzione a vuoto da programmare in un'epoca di crisi socio-ecologica. Teorizziamo lo spazio aperto come un assemblaggio dinamico conteso, in cui processi ecologici, storie coloniali e agenzie più-che-umane si intersecano con gli impulsi tecnocratici del progetto.

Attingendo a teorie della spazialità relazionale, l'articolo sostiene una cornice teorica pluriverso che sia attenta a sovrapposizioni, tensioni e intrecci, chiedendosi come questo costruito possa sostenere l'agenzia del progetto in condizioni di complessità, disuguaglianza e cambiamento. Attraverso il caso studio della discarica di Puente Hills, esaminiamo come l'"apertura" si manifesti nei registri temporali, materiali e sociali. Pertanto, lo spazio aperto inteso come un sistema generativo senza limiti precisi e un terreno performativo, dove soggettività ecologiche, iscrizioni culturali e rivendicazioni socio-politiche convergono, richiede un riorientamento radicale dell'agenzia progettuale e dei confini di significato dell'architettura di paesaggio.

Keywords

Open space, Landscape-based epistemology, Relational spatiality, Socio-ecological subjectivities, Design agency

Spazio aperto, Epistemologia basata sul paesaggio, Spazialità relazionale, Soggettività socio-ecologiche, Agenzia del progetto.

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Revisiting the Concept of Open Space

The discussion about space and its active making has become somewhat marginal in contemporary landscape architecture discourse, often displaced by more evocative terms such as place, public realm, or landscape infrastructure¹. In contrast to place or landscape, which are typically associated with specificity, materiality, and cultural meaning, space has often been treated as empty, detached, neutral, or lacking in qualities, and its affordances determined primarily by what occupies it. The historical relegation of open space to a liminal, secondary role in conventional urban practices not only limits the conceptual richness of space but also constrains its potential as an active and generative category within design inquiry. This marginalization raises important questions: if we accept that space receded from disciplinary focus and was critically substituted by the former set of concepts, what might be gained by returning to it, particularly through the lens of open space? Especially as a set of qualities or conditions that are surfaced and leveraged in design thinking processes? By the mid-20th century, the modernist planning paradigm transformed open space into a functional land-use category, defined by its opposition to development. In zoning and infrastructure planning, particularly under the garden city model and later, landscape urbanism, open space was absorbed into lay-

ered systems of green and blue infrastructure. Yet, these approaches frequently retained a technocratic logic that failed to interrogate spatial politics, cultural memory, or ecological subjectivity.

Conventionally, open space has been treated as a residual or inert category: the land left over after development, a buffer, a visual relief, or a planning unit demarcated by zoning regulations. Rooted in hygienist and moral paradigms of the 19th century, it has often carried normative assumptions about who it serves and how it should be used, rarely interrogating its exclusions, frictions, or latent potentials. Yet, as thinkers from Lefebvre to Massey have argued, space is never neutral or passive, but a lived and constructed reality. It is continuously produced through bodily movement, economic flows, ecological rhythms, and cultural inscriptions. Its apparent neutrality conceals struggles over access, representation, and use. In this light, the marginalization of space as a category is not accidental, but symptomatic of broader disciplinary alignments with market-oriented urban policies, hybrid governance, and technocratic rationality. This article revisits the notion of open space as a theoretical and practical construct, asking what design agency, as the capacity to shape material, spatial, and social conditions through creative intervention, might gain by reconsidering space not as a passive repository but as a dynamic field of relations. By dis-

secting open space through a critical lens and speculating on its affordances and constraints, the article asks: How can we discuss open space today?

Reclaiming space, particularly open space, as a critical concept allows landscape architecture to re-engage with its political and epistemological stakes² (Lefebvre 2011, Massey 2005, Harvey 2008, Brenner 2019), enabling a reading of landscapes not simply as sites of identity or infrastructure, but as dynamic fields of negotiation between visibility and exclusion, inhabitation and dispossession, regulation and resistance. In doing so, we gain a framework for exploring how design agency, understood as the capacity to shape material, spatial, and social conditions through creative intervention, can emerge through critical engagement with latent spatial structures and collective atmospheres.

The analysis positions open space as a binomial concept, one that facilitates spatial reasoning in design. Central to this inquiry are critical questions: Is 'open space' still a relevant term for engaging in design? How expansive is openness, and for whom?

The Myth of Openness: Open Space as Contested Terrain and Practice

The concept of open space has regained prominence amid contemporary crises, including climate change, spatial injustice, and land-use conflicts. Originat-

ing in 19th-century urban reform, it was historically framed as a moral and hygienic corrective to industrial cities, often reinforcing social hierarchies through prescriptive and technocratic design ideals that limit participatory agency and suppress alternative spatial imaginaries. Planning paradigms from the garden city to modernist zoning, situated open space within a Gestalt tradition of figure-ground relationships, which persist in landscape architecture, planning, and contemporary urbanism, recasting open space as a functional land-use category increasingly linked to ecological infrastructure yet frequently detached from questions of equity and access.

Presently, the term's continued use across design disciplines obscures its socio-political entanglements and historical exclusions. Open space, however, is a deeply political term, in the sense that it encompasses the future value of a morally accepted natural or ecological development. It is not a mere void or leftover, but is considered a socially, ecologically, and politically productive field. The authors sustain that unless we dissect what openness means today and for whom, the term requires reconceptualization to address dynamic processes that rigorously address multispecies cohabitation, while questioning the often neglected spatial politics of visibility and control and legacy models of spatial control. To design open space critically is to interrogate its con-

ditions of openness. In sum, the term 'open space' reflects a shifting terrain of meaning shaped by normative planning logics, a lack of spatial politics, and ecological imaginaries that shape the very grammar of openness, as emptiness, wilderness, and terra nullius (Mbembe, 2020; Said, 1978). This colonial framing of land as 'open for settlement' continues to echo in modernist and contemporary masterplans that overlook or neglect local, vernacular, informal, rural, fallow, or ecological presence.

If spatial experience is socially structured and historically sedimented, then open space becomes a medium through which collective life is constituted and remembered, where the sedimented traces of lived experience, expressed through gestures, routines, and ways of being that shape both perception and action. In this view, spatial design is not simply about organizing physical form but about cultivating the latent structures through which experience becomes meaningful over time, therefore, engaging with the slow accretion of meaning, memory, and routine.

A landscape-based approach to open space must also engage with more-than-human subjects and decolonial critiques. Space is performed and materially defined or formalized through entanglements of human and non-human agency (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Tsing, 2015; Haraway, 2016). These reframing challenges instrumental definitions of open space as

merely functional or performative, proposing instead a vocabulary of latency, reciprocity, and potentiality. It calls for a more rigorous, politically attuned, and ecologically grounded reading of open space, one that foregrounds its spatial, temporal, and affective dimensions. Doing so repositions open space as a terrain of design agency: a field through which landscape practice can foster relationality, repair, and commoning amid systemic fragmentation.

Exploring Structures of Spatiality, Temporality, and Conviviality in the Puente Hills Landfill

The Puente Hills Landfill, long categorized as a 'waste site,' is now poised to become one of the largest regional parks in Los Angeles County. This shift in designation reflects a broader reevaluation of land once deemed marginal, toxic, or unusable. In dominant planning discourse, open space is often framed in functional or instrumental terms, whether as land preserved for recreation, ecological restoration, or aesthetic relief from urban density. It is coded as green, clean, and accessible in contrast to urban, industrial, or infrastructural. Yet such a binary collapses under the weight of Puente Hills. Here, the surface of open space is underwritten by deep histories of erasure, extraction, accumulation, and containment. The site's 'openness' is shaped not by pastoral idealism, but by methane migration, engineered subsid-



Fig. 1 - Puente Hills (photo: The Sound of Silence project, 2023).

ence, and the slow metabolism of waste. From one perspective, Puente Hills embodies the legacy of infrastructural modernism, an engineered void created to absorb the excesses of a metropolis. From another, it is a palimpsest of lived experiences, material cultures, social resistance, and eco-cultural adaptation. The Puente Hills Landfill, once the largest in the United States, operated from 1957 to 2013, rising over 150m and covering 283 hectares. Community members who have lived under the shadow of the landfill for decades now see the promise of a return: a reclaiming of space once zoned against, or oblivious to, them. Their demands for accessible trails, native plant restoration, cultural storytelling, and healing infrastructure expand the definition of open space beyond recreation toward reparation (County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, 2025; Brake, 2024; Studio-MLA, 2025; ASLA, 2024).

In design terms, the landfill presents unique constraints and affordances for rethinking the spatial practices of openness. Traditional site programming must contend with highly regulated geotechnical conditions: capped surfaces that prohibit deep planting, methane vents that limit building loads, and ongoing subsidence that undermines formal infrastructure. These limitations challenge the designers to think materially and politically: What kinds of spatial openness can be built on unstable ground?

We could argue that open space becomes a temporal ecology: a field of provisional relationships between land, regulation, ecology, and community. Puente Hills thus reveals the limits of conventional open space categories. It is neither a park in the normative sense, a remnant industrial site, nor a wildland preserve. It is something else: a site of negotiation, unfinished and unfinishable, where openness is less about form but about its potential for cohabitation, memory work, ecological experimentation (and justice).

Designing Post-Industrial Futures Through Landscape Inquiry

The design studio³ was framed as a form of critical spatial inquiry, employing design as both method and lens to imagine, test, and critique the socio-spatial pasts and speculative futures of a post-industrial landscape. Through experimental and collective methodologies, the projects interrogated the paradoxes and potentials of this open space within the socio-ecologically complex context of the Puente Hills Landfill.

Operating through a landscape-based epistemology, students engaged the landfill not as a tabula rasa or site to be remediated into normative typologies such as 'park' or 'green infrastructure', but rather as a layered palimpsest of ecologies, memories, regulations,

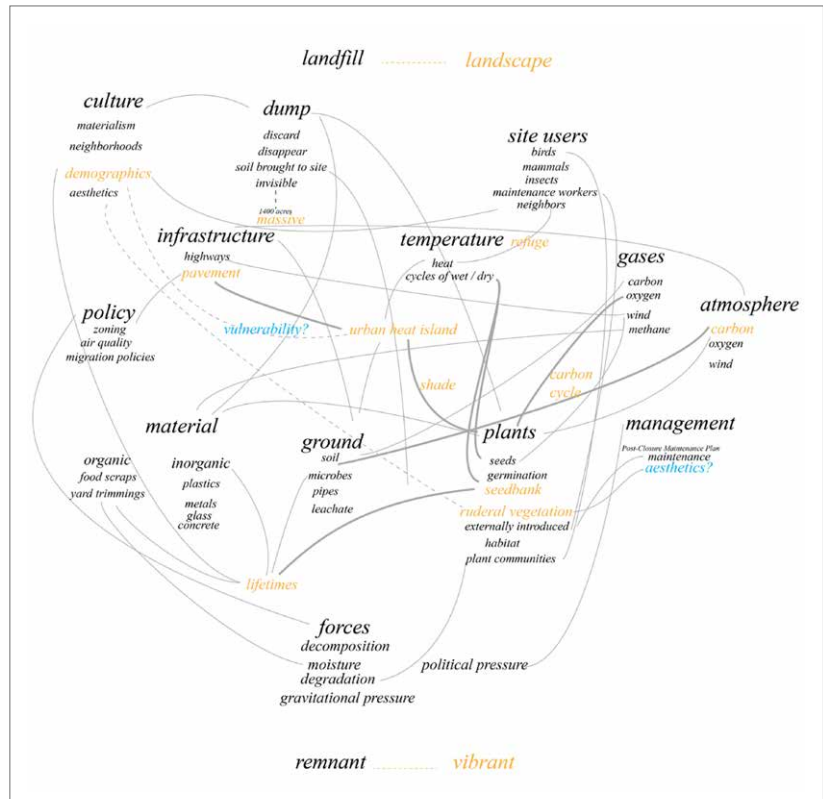


Fig. 2 - Spatial assemblage
(image: Kate Chesebrough,
2023)

exclusions, and belonging. The pedagogy emphasized tracing latent relationalities and affordances embedded in the site, where infrastructures, atmospheres, temporalities, and subjectivities converge in contested and often invisible ways.

Paired with archival research and community-based inquiry⁴, the studio explored the critical zone (Latour, 2014) as a methodological tool to uncover entangled histories and material processes, examining methane migration, subsidence patterns, informal ecologies, and socio-political boundaries. Student investigations produced forensic cartographies that overlaid geological strata, waste deposition timelines, regulatory frameworks, multispecies habitats, and migration routes. These mappings expose latent spatial and ecological agencies, proposing new imaginaries of open space as contested commons shaped by waste legacies, regulatory infrastructures, and socio-environmental justice claims. They represent

(and perform) space as dynamic, unstable, and multi-scalar, illuminating alternative spatial narratives and design opportunities.

Here, openness is reimagined not as a visible or vacant condition, but as an expanded, sensory, and affective field perceived through atmospheric conditions, micro-scale mutations, and temporal flows. By focusing on thresholds, ecological cycles, and regulatory constraints, the work renders perceptible the invisible and proposes design as a practice of attunement to the critical zone.

Sectional Relations of Material Flows and Living Systems

Material flows, both inert and biotic, interact within a landscape, drawing attention to the stratigraphy and composition of layered substrates, as well as to the dynamic exchanges occurring between subterranean and surface ecologies. This vertical openness 79

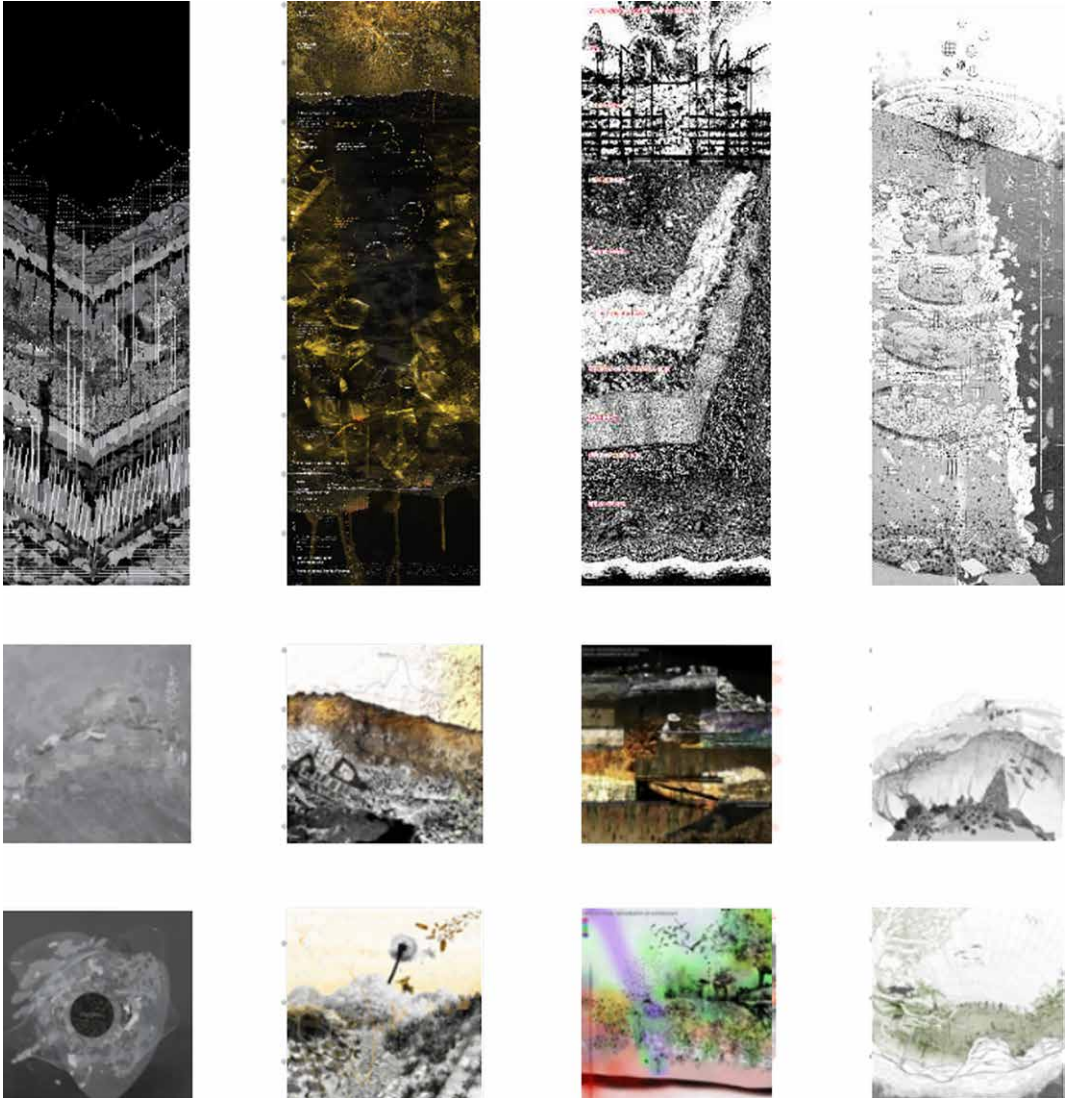


Fig. 3 - Deploying the critical zone (images: Kate Gliniak, Kate Chesebrough, Mengting Zhang, Yuqing Guo, 2023).

foregrounds the relational entanglements between species, materials, and infrastructures across vertical gradients, echoing calls within landscape architecture to understand the ground not as a camouflaged surface but as a medium that reaches across, deep and above, demanding a move beyond planimetric design thinking.

This exploration of sectionality resonates with Michel

Corajoud's definition of landscape as the section between the underground and the sky (2001), underscoring the vertical axis as a central register for spatial practice. Sectionality, in this sense, reassigns agency to the underground, not merely as a passive substrate but as an active domain shaping the affordances and limitations of open space.

The Puente Hills Landfill, for instance, illustrates how infrastructural interventions, such as landfill capping and gas venting systems, can significantly limit the

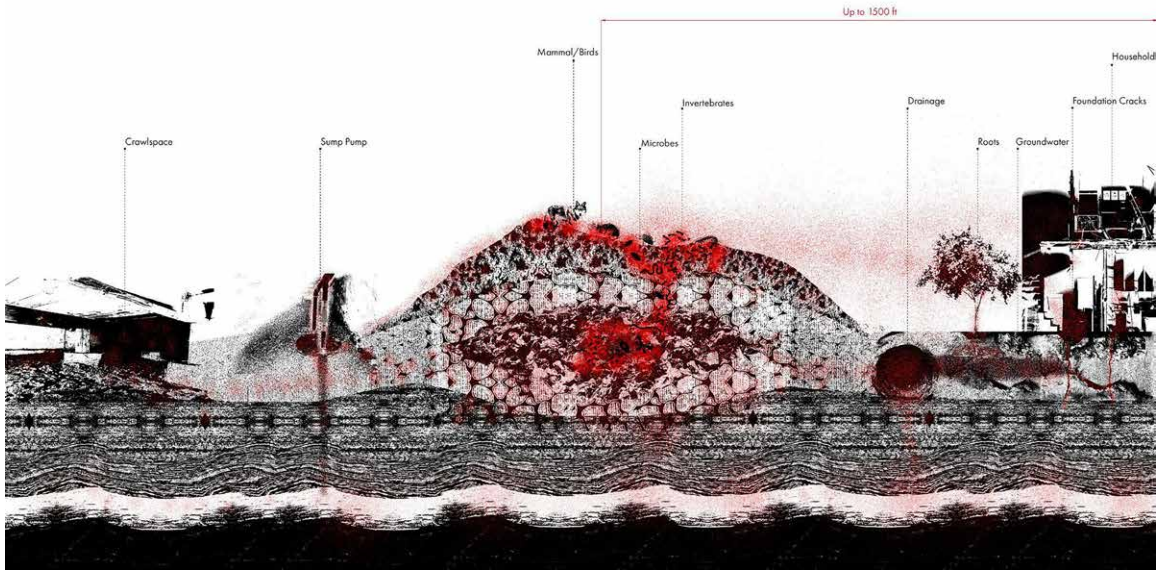


Fig. 4 - Landfill Gas Migration (image: Mengting Zhang, 2023).

subterranean flow of water, gas, and organic matter. These engineered blockages inhibit vertical permeability, relegating openness to the horizontal plane and reducing the landscape to a surface condition, a common issue in almost any urban project, where the underground is usually heavily compromised by infrastructure.

Open-Ended Temporality

The landfill's proposed reintegration into Los Angeles County's regional parks network offers a compelling case for open space as a temporal projection. While the aim is to restore or 'complete' an ecological corridor for endemic or migrating species and wildfire mitigation, such aspirations are constrained by the material and temporal demands of post-industrial land remediation.

The engineered topography is estimated to require 75 years to stabilize due to subsidence and methane venting, highlighting a temporal lag between ecological desires and infrastructural reality. In this context, openness imbues a sense of uncertainty, as any long-term framework inevitably casts its

projections. Modelling subsidence allows for some direction in decision-making; yet, how this uncertainty about the ground, its conditions, and qualities is addressed in design opens a whole range of design questions. Design for a part, [design for all] in a part of the site, design for linear accesses with transformative edges, design of conditions, allowing for the ephemeral, etc., inviting a reconsideration of how the binomial open space allows to shape 'design for the long term'.

How open is open space when decisions made are focusing on the present and materialized in ways that can only lead to eventual reform? What does it mean to design the form of conditions in open ways⁵⁷?

Intergenerational Amnesia

Temporal dynamics transform space into a dimension of multiplicity, where space is continually in the process of becoming, as a convergence of diverse trajectories, experiences, and agencies (Massey, 2005). This relational view inherently conflicts with technocratic notions of programmable, universally applicable open space as a static typology or unit of land. The

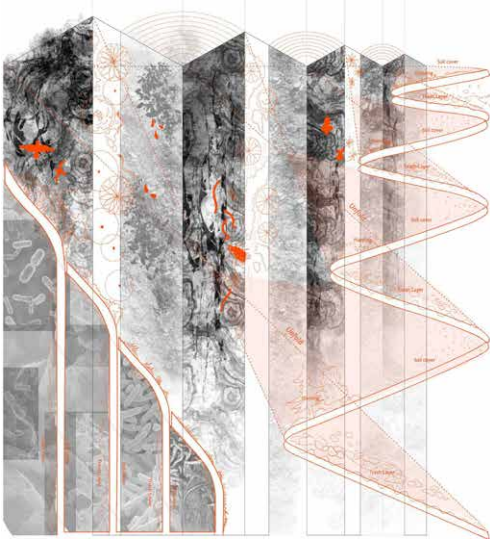
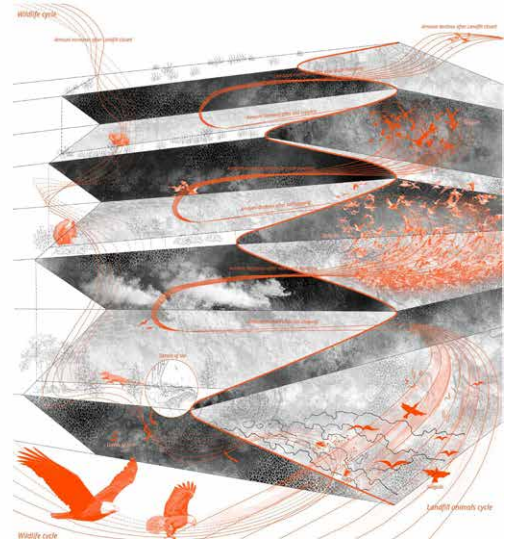
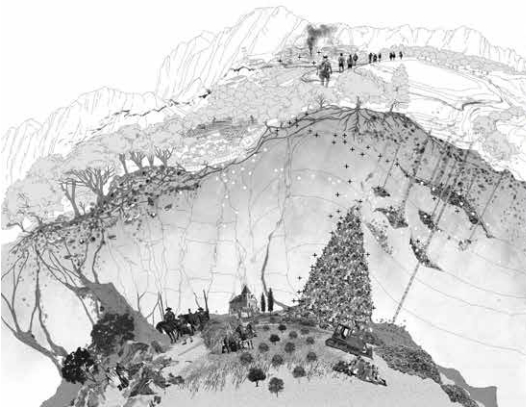


Fig. 5 - Unfolding cycles (image: Xinyun Li, 2023).



Traces of relationships



New form of ghosts



Fig. 6 - Mediating cultural memory and ecological emergence (image: Yuqing Guo, 2023).

closure of the Puente Hills Landfill in 2013 (Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, 2013) was the result of decades of grassroots activism and community resistance. However, the physical transformation of the site into public open space will likely occur long after those activists are gone. This temporal disjunction foregrounds a condition of intergenerational amnesia, where the memory of struggle risks era-

sure in the absence of commemorative or narrative frameworks within the design. Designers are thus confronted with the dual responsibility of preserving activist heritage while also accommodating novel ecological colonizations, such as migrating species or spontaneous plant successions. This tension invites more profound reflection on the role of landscape architecture in mediating between



Fig. 7 - Spacetime entanglements (image: Kate Gliniak, 2023).

cultural memory and ecological emergence. Can openness accommodate both preservation and deviation? Can design hold space for histories while remaining open to futures that are radically different?

Multispecies Cohabitation and Connectivity

A truly open space must also be legible and accessible to more-than-human actors. The question, then, is: what spatial cues and sensorial affordances enable multi-species cohabitation? Designing for multispecies connectivity requires an attunement to the perceptual and behavioral patterns of nonhuman life forms (Tsing, 2015; Haraway, 2008). These include habitat corridors, microclimatic variations, and the provision of ecotonal edges that support diverse life cycles.

Articulating open spaces and working beyond the site can afford different meanings to the concept of openness.

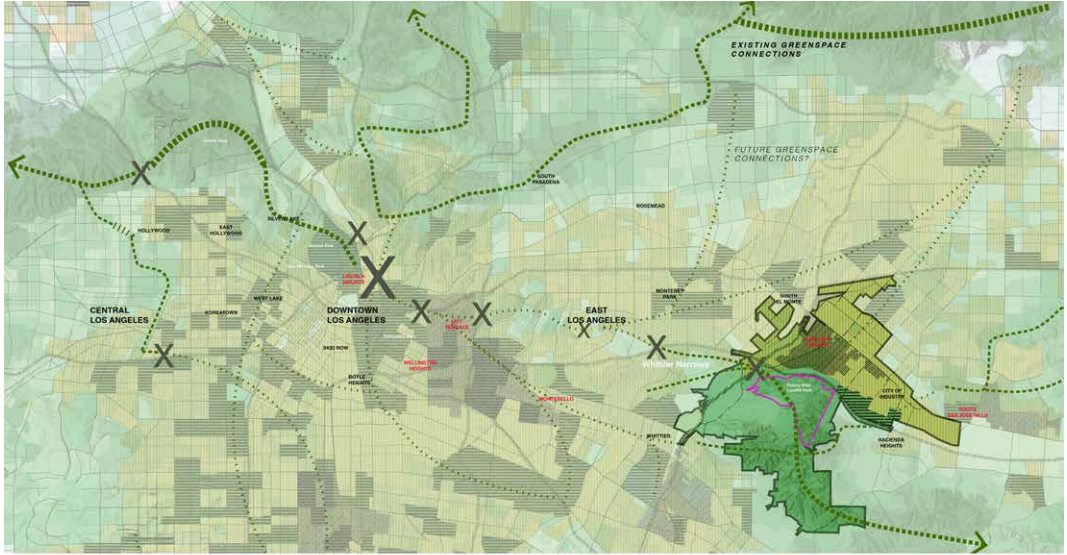
Cultural Intersections

Mapping cultural intersections reveals another layer of openness: the spatial imprint of heritage-driven behaviors, practices, and memories. Even in con-

texts where dominant demographics may hold U.S. citizenship, cultural practices often stem from diasporic or indigenous traditions. Juxtaposition in this sense does not automatically yield intersection. The spatial politics of open space must consider whether design facilitates parallel use or genuine interaction. Is the space versatile enough to support cultural plurality without collapsing difference into uniformity? And further, is space truly open when its infrastructure encourages separation over synergy?

The Landfill as a Relational Field

Rather than framing the landfill as a void to be filled or erased, the design explorations approach it as an active, contested, and relational field, aligning with contemporary calls to reclaim open space not as a fixed noun but as a verb: a site of continuous negotiation, where visibility, access, and ecological reciprocity are shaped through overlapping temporalities and agencies (DuFour 2021; Massey 2005). Within this framework, the Puente Hills Landfill becomes a testbed for reimagining open space as a commons-in-form, where design is less about closure and more about ongoing stewardship.



redefining site boundaries

community

Fig. 8 - Redefining edges, boundaries, and more-than-human communities (image: Kate Chesebrough, 2023).

The trope of emptiness is challenged by treating waste not as the end of a cycle, but as an archive of active residues from consumption, displacement, and industrial processes. The landfill is reconceptualized as a living palimpsest of material histories. Rather than a passive receptacle, open space is rendered as an agent of ecological and social accountability (Barad 2007; Latour 2017).

The shifting grounds of the landfill marked by subsidence, buried infrastructures, and atmospheric seepage form a confluence of socio-ecological, mi-

gratory, and industrial histories. Its apparent 'openness' is deceptive, often masking histories of exclusion, particularly the disproportionate burden borne by low-income Latino communities in surrounding areas (Pulido 2000; Harrison 2016). Access, in this context, is not merely about entry but about material justice for those who have lived with its toxicity and who, in some cases, harvest its latent resources from metals to biogas.

The landfill emerges as a performing space, enacted through the entanglements of humans and

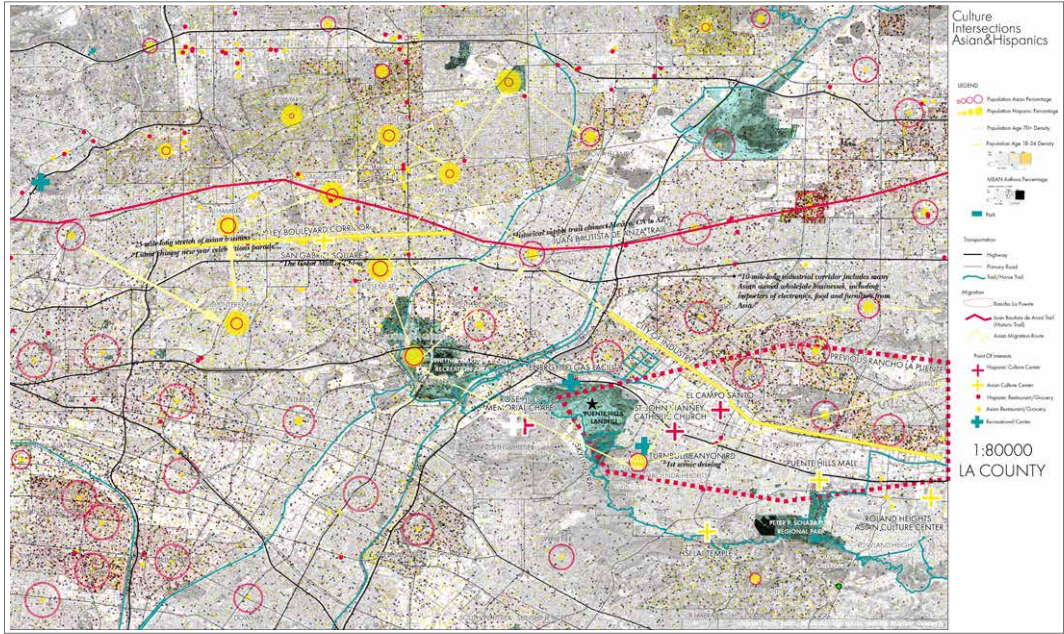


Fig. 9 - Intersecting cultures (image: Mengting Zhang, 2023).

non-humans. Methane pipelines act as infrastructural ghosts, soil movement signals unspoken risks, and multispecies assemblies, ranging from coyotes and soil bacteria to maintenance workers, collectively shape its unfolding ecology (Haraway 2016; Tsing 2015). These are latent political ecologies, where design must attend to what leaks, persists, and resists (Houston et al. 2016).

The design research conducted on site explores modalities of leakage, repair, and conviviality, recognizing the landfill's material transformations as part of its identity rather than problems to be concealed. Methane becomes both a hazard and an energy source; instability becomes a register of past violence and future care. The design explorations amplify the site's temporal rhythms⁶ of decomposition, remediation, or ritual as spatial qualities (Anderson 2009; Ingold 2011). Against greenwashed strategies that treat the landscape as a surface for beautification, the work turns to the underground and the atmosphere as a medium⁷, where matter, memory, and agency converge.

Through this lens, open space is reframed not as a static public good or a final design product but as a negotiated and open-ended process rooted in conflict, care, and collective transformation. The landfill becomes a commons-in-the-making, where translocal knowledge, material flows, and multispecies inhabitation actively reshape both the use and identity of space.

To engage open space, then, is to recover its layered inheritances and to design for situated justice. It demands that landscape architecture extend beyond its managerial paradigm, reimagining design as a forensic and relational practice, attuned to atmospheric conditions, multispecies presence, and the entangled socio-cultural narratives that render space both contested and alive.

Reclaiming Openness as Radical Relationality

Open space is not 'empty land' awaiting activation, but a dense constellation of ecologies, histories, politics, and potentialities, often rendered invisible by dominant regimes of spatial abstraction and encl-

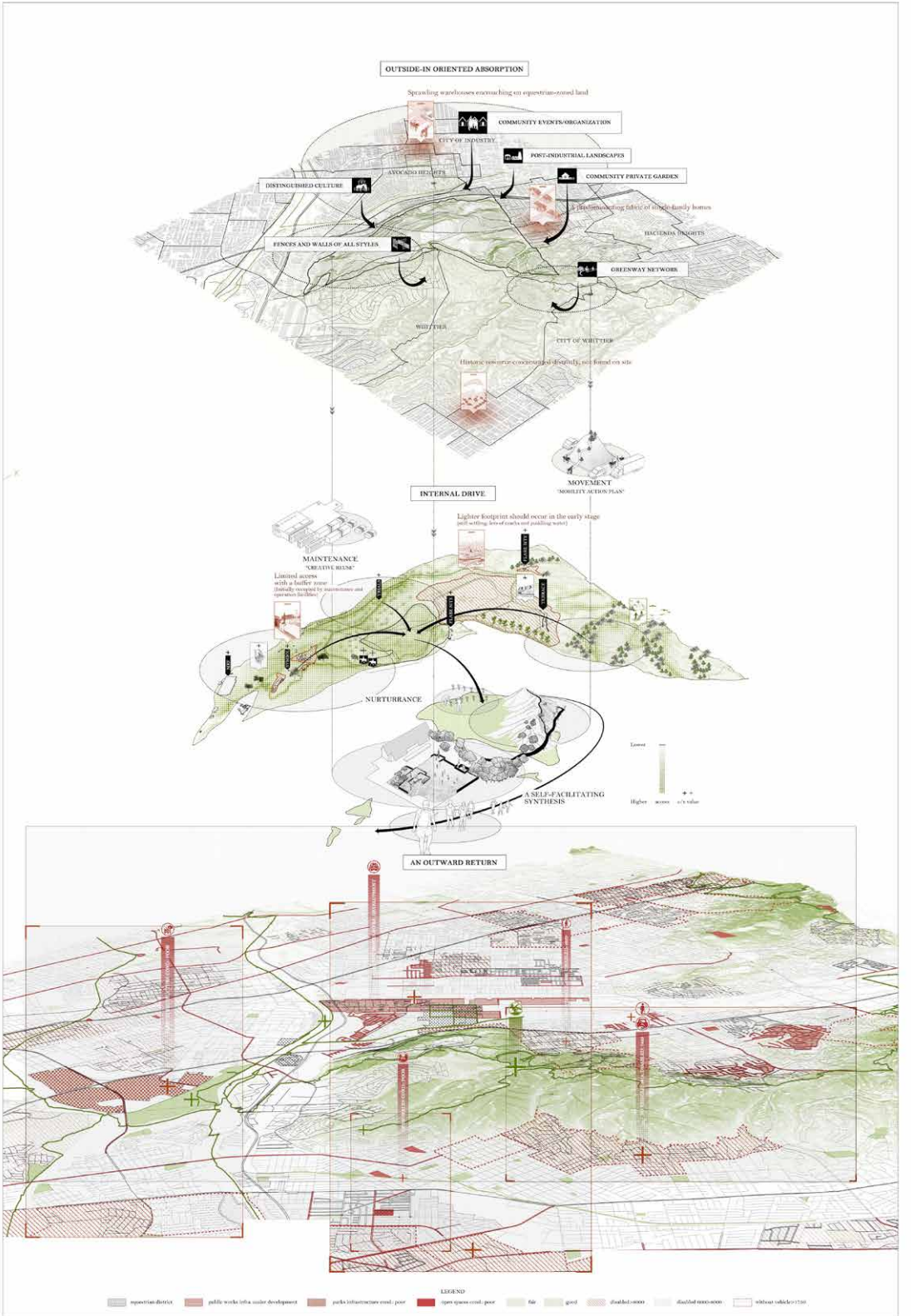


Fig. 10 - Landscape as facilitator (image: Yuqing Guo, 2023).

sure. This article critically explores open space as far more than a neutral spatial void or typological category. It argues that open space must be understood not in terms of fixed boundaries, ownership, or functionality but through its relational, temporal, and affective capacities⁸.

We suggest, therefore, that the presumed neutrality of open space, often equated with blue and green infrastructure, has been deliberately flattened by market-oriented urbanism. More significantly, the memory of spatial forms, materials, and spatial qualities transcends purely functionalist design logics. It is precisely within the scope of design to reanimate these memories and extend approaches toward a renewed conception of openness, one that accounts for embodied history, socio-environmental entanglements, and multisensory inhabitation.

The landfill operates as a contested yet shared reference point, a boundary-object⁹ (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Trompette & Vinck, 2009), revealing the frictions between planning, policy, infrastructure, and landscape design. Its materiality anchors competing interpretations: where planners see zoning categories, engineers see waste management systems, and designers envision post-industrial ecologies, while affected communities grapple with its lived consequences. This multiplicity exposes the limits of any singular disciplinary approach. The landfill's instabil-

ity as an active dump, a capped hazard, and a speculative park forces continuous renegotiation, making visible the power geometries that determine whose knowledge and values shape its future. Yet this very tension holds potential.

By refusing to resolve the landfill into a static or neutral form, it becomes a site of critical mediation, where technocratic models collide with embodied experience, policy timelines confront geological rhythms, and infrastructural control wrestles with ecological agency. The challenge for landscape architecture lies not in erasing these contradictions through seamless design, but in amplifying them as a generative force or ways to rehearse more inclusive and adaptive spatial practices. In this light, the landfill's true significance emerges not as a problem to be solved, but as a revelatory space where the conflicts inherent in contemporary land use rise to the surface, demanding collective reckoning and imaginative repair.

By mobilizing critical spatial theory and design thinking, we frame open space as a site of entanglement: between the public and the private, the formal and the informal, and the human and the more-than-human. As such, open space is inherently paradoxical: accessible yet restricted, common yet commodified, lived yet planned, regulated yet insurgent. This paradox is not a flaw but a productive tension that re-

veals the uneven geographies of access, care, and imagination.

This article challenges the notion that openness can be measured solely by size or ill-perceived emptiness. It has been proposed that openness is scalar but not scalable, contextual rather than universal, and experiential rather than empirical. The lens of the commons further reorients our understanding of open space from a noun to a verb, a practice of co-creation, maintenance, and refusal. It highlights how open space can become a tactical ground for alternative infrastructures, ecological democracy, and shared world-making, especially in the face of dispossession, surveillance, and the climate crisis.

Ultimately, this synthesis proposes that open space should be reclaimed as a radical relational construct, an active proposition for thinking and designing with complexity, with care, and with the openness of the world itself.

There is no outside to space (Derrida, 1976; Laclau, 1996; Butler, 2005; Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2013), only openings within¹⁰. The most effective way to discuss open space is to start by asking how open it can become, to what extent openness can be enacted, contested, and sustained, and for whom?

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The views expressed in this article are solely those of the authors. Any errors or omissions remain our own.

Notes

¹In recent decades, the field has turned its attention toward more programmatic or evocative concepts such as place, with its emphasis on identity and rootedness; public realm, with its juridic-political dimensions; and landscape infrastructure, which foregrounds systems thinking and performance metrics. While each of these terms offers valuable insights, their rise has often come at the expense of a critical engagement with space as a relational, contingent, and political category. While the notion of 'landscape' has been extensively theorized as a medium, representation, ideology, or process, the term 'space' has paradoxically receded from critical discussion. Henri Lefebvre's seminal claim that "space is a social product" remains a crucial provocation, reminding us that space is not merely a container for social life but a condition through which social, political, and ecological relations are continuously produced. In landscape architecture, however, space has too often been reduced to background: a void to be filled, a leftover to be programmed, or a surface to be greened. This disciplinary neglect of space has allowed dominant planning practices to instrumentalize open space in the service of technocratic, depoliticized goals, be they ecological services, climate adaptation, or real estate value.

²Unlike 'place', which can sometimes lean toward essentialism or nostalgia, space demands an analysis of power, temporality, and relationality

³Cornell University, MLA Design Studio LA6020 Integrating Theory and Practice II, Spring 2023, TRANSLOCAL ECOLOGIES. shifting grounds, multispecies migrations, material displacements, and reciprocity in landscapes futures, led by Duarte Santo

⁴Engaging with participatory process led by Studio-MLA, a landscape architecture firm located in Los Angeles and San Francisco, USA.

⁵Paraphrasing Stan Allen (1999), a shift from designing form to designing conditions.

⁶Its atmospheres, material transformations, and sensorial resonances.

⁷What Bruno Latour conceptualizes as the critical zone.

⁸Although space has often been framed as neutral, phenomenological thinkers have long challenge this assumption. Husserl, interpreted by Tao DuFour (2021) reconceptualize space through the principle of co-subjectivity positing perception as the relational phenomenal structured by shared social, historical, and environmental conditions and horizons. Dufour highlights that perception is both habitual and anticipatory temporal unfolding shaped by memory expectation and inherited spatial structures.

⁹The concept of a boundary object describes a site or artifact that enables collaboration across divergent social worlds while maintaining interpretive flexibility. Boundary objects do not eliminate conflict; rather, they mediate 'heterogeneous cooperation' by allowing actors to engage from different epistemic positions. In the case of Puente Hills, the landfill functions simultaneously a remediated brownfield, a future park, a source of ecological volatility, and a symbol of environmental injustice. Its contested openness exemplifies this dynamic, revealing the layered and often unequal relationships between infrastructure, regulation, memory, and design.

¹⁰From Derrida's deconstruction of the outside, where no meaning exists outside systems of representation, through Laclau and Butler's constitutive outside where what is excluded from a system actually structures that system from within, to Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos's spatial lawscapes where space is always mediated by law, by affect, by power. Each affirming that spatial systems are constituted from within, revealing openings rather than self-contained borders