



Fig.2. The territory of the Open-Air Art Museum Pedvāle with locations of artworks and a walking path in 2011³



Fig.1. The Zone effect created in the Aizpute town's centre²

Legends

- Location places of artwork
- ▲ Cast Iron Art Symposium place
- Conceptual Zone area
- ▲ Interesting places

The artscape is a changing entity as is the landscape itself. Sometimes, by creating and locating contemporary artworks in the landscape, an effect occurs that could be called a "zone effect". This effect is part of the atmosphere, attraction and potential of the site. The idea of a "Zone" is borrowed from Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, which was released in 1979. The film depicts an expedition led by Stalker to a place called the Zone, which is a supernatural, mythical place, disconnected space, the void, with an imaginary capacity to fulfill one's deepest desires, faith and hopes.

The aim of the research is to look at the changing role of contemporary art practices as a way to rearrange and to define the possible strategies employed to determine relationships between the creator, art practice and spectator. The study sought and distinguished groups that derived the "zone effect" and transformations of the place during the investigation. Tarkovsky got inspired from Russian authors Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, who wrote a novel *Roadside Picnic* (1971/1972). In the novel the Zone is an area where the aliens had possibly landed. The so-called Visitors have a "picnic" and according to their actions they have not noticed humans or paid attention to the site. The author of the present paper has interpreted the Visitors as artists or creators who stop at the site for a shorter or longer period of time. The Zone is understood as an area where artistic actions have occurred and a Picnic - as a particular place where artwork or action is situated. During the Picnic, a Visitor becomes the "owner" of the place for a certain period of time depending on the action. In some cases, the creators obtain knowledge through experiencing the site.

In this context, the Zones are understood as urban elements in urban fabric combining the notion of the landscape structure and geography. Thus, in this paper the "zone effect" is seen as a trait of place that characterizes its specific essence and structure. To illustrate the Zone effect, the town of Aizpute in Latvia is offered as an example (see Fig.1).

The artwork locations were explored that were created during the Art Laboratory AIZ (curator artist Māris Grosbāhs) and held by the art residency and workshop centre Serde in 2011 (Serde, 2012). Artworks made during the Laboratory were small-scale artistic, urban interventions, including sound experiments and video works, spatial installations in the environment, site-specific interventions and performances. Besides there is also the International Cast Iron Art Symposium organised. The case of Aizpute demonstrates that artists are eager to exhibit their works and involve the local communities and other interested individuals by both involving them in the creative process and explaining the result. The exhibited artworks along with the activities as part of the process form an uncertain border of the Zone area, which should be understood symbolically and not literally.



Fig.3. The environmental art object *Stone Fog* by Ojārs Feldbergs and Fujiko Nakaya, 2011 (Open-Air Art Museum Pedvāle, 2012) (Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle, 2012)



Fig.4. Urban Installation *Pier* by Siiri Vallner and Indrek Peil, Tallin, 2011 (LIFT11, Urban Installations Festival, 2012)



Fig.5. Cybernetic sculpture *Red Queen's Race* at the Jelgava Palace courtyard by Krists Pudzens, Latvia, 2010 (Foto: Krists Pudzens)

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Creation of the "Zone effect" by contemporary art practices

Towards the determination of the place

The place valence method is applied to comprehend the way to approach the place before and after the artwork is created. This method was adjusted in folklore studies (Laima, 2011, 27). The title of the method includes two concepts: *the place*, to be understood as a particular element of the landscape, which is limited by the existing tradition; and *valence*, a term borrowed from linguistics and chemistry to describe one element's ability to attract itself to other elements. Thus, in the context of this research, valence represents an ability or capacity of the place:

- to attract artists (creator, interpreter), where the ability or capacity is based on the idea (objective), and it can either actualize or not actualize the ideas of authority and/or supporters (commission), who can describe and "bring forth" (Martin Heidegger's concept of *Herbor bringen*) or highlight a specific character of the landscape, including meaning, the value of landscape elements interpretation, research and awareness; and
- to attract viewers, users, individuals as a "newly established" landscape, landscape element or process. The created place or the artist/creator's personality's potential to attract visitors to the landscape or the created place.

In this research three varieties of the place valence are distinguished, such as:

- (a) *the naturally determined place valence*, which includes geographically, geologically or ecologically unusual or particularly in the tradition marked formations, attracting the artist's or the creator's attention and interest by encouraging new ideas and artistic activities. Use of natural landscape features (such as meadows, forests or reliefs) forms the basis of the artistic practice;
- (b) *the historically determined place valence* in turn is associated with the site-specific importance of a historical event or its (long-term) use for a specific purpose and function. For example, artistic actions within art residency and workshop centre *Serde* in Aizpute, Latvia can be named as such. Local inhabitants become aware of the artistic actions in this place seasonally, thus the local communities get engaged and certain individuals get involved. In this way the Zone becomes recognizable by repetitions; and
- (c) *the artistically and creatively expressed place valence* pursued subjectively. For example, the Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle (2012) founded by the sculptor Ojārs Feldbergs in 1991, is arranged within the territory of the land, allocated for such purposes by the land owner. Through environmental artworks by young and professional artists, he manages to focus at safeguarding the natural features of the cultural landscape and creating inspiring conditions for diverse creative activities.

The varieties of the place valence mentioned above are not so unequivocal and may involve two or all three aspects, or transgress from one to another. For instance, the Open-Air Art Museum Pedvāle incorporates both the naturally determined place valence due to its location in a specially protected cultural and historical territory of the Abava Valley and is a cultural monument of national importance; and the historically determined place valence because Firkspedvāle and Brinkpedvāle manor houses (Fig.2), as well as the classical style rectory ruins of Sabīle are situated in the territory of the museum. At the same time, the transformation of the landscape function and meaning towards the artistically substantial place, provides the third variety - the artistically and creatively expressed place valence. Since the opening of the museum, it periodically attracts artists, visitors and spectators on the national and global level, who repeatedly visit Pedvāle to see both the existing and new artworks.

The naturally determined and the historically determined place valence may be defined as sequential and continuous, site-adapted, contextual (requiring comprehension of the essence of the landscape used by the artists to create artworks), while the artistically expressed place valence may occur as a process not related to the place. The latter can be compared to the Visitors, who go for a Picnic, which is not related to the site. The place valence analysis determines the potential of the landscape, which can be developed to encourage the involvement of artists and local inhabitants in the artistic process.

Phenomena of the Zone creation

Nexus between a landscape, creator and the contemporary artwork can be understood in terms of three following steps: before, during, and after the creation of the Zone. It is possible to trace two intertwined segments: (a) relation between the site and the artist during the development of the Zone; and (b) how the attraction effect that identifies the Zone can be created.

(1) Before creating the Zone

Sometimes creators get interested in a particular landscape type or its separate elements and stories as inspiration sources for their works. Wandering, drifting, walking and observations are some methods how to get to know the surroundings and the issues related to them. However, the artworks that are not characterized as site-specific, place-specific or contextual can be determined as a Picnic interaction without particular linkage to the site.

According to the general features of space, several categories have been drawn to attract artists before creating the Zone. The artists or creators can be attracted by: (a) selection of space either because of the interest of artist (materials working with) or through commission; (b) the ways of how the artwork may be incorporated into the site and what elements or processes may become interpreted; and (c) challenge, experiment with sites, materials, media. Some landscape spaces that may be selected are the following:

- consolidated spaces which are dense, occupied, complete with meaning, built structures, flora, symbols and informational signs or other objects. They can be not only physical objects, but also saturated with events such as festive parades, fairs, planned or spontaneous actions, etc.;
- open, empty spaces, for example, squares, meadows;
- "heterotopias" or other spaces;
- "terrain vague", the in-between and "a space in time";
- urban voids, abandoned territories;
- brownfield, greyfield, greenfield;
- abstract space, utopia;
- transferable, mobile spaces, for example, mobile garden;
- non-spaces, for example, chain shops;
- strategically important spaces such as nodes, edges, squares;
- cultural and historic environments, cultural heritage sites - sites which are defined as a cultural or natural heritage.

Each of the landscape spaces mentioned above reflect some particular problem, issue or aim.

(2) Relation between the site and the creator during the development of the Zone

The process that occurs during the development of the Zone can be linked with the placemaking concept (Fleming, 2007) which mainly is understood as part of the urban design that makes places meaningful and liveable, involving the production of place. Apart from the process of making or creating place, the writing [in] landscape approach is possible to distinguish. In this context the approach includes the idea of creation of new stories, elements or revival of the existing and the forgotten. In this way re-writing or re-definition of the landscape takes place.

Jane Rendell has developed a project of site-writing influenced by debates of art-writing, that incorporates and explores the position of the critic through "the site of writing itself, investigating the limits of criticism, and asking what it is possible for a critic to say about an artist, a work, the site of a work and the critic herself and for the writing to still "count" as criticism" (Rendell, 2010, 2). In this way writing [in] landscape incorporates not only physical and meaningful process of placemaking, but also "an active writing" that constructs as well as traces the sites between critic and writer, artist and artwork, viewer and reader" (Rendell, 2007, 69).

We may distinguish several characteristics of places created, which includes:

- temporary places (ephemerality, provocation, shock, etc.);
- enduring places (stability, values, etc.);
- places of everyday life (ordinarily, known, etc.);
- contemplation place (ambiance, atmosphere - reflecting humour, anger, passion, wonder, attachment, etc.).

There are several factors affecting the creator's relation with the site and the decisions made. First, *nature and human factors* must be mentioned. The factors linked to nature contribute to geology, hydrology and ecology. The factors defined by human are functional, aesthetic and ethic. In this way the Open-Air Art Museum Pedvāle has been offered as an example. The museum is a well-known and multifaceted culture and arts centre in Latvia. It is a platform for the development of traditional and contemporary art with integration of natural environment and cultural heritage. There are local and international open-air art exhibitions, symposiums, and workshops held. The founder Ojārs Feldbergs continued to work in the environmental landscape and organized various happenings, actions, performances and other staged events.

Large part of the museum's exhibitions - both permanent and temporary objects or actions - are linked with the natural setting of the site and incorporates water, trees, terrain, meadow, valley, earth or stones for their compositional setting within the landscape. Furthermore, it incorporates such features as day and night, seasonal changes or rituals incorporating agricultural actions. However, there are artificial creation processes that represent the natural ones, for example, the environmental art object *Stone Fog* by Ojārs Feldbergs and Fujiko Nakaya made in 2011 (Fig.3).

The second factor is that *commission* determines the preferable result or invites the preferable creator. The impact of a top-down vision of the territory by developers or planners and territory ownership has been significant. Accordingly, commission for the landscape is a predominant attribute. Different visions of the landscape can affect the decision-making in future, as well as the policies of the artwork commissions. Another factor marks the *level of the idea implementation*. It questions to what degree the planned and the initiated has been implemented and what determined the development. Yet, this subject requires further analysis of the before-and-after stages of the placemaking.

This step during the creation of the Zone contributes to the creation of the attraction effect that identifies the Zone. Through this attraction effect the place's ability of the change emerges and is emphasized for a longer or shorter period of time. The ability of the change is characterized by the notion of dynamics. Dynamics of micro-landscapes emerge having a further probability of transition into a landscape of wider spectrum.

(3) Identification of the created Zone

The last step implies the elements of attraction and advertising that become significant after the Zone has emerged in the landscape. This gives a direction asking for the impact on the results obtained. It should be asked how the Zone appears.

This segment opens the ability of an artist to draw attention to the landscape space or demonstrate accessibility of the space to be used. The place valence method allows drawing people's attention to the landscape or a particular place through creative activities and processes. In this way the artists or creators provide a motive to visit and use places which was unfamiliar to general public before. Thus, a Picnic place becomes open and usable for society. These phenomena can be traced in Andy Goldsworthy's trail of connecting several art shelters as stopping, resting points and landmarks into the territory of a transition between the Alps and Provence with a diversity of exceptional landscapes. All this has been incorporated into the project *Refuges D'Art* in the Haute-Provence Geological Nature Reserve, Digne, France. Also, the urban installation *Pier* (Fig.4) by Siiri Vallner and Indrek Peil at Kalaranna 1, Tallin, that lasted for three months in 2011 is another example. The installation was made as part of the Urban Installations Festival LIFT11 within the Capital of Culture Programme.

Three main transformation or alteration levels may be distinguished according to the identity of the cultural landscape (in the form of material and intangible elements or processes):

- values and identity preservation of traditional or historical landscapes in direct application by none or minimal attachment of new elements (artefacts) without burdening and modifying the existing landscape. For instance, small scale urban installations, sculptures, interventions or street art projects can be grouped here. This description can be applied to the cybernetic sculpture *Red Queen's Race* at the Jelgava baroque Palace courtyard by Krists Pudzens in Jelgava, Latvia, that was installed in 2010 and lasted for two months (Fig.5). This artwork in Jelgava was implemented as part of the European Project Art Landscape Transformation that took place from 2008 to 2011 and was supported by the Culture Programme 2007-2013 of the European Commission;
- values and identity transmission of traditional or historical landscapes into new symbolic forms or symbolic synthesis of new elements (artefacts). However, this kind of transmission and stratification of historical information encourage the establishment of historical connections of the place understandable for future generations (Zigmunde, 2010, 56). For example, concert *Strāvoklis* by Latvian independent musicians singing songs with incorporated poetry by Latvian poet Rainis took place next to the monument of the poet. By this the traditional poems of Rainis were presented in a different light to be better understood and accepted by new generation;
- creation of new values and identity by emerging new traditions and experiences from other cultures, by promoting the processes of globalization and technological growth. In this case, monotony increases without keeping the uniqueness and distinctiveness characteristic to the nation and landscape. However, it must be mentioned that in the art scene experimental ideas have been developed in a unique way, thus increasing the diversity.

The first two transformation or alteration levels include the idea of introducing a new layer into landscape that is more or less notable, whereas the third level forms a new vision and a new layer.

One may ask what kind of influence it is possible to attain. According to this transformation of tradition and function, arising from the place valence method application, the preferable site and planning strategies can be defined if required. It is a circular twofold process. On one hand, it provides a potential or capability of the cultural landscape, and, on the other, it is the capacity of the artwork to determine the landscape, outlining the subsequent research directions.

Conclusions

This research demonstrates various processes with which the methodology has been built to understand the connection between the contemporary artwork and a landscape better. Analysis shows that the nexus between the landscape, the creator and the contemporary artwork can be understood in terms of three steps: before, during and after the creation of the Zone (the idea borrowed from Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*). Awareness of artistically created effect such as Zones implies a series of features which are applicable into the conceptual framework of searching for new ways of formulating the place. The directions mentioned above can be characterized as pragmatic solutions to include a landscape appreciation into the everyday life. Thus, artworks which are located into public space are intended for all individuals. Practice of everyday life has roots in that how individuals perceive and experience the world as a landscape. This is based on the concept of the lived space as formulated by Henry Lefebvre (1991). This symbolic dimension concerns the space of "inhabitants" and "users". Thus, the proposed way to look at contemporary artwork practices as urban elements is a way how interventions create the landscape effect. To sum up, it is important to understand the process of becoming in the context of artistic phenomenon. The effect created into landscape defines notification and attraction to the place by individual's perception and sensations. The study reflects that the landscape is a source of inspiration for the artists or creators and people's attraction. Thereby the research allows concluding that the possible strategies for future analysis include a relationship of the potential of the cultural landscape and the artwork defined landscape or a Picnic place.

Notes

- 2 The source of the presented map is prepared in cooperation with the interdisciplinary art group *Serde*. The map is given without the scale.
- 3 The source of the presented map is prepared in cooperation with the Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle. The map is given without the scale.

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