War-Scapes
Landscape Perception, Fortification, and Camouflage in Times of War

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Abstract | Landscape may be made up of both physical and geographical features but they are also constituted through perceived experiences. We construct landscape through imagination as much as through vision. We also inhabit and cultivate our environment and transform it into multifaceted cultural landscapes.

Wars transform these cultural landscapes both physically and mentally, and with dramatic consequences. Evidence is visible not only in the mental constructions of landscape (in ideas, concepts, texts, images, or maps), but also in the physical landscape itself: traces and material witnesses of war are manifold. Remaining structures and objects such as battlefields, front lines, walls, or fortifications have been either transformed into heritage sites or closed off as prohibited zones. War graves, cemeteries, and memorials were built to bury the dead and to commemorate countless lost lives. War gardening programs were initiated to counteract scarcity of food and depression at home. Camouflage landscapes created invisibility and devastated areas called for restoration. Even in Switzerland, said to be a land of peace and plenty, we can find traces of war landscapes and land used for defense.

Evidence is also given in theoretical approaches to landscape. The term "sense of place" is a key concept that focuses on behavioral and emotional approaches and attitudes toward spatial settings and landscapes. It highlights the love for landscape but also points to fear and danger as determining elements. After all, the direct experience of war has greatly influenced landscape perception and reflection, as is visible in the work of both the German sociologist Kurt Lewin and the US-American landscape historian John Brinkerhoff Jackson.

In this paper[1], I will focus on how war shapes landscapes and informs our understanding and perception of landscape. I will first discuss landscape perception in the context of fear and danger and then I will present exemplary war-related structures and practices of shaping the landscape, some of which persist to this very day.

Keywords | Landscape Perception, War-Scapes, Camouflage, Fortification.

Introduction | How do landscape and war interrelate? Landscapes are of fundamental importance to the identities of societies, communities, cultures, and nations. The term "landscape" has multiple meanings defined in various ways by a variety of disciplines. As such, its definition draws on abstract ideas, cultural traditions, medial images, and physical realities (Bucher, 2014). This offers many possible perspectives for studying the relationship between landscape and war – war understood as a state of armed conflict and characerized by aggression, destruction, high mortality, and precarious living conditions. Certainly, pivotal points are terrain and perception.

- Terrain

The physical landscape, its terrain and topography, is a fundamental parameter of any society: it provides space and it sets limits – even for warfare. Wars took and still take place in physical landscapes. Ground profiles and terrain conditions thus contain fundamental strategic meaning, as historical sources indicate.

In the 5th century BCE, the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu noted in "The Art of War" that the knowledge of the natural formation of the terrain is the soldier's best ally. Sun Tzu points out three general areas of resistance – distance, dangers, and barriers – and six types of ground positions that arise from them. Each of these six field positions offers certain advantages and disadvantages, for instance constructed positions should be filled first to await the enemy.

Terrain also determined the war between a well-armed Austrian army from the Holy Roman Empire and a poorly-armed force of the Swiss Confederacy in the legendary Battle of Morgarten in 1315. The Swiss only defeated the Austrians because they used the landscape strategically: The battle took place between the shores of Lake Aegeri and the steep rocks of the Morgarten Pass, where the Austrian army was positioned and subsequently cornered. On this exposed battleground, the Swiss demonstrated that using the terrain wisely, even a small, unarmed group could defeat a well-armed battalion (Pic. 1).

In the 18th century, Carl von Clausewitz (Vom Kriege, 1832) highlighted the connection between war and the ground on which it is fought, as a critical aspect of military strategy. According to Clausewitz, a war strategist must have "a natural mental gift" – a sense of locality (Ortsinn). Such a sense results from the perception and imagination of terrain, formed partly by the physical eye and partly by the mind, which completes what is missing with notions derived from knowledge and experience.

- Perception

Landscape perception is not so much a cognitive process; it refers much more to behaviors, emotions, desires, and fears

Pic 1: Mural at the townhall of Schwyz depicting the Battle of Morgarten, Fresco by Ferdinand Wagner, 1891, Photo: Adrian Michel. Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schlacht_am_Morgarten#/media/File:Morgarten_Rathaus_Schwyz.jpg.

that people associate with place. To address these affective relations, the Chinese-American geographer Yi Fu Tuan2 has postulated the notions of topophilia and topophobia. In everyday land use and perception, topophilia seems to be the guiding principle: topophilia describes the love for a place, where people feel rooted, where they have developed a bond. Tuan argues that this bond varies culturally and has many forms of expression. In this way, the love for a place or a landscape often takes the form of aestheticization. Aesthetic approaches to landscape are therefore also the most common way of displaying topophilia. Another common form is feeling at home or feeling safe.

Landscape can also be associated with negative values – linked, for example, to fear and trauma. Accordingly, as a characterization of places where people have experienced individual and collective insecurity and uncertainty, threat, hate, or other negative emotions, topophobia can be understood as a repulsion of place.

In a Western context, landscape is associated more readily with the notion of homeland than with a battlefield. One could even say that landscape is commonly perceived as an antithesis to war because of its intrinsic references to beauty, health, security, and recreation. However, a closer look reveals that fear, stress, and danger also inform a shared understanding of landscape. Western cultural landscape history hints at a relationship between fear and landscape, which may prove quite productive.

Theoretical Approaches

Fear seems to be ubiquitous in the conceptualization of landscape. In the 18th century, landscape was codified through the theory of the sublime. In aesthetics, the term "sublime" refers to a greatness beyond all possibility in calculation, measurement, and imitation. This concept of the sublime as an aesthetic quality in nature as distinct from beauty was brought into prominence in the 18th century through the writings of English artists and philosophers, and in particular the work of the Earl of Shaftesbury, John Dennis and Joseph Addison. Each made a journey (The Grand Tour) across the Alps and commented in his writings on both the horrors and the harmony of the experience, expressing a clear contrast of aesthetic qualities in the face of the alpine landscape. Edmund Burke was the first philosopher to argue that the sublime and the beautiful are mutually exclusive, and that the aesthetic experience of the sublime actually relates more to fear and "delightful horror" (Burk, 1756).

Current approaches within cultural landscape theory reveal that landscape has an implication of fear. According to Jay Appleton, cultural preferences for park-like landscapes, including natural landscapes, designed landscapes, and painted landscapes, derive from our ancient ancestry as savannah-dwelling hunter-gatherers. These parkscapes demonstrate our innate desire to locate ourselves at a hidden, defended, and protected vantage point (Appleton, 1996).

In view of the two World Wars, theoreticians developed concepts of landscape that accommodated not only for what was subsequently called a sense of place, but also a sensibility to negative attitudes toward spatial settings, such as fear and danger.

- Kurt Lewin: Shifting landscape experiences at the war front

Kurt Lewin's essay "Kriegslandschaft" (1917) is an early inquiry into the perception and phenomenology of war landscapes. Furthermore, it is a fundamental contribution to the conceptualization of topological and environmental psychology and the perception of landscape.

Discovering how the effects of military operations were inscribed onto the land thus distorting ordinary landscape perception, Lewin classified war landscapes as "directional landscapes" (gerichtete Landschaften) sharply limited by the frontline, whereas peace landscapes are perceived as an infinite round.

Based on his own experience as a field artillery soldier in a long war of attrition, Lewin tried to find a war-related reading of landscape. To survive at the front, a soldier needs to determine the lay of the land primarily according to physical safety, food, a favorable vantage point or position, and other precautions. Moving from behind the lines toward the frontline, he would experience a rather unusual reshaping of the landscape. This was not due primarily to an increasing alertness in response to the imminent danger at the front and its ultimate inaccessibility, but rather due to changes in the landscape itself: the occupied area seems to have a defined end somewhere ahead, followed by a „nothing." If the position is broken up during mobile warfare, then it is clear that not only will the border move and the character of the danger area change, but one would also notice with surprise that the former fighting position has been replaced by land. The area in which soldiers had to continuously duck in defense has now become part of the land which is to be passed through. What was perceived as an element of battle is suddenly transformed back into meadows and farmland; what was previously seen as a flattish dip in the ground and considered good cover is now seen as reasonably flat, gently undulating ground lacking any real height differences. As soon as the front moves on – or the war ceases – the landscape regains its original and individual character as a "peace landscape". Lewin managed to demonstrate landscape as a polymorphic and floating concept depending much on perception.

- J. B. Jackson and the development of environmental awareness

John Brinckerhoff Jackson3 is a US-American writer, publisher, landscape theorist, and instructor who influenced the broadening of the perspectives on landscape through the "vernacular" in the middle of the 20th century. Based on his experiences in World War II, he began thinking about landscape as a human artifact and furthered the idea that landscapes reveal styles of their own.

As an officer positioned in Europe during the war, he studied books to gain insight into the geography of his current location. He deciphered code, consulted maps, and studied the terrain. But as an intermediary between the front and the headquarters, he discovered that the soldiers at the frontlines developed a greater awareness of the environment by learning to rely on all their senses for guidance. He describes how this formed an environmental awareness and a sense of place (Ortsinn). Ultimately, this is what distinguished the soldiers in the field from their comrades at the headquarters. In peacetime, whether by day

Hadrian's Wall, remains of mile castel No. 39 (Castle Nick). Photo: Adam Curdon.
Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrianswall#/media/File:Milecastle_39_on_Hadrian27%s_Wall.jpg.

or by night, topographical features such as swampy soils or foliage were never looked upon as of much consequence for survival. However, at the war front such an environmental awareness becomes essential, and every soldier takes pains to activate and cultivate it. Jackson assessed the awareness of the environment – the sense of place – not only as a strategic tool (as according to Clausewitz) but also as the foundation of a new landscape concept. In this way, it was in the face of the wars that Jackson developed his skills to read the landscape as a manmade artifact. Based on these readings, he developed the concept that the shaping and devastation of landscape is closely linked to the necessities of human existence. It is thus pertinent to further investigate this notion of landscape as the product of humankind's effort to "re-create heaven on earth" using methods from cultural studies.

Warscapes

The following attempts to classify and compare warscapes throughout history show how war shapes landscapes in a wide variety of ways and how this is still visible today.

- Fortifications and Walls

Walls are structures built to define an area and to provide shelter and security. From ancient to modern times, they have served as an essential part of fortification endeavors, used to enclose and protect settlements and territories from potential aggressors. Great walls transforming and dividing landscapes are witnesses of major conflicts in world history. Along its 21,190 km stretch the Great Wall of China encompasses a series of fortifications made from stone, brick, rammed earth, wood, and other miscellaneous materials to protect the Chinese empire from the invasion of nomadic tribes. In the 7th century BCE, several walls were built along the empire's northern borders and later joined together. The defensive characteristics of the Great Wall were further enhanced by the construction of watchtowers, troop barracks, garrison stations, facilities for signaling by means of smoke or fire, and finally the path of the Great Wall, which also served as a transportation corridor. The landmark is so great it can be seen on satellite images.

The Romans have left comparable traces of war and border fortifications on the cultural landscapes through the construction of so-called "limeses", a type of fortification wall raised up along the many remote frontiers of the Roman Empire in defense against a barbarian invasion. As one of Europe's three major wall monuments, Hadrian's Wall was built from 122 CE onward in the province of Britannia. The fortification, complete with stone wall, forts, milecastles, and turrets, ran from the North Sea to the the Irish Sea, leaving in its wake a politically and spatially divided landscape. A significant part of the wall still stands and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 (Pic. 2).

Throughout history, the construction of walls has proven an

effective defense strategy. In World War II, Nazi Germany built the Atlantic Wall between 1942 and 1944, an extensive system of defense architecture spanning the coastlines of continental Europe. All the way from Norway to the border of Spain, numerous fortifications and related infrastructure interlinked with the terrain. Some parts of this Atlantic Wall have been demolished while others are of substantial interest to the public and anchored as heritage sites in the collective memory.

A case in point is arctic Norway where the Finnmark region constituted the northernmost branch of the massive German defense line. The immense presence of the German Wehrmacht at the time of World War II and its tactics of scorching earth radically transformed the rural and coastal Norwegian landscapes, greatly affecting local communities. Today, war is still a conspicuous feature of this northern coast: bunkers, battery emplacements, gun positions, surveillance posts, trenches, roads, barbed wire fences, as well as the overgrown ruins of former settlements continue to display a dramatic landscape of war.

The building of walls seems to regain a new and poignant relevance today in the presence of the border fortifications along Europe's "external frontiers" to stop refugees.

- Battlefields, war graves, and memorials
Battlefield landscapes define places where opposing armies came into contact with one another. Such places include the areas used for fighting and major movements of troops, key vantage points for viewing events or directing troops, and overnight camps. When combatants fall, they are generally buried on or near the battlefield itself. While the landscape will typically have undergone some changes since the time of the battle, it often retains key characteristics of the terrain at wartime and is thus of continued vital importance, both in allowing events to be located on the ground and in aiding understanding and interpretation. Archeological investigations have revealed battlefields back to ancient times as it is the case with the Museum and Park of Kalkriese near Osnabrück, Germany. Soil investigations revealed that this area could be the site of the historical Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in the 9th century CE. To reassess the area, a museum and park were established. The Swiss landscape architects Zulauf & Schweingruber designed the 20-hectare park to stage archaelogocial excavation and imagined features of the battle (Zulauf & Schweingruber, 2001); (Pic. 3).

During World War I, vast landscapes in Europe were turned into battlefields. The need for war graves was immense. The German landscape architect Willi Lange developed so-called hero graves (Heldenhaine), in which an oak was planted for each fallen soldier. In Germany as well as abroad this concept for burying and commemorating the loss was quickly propagated.

Pic 3: An archaeologically staged landscape in the park of Kalkriese, designed by landscape architects Rainer Zulauf and Lukas Schweingruber. Photo: Corradox.
Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museum_und_Park_Kalkriese#/media/File:Kalkriese_Turmblick.JPG.

Pic 4: German war grave, Futa Pass, Italy. The sculptural landscape features a 2 km-long wall, which forms a spiral around the mountain and terraces for the graves.
Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutscher_Soldatenfriedhof_Futapass#/media/File:FirenzuolaSoldate nfriedhofFutapassMonumentGraeber2.JPG.

Impressive warscapes still exist in Flanders, Belgium4 and in the Region of Verdun and the Maas Valley in France. Villages and cities, agricultural fields and forests were turned into battlefields and then into war cemeteries. Eroded dugouts, bomb craters, and vast cemeteries remain visible signifiers of history inscribed in the landscape.

In postwar times, many war graves were merged and new commemoration places and cemeteries were founded, as the war cemetery on the Futa Pass in Italy demonstrates. This postwar burial and commemoration site was a collaborative work realized in 1959 by the architect Dieter Oesterlen, the landscape architects Walter Rossow and Ernst Cramer, and the sculptor Helmut Lange (Pic. 4).

War graves and cemeteries are often combined with memorials, places designated to celebrate a victory or to commemorate those who died in war. Before the 20th century, fallen soldiers were thrown into unmarked mass graves directly on site, and memorials were erected at home to remember the nameless killed in the battles. After the great losses of World War I, commemoration took center stage and many communities erected a war memorial – often statues or plaques – listing those who never returned. Other memorials take the form of commemorative gardens, such as the Irish National War Memorial Garden in Dublin. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the garden is dedicated to the memory of the 49,400 Irish soldiers who died in World War I. It includes a sunken, central rose garden, various terraces and pergolas, lawns, and avenues. It is lined with impressive parkland trees and four granite pavillions containing volumes that record the names of all the dead.

The Vietnam War became a cause for many memorials, among them Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial from 1982. It consists of a black, V-shaped cut-stone masonry wall with the names of 57,661 fallen soldiers carved into its face. Lin's unconventional concept was to create an opening or a wound in the earth to symbolize the gravity of the loss.

- War gardening/victory gardening

Planting and cultivation strategies came to the fore in wartime as well. Growing a crop or maintaining a garden

Pic 5: During the "Anbauschlacht" one could encounter wheat or potato fields in the very center of Zurich.
Photo: Toini Lindroos.

usually contradicts war schedules, but during the two World Wars a new garden movement emerged, which closely related to war on the one hand, and came to resemble today's urban gardening and agriculture movements on the other.

Victory gardens5, also called war gardens or food gardens for defense, were vegetable, fruit, and herb gardens planted at private residences and in public parks. During World War I and World War II, these productive gardens came along with rationing stamps and cards to reduce pressure on the public food supply in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Austria, Germany, and even in Switzerland. Besides indirectly aiding the war effort, these gardens were also considered a civil "morale booster" in that gardeners could feel empowered by their contribution of labor and rewarded by the produce they grew. This made victory gardening a part of daily life on the home front.

This phenomenon first appeared in 1917 when the U.S. National War Garden Commission was founded and the war garden campaign was launched. During World War

I, the food production had fallen dramatically worldwide because agricultural labor had been largely recruited into military service and farmland thus rendered unproductive by the conflict. The idea took hold that the food supply could be greatly increased without use of the land and manpower already engaged in agriculture. Consequently, the campaign promoted the cultivation of available private and public land – soon thereafter food production was boosted with over five million war gardens.

At the beginning of World War II, victory gardens began to emerge again. Not only in the U.S. but also in many European countries, war gardens and corresponding programs were launched. In London's Hyde Park, sections of the lawn were publicly plowed for plots to promote the victory garden movement. Vegetable gardens were planted in backyards and on the rooftops of apartment buildings.

In Switzerland a similar program to enhance food production temporarily changed the private and public green spaces. This program was closely linked to Friedrich

Pic 6: An artificial tree, used as a disguising observation post. Photographs and sketches of trees on the battlefield were sent to a workshop where artists constructed artificial trees using hollow steel cylinders, later installed as spy trees in the field.
Source: http://historywars.tumblr.com/image/113093075934.

Traugott Wahlen, a member of the Swiss federal council, and for this reason also referred to as "Plan Wahlen." Prior to World War II, Switzerland had imported one half of its food supply. To prevent an imminent embargo, the so-called "Anbauschlacht" (cultivation battle) was launched. Maintaining one's own vegetable garden became a daily routine, even in urban contexts; green spaces in bigger cities were transformed into arable land. In the years between 1940 and 1945, the level of self-sufficiency increased from 50 to 70%. The potato crop was tripled; the breadstuff doubled. The Plan Wahlen was a successful strategy to prevent Switzerland from starving, and together with other manifestations in art and architecture, it also functioned as a symbol of resistance to Nazi Germany (Pic. 5).

- Camouflage: Creating invisibility
The shape of the natural and cultural landscape – its textures, light and shadow, color – has a profound impact on how war operations are organized6. Throughout history, the military has developed strategies and related prosthetic devices for extending visual engagement with the terrain. Like mimicry and mimesis in the natural word, in which animals adapt to their environments to deceive the enemy, visual illusion and camouflage were adopted as strategies in the wars of the 19th century. With the increasing use of firearms, evading visual attention and disappearing into the landscape became a survival policy.

In the 20th century, military camouflage developed rapidly and created a set of staged landscapes and "fake natures" (Dümpelmann, 2012). During World War I, artists in France were commissioned to design camouflage schemes, trompe l'oeil paintings and observation posts disguised as trees. The French army formed the first specialized camouflage unit (Les peintres de la guerre au camouflage). Soon they developed camouflage fabrics and wire umbrella devices to suspend over artillery installations. The value of this form of strategic deception was quickly recognized and used by all warring parties.

Pic 7: Switzerland is riddled with hidden and disguised military installations. What appeared to be a rock is actually a bunker made of steel and concrete painted like rock. Fortification at the Gotthard Pass.
Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festung_Gütsch#/media/File:Gütsch_MG.JPG.

During World War II, camouflage schemes were used against the reconnaissance of factual landscapes as well as for aircraft and ground vehicles in different war operations. The catalogue of 'fake natures' that was devised and deployed included elements that ranged from hollowed-out trees and painted screens to camouflaging devices and backgrounds (Pic. 6).

To successfully use strategies of camouflage and related terrain modeling, it is key to first understand how landscape is perceived. As such, the camoufleur must also carefully identify landscape elements and their relationship to the observer and surrounding objects.

In Switzerland, the defense plan to create a National Redoubt (Reduit) shows the extraordinary combination of artificial and naturalistic effects to create viable and convincing landscape scenographies for defense (Duckart, 2011). In 1880, the government responded to the threat of foreign invasion with a defense plan to fall back on the alpine region and to secure the region with camouflaged fortifications. During World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, this redoubt was continually expanded and refined. It encompassed a widely distributed set of fortifications lining the Alps and three major fortress complexes to deter an invasion by denying Switzerland's crucial transportation infrastructure to aggressors. This defense concept shaped not only the physical landscape with false rocks, bunkers, false chalets and stables in the vernacular style, it also constituted a crucial part of Switzerland's supposed mental defense (geistige Landesverteidigung), which aimed to uphold the confederation's neutrality. By the 21st century, the National Redoubt was a subject of debate in Swiss society; many fortifications were decommissioned and outstanding bunkers and false chalets transformed into museums, hotels, or private spaces (Pic. 7).

Conclusion | Evidence of the complex relationship between landscape and war can be found in sources from antiquity to today. A great many of our present cultural landscapes are significantly shaped by conflicts. Fear and danger, as prevalent experiences of war, have also had an effect on our understanding of landscape. Though we may still dream of it, we have moved away from the concept of an absolutely beautiful and recreative landscape. Instead, we are dealing with landscapes of succession and compensation, disaster management, urban sprawl, and more. Against all hope, wars do not seem to vanish. There persists a worldwide need to discuss how warscapes may be reorganized, both mentally and materially.

Conflict-based land use and the tactical design of landscapes in times of war have hardly been a designated task for the design disciplines, for landscape architects and artists. With the exception of the camoufleurs and dazzle painters of World War I, these warscapes remain mostly in the hand of the military. Landscape architects were only invited in post war times to take part in the design of war cemeteries and memorials. But what becomes an increasingly important task, even a duty, for landscape architects is the meaningful re-use and re-design of warscapes after warfare. Dealing with the material remnants of warfare such as ruins, wreckage, mine fields, etc., and creating programs and practices to re-inhabit these landscapes, calls for an attentive reading of warscapes on the one hand and for the search for creative solutions on the other.

Learning from warscapes should also encourage us not to support landscapes of fear or to repeat the same faults again, but rather to actively contribute to the international efforts of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Endnotes

1. This paper is based on a collaborative research endeavor by FOA-FLUX and the Institute of Landscape Architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich
2. See this author's books: Tuan, 1977 & 1979.
3. See this author's book: B. Jackson, 1994.
4. See: Freytag & Von Driessche, 2011.
5. See: Gowdy-Wygant, 2013; and Platenius, 1943.
6. See: Elias et al., 2015; and Coutin, 2012.

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