European cultural heritage is inherently complex and layered. In the past, conflicting or controversial perspectives on different historical memories and experiences have been colliding in the rich cultural landscape of Europe and continue to do so in the present. Contemporary projects of re-activation of contentious spaces seem to challenge both the traditional design parameters and the role of spatial practitioners. They require new strategies that effectively mix top-down and bottom-up impulses, through a new design approach that is still in search of a clear definition. *Contested Spaces, Concerted Projects* collects the stories of some selected cases of difficult built heritage, in order to highlight the most innovative methodologies of re-activation, by which architects, artists, designers and collectives have developed new participatory public interfaces.

Edited by Cristina F. Colombo, Jacopo Leveratto

Contested Spaces Concerted Projects

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Designs for Vulnerable Memories

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Hybrid Space Lab: Re-Charting Places

Elizabeth Sikiaridi and Frans Vogelaar

In our globalised world, the accelerating speed of socio-political and cultural change collides with the *longue-durée* of heritage sites and territories. As social and political contexts around places with a public meaning change, controversies often arise. Debates surrounding the future of these places are characterised by conflict, and opposing voices and claims with stasis hampering debates, resulting in an impasse.
What is necessary, then, is envisioning, developing and designing solutions that enable observers — be they experts, researchers, non-professionals, practitioners — to "look, and look again," to rethink places and landscapes anew. The possibility to look at these places under a new light is the gateway to meaningful processes of re-signification of their wider public meaning, too.
To facilitate decisive new gazes and outlooks on such places, Hybrid Space Lab relies on a broad range of detachment and crossover strategies, combining the digital and the physical into eye-opening solutions.
These span from transformative, provocative projections which promise to essentially overturn a place's power dynamics such as in the Berlin projects *Humboldt Jungle* and *Humboldt Volcano* or to transform its negative space character, such as in the project *DMZpace*, to an outsider's gaze approach allowing to work on the Valle de los Caídos Monument without physically touching it.

Detached Crossover

Re-signifying the public meaning of places and devising design solutions that make one think and see such places anew entail adopting detachment as a tool and a strategy. Within the broad scope of Hybrid Space Lab's work, detachment strategies are coupled with a crossover method, allowing to craft multi-focal approaches, providing a multiplicity of perspectives to reconsider compelling issues.
This provides the possibility to take distance from an issue's original toolbox and enrich it with elements transferred from other fields. The tension and interplay between the insiders' situated knowledge and the outsiders' possibility of detachment generate new gazes and design solutions.
Crossover is a method and a strategy, drawing on the recognition that transferring ideas from one field to another is an acknowledged recipe for cultural innovation. Thanks to its versatility, the crossover method is relevant for several controversial landscapes, promoting exchange, mutual learning and opening.
Working within a crossover framework entails daring to combine elements unexpectedly and to coordinate concepts that do not necessarily fit together. Uprooting concepts and tools from their original context and applying them elsewhere favours adaptive thinking and unprecedented (hybrid) solutions. Crossover promotes the development of new synapses — creativity being nothing more than that. By taking full advantage of detachment as a strategy, Hybrid Space Lab's projects introduce elements and methods intentionally, creatively "misplaced," not native to the particular field of inquiry, crafting hybrid landscapes for research and design.

Humboldt Jungle

Implementing such a detached cross-over strategy, Hybrid Space Lab developed a vision to break through the biased debate around the Berlin City Palace, hosting the "Humboldt Forum," whose inauguration is due in late 2019/early 2020.

This most ambitious cultural project of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Berlin "Humboldt Forum," is to be housed in a newly built replica of the Kaiser's Palace on the "Museum Island" ("Museumsinsel") in the centre of the city.
Severely damaged during the World War II, the Berlin City Palace was then blown up during the Communist era. In its place came the "Palace of the Republic" ("Palast der Republik"), a building for state representative of the (East) German Democratic Republic that was demolished after the reunification of Germany.
While the palace dummy evokes associations with the imperial German and Prussian past, the "Humboldt Forum," which also accommodates the Berlin ethnographic collections, is to become a place for the "Dialogue of Cultures." Therefore, in the Forum and its building, the revival of national historical symbols intermingles with contemporary ideas for transnational global cultural exchange and development. This has led to a very controversial public debate centring on Berlin's international role, on Germany's national symbols and its (colonial) history.
In addition, the "Humboldt Forum" is to be housed in a stone and concrete building — without any green — exactly at the location where the highest temperatures in Berlin are being measured. On such so-called "urban heat islands," planting can help prevent overheating on summer days. This lack of vegetation — and thus lack of awareness concerning issues of climate (change) and of biodiversity — is all the more surprising, as the namesake of the Forum, Alexander von Humboldt, was a sustainability pioneer. As a naturalist and explorer, Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) developed early sustainability concepts and an understanding that nature as a whole is connected and forms an interrelated network.
As an homage to Alexander von Humboldt, in 2015, at a time when the funding of the baroque façade stone of the Forum was not yet secured, Hybrid Space Lab developed the radical proposal to turn this controversial reconstructed palace façade into a "Humboldt Jungle"!
This radical greening includes a hanging garden with lianas overgrowing the Prussian palace and a tropical forest on its roof. But *Humboldt Jungle* (*Humboldt Dschungel*) is more than the greening of a façade. *Humboldt Jungle* lets "grass grow over" and reconciles the place's layered historical wounds. This polemical proposal with the impressive

visualisation was a conceptual contribution to the biased debate around the "Humboldt Forum" with the aim of opening up discursive and positive visions for the Forum and the city. With the development of a strong and far-reaching media campaign, which relied on detachment as a component of the overall communication approach, *Humboldt Jungle* was received with great enthusiasm by the German media and cultural world. Implementing a crossover design approach with the merging of nature and the built environment stirred the transformation of one's perception of the place.

Humboldt Volcano

Even though in the meantime German taxpayers have stepped in to finance the baroque facade, the jungle's provocative proposal remains up-to-date, as the biased debates around the "Humboldt Forum" are still ongoing. Therefore, a year later, in 2016, Hybrid Space Lab developed *Humboldt Volcano* (*Humboldt Vulkan*). This project adopts a strategy of 'detachment', proposing a freestanding greenhouse pavilion with a vertical jungle placed in front of the Forum.
As a radical plug-in addition to the building, *Humboldt Volcano*'s crystalline architecture transforms the meaning of and access to the Forum and re-shapes its interactions with its urban environment. *Humboldt Volcano* offers public access to the roof of the Forum, enabling the appropriation of the "Humboldt Forum," opening it up to the public. Its innovative, flexible, transparent structure contrasts with the historical appearance of the introverted power-radiating reconstruction of the Berlin Palace, which houses "Humboldt Forum." With its environmentally friendly expression and its contemporary and extravert architecture, *Humboldt Volcano* radiates strongly into the city, stretching onto the surrounding urban landscape.
The project also changes the inward perspective on the "Humboldt Forum" with its reference to the work of the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt. Von Humboldt was the first to describe flora and fauna in relation to their altitude above sea level, observing that the whole world can be found in the elevation of a single place. With its layered vegetation zones,

referencing the botanical zoning of the Andes by Alexander von Humboldt, the "Volcano" holds the whole world in one place.
Humboldt Volcano is not just a mountain — it is a volcano with underground water basins and other underground chambers, which echo Berlin's underworld with its subways, tunnels, bunkers and other hidden structures. With its underground lake, *Humboldt Volcano* carries the entire depth of time in one location — referring to Jules Verne's *Journey into the Center of the Earth*.
Placed directly on the axis of the Unter den Linden Boulevard, *Humboldt Volcano* is much more than just a vision that gives the "Humboldt Forum" in the palace replica an extroverted, innovative expression. The project is based on a detailed analysis of the complex history of the site: historically, the palace grounds — with the neighbouring burgher houses, the oblique approach of Unter den Linden, the displaced axis of the *Lustgarten* (Pleasure Garden) — were embossed by several superimposed urban systems.
Considering the complexity of this central and symbolic location offers the opportunity for a contemporary development of the "Humboldt Forum" and its surroundings. These complex spatial relationships are reflected in the *Humboldt Volcano* project that transforms the Forum from a solitaire building dominating its surroundings to an urban element spatially and socially embedded in the communal fabric of the city.
In this central, densely built-up part of Berlin with particularly high summer temperatures, the expected extremely intensive use of public space by Berliners and tourists leaves little room for conventional green spaces. Therefore, the vegetation of the *Humboldt Volcano* can help regulate the temperatures and improve air quality. As a stacked oasis that integrates vegetation into the built environment, *Humboldt Volcano* demonstrates innovative ways to incorporate green in very dense urban situations.
By blending nature with the building, the project develops a new urban typology for climate adaptation and ecological upgrading of the city. This convergence fosters a forward-looking "hybrid" architecture that faces the challenges of the Anthropocene — the geological era shaped by human activity on our planet.
Humboldt Volcano is a concrete utopia, a perception transformer that opens up spaces for imagination and worlds of possibility. After receiving

a broad and very positive response by the press, *Humboldt Volcano* is at the moment being discussed with Berlin political and cultural world. With a very long expiration date, it is a project that could be realised — even considering the long-stretched decision spans in Germany.
Both projects, *Humboldt Jungle* and *Humboldt Volcano*, are powerful invitations to "look, and look again" at Berlin's history-laden heritage anew. Berlin-based Hybrid Space Lab has a deep and local understanding of the Berlin controversies. At the same time, as an international interdisciplinary studio, Hybrid Space Lab's approach derives its strength from its outsider's perspective that grants the freedom, the freshness and novelty of the gaze, enabling eye-opening solutions and breakthrough visions.

Deep Space: Re-Signifying Valle de los Caídos

Adopting such an outsiders' approach enables us to meaningfully interact with territories suffering from historical wounds, for instance, with controversial monuments. Hybrid Space Lab's "Deep Space" investigative program, addressing the re-signification of the extremely controversial Spanish Valle de los Caídos Monument, takes advantage of such an outsiders' gaze. The project focuses on creative processes, digital tools and strategies to open up the monument, breaking through and transforming the symbolic power of the place.
With its 152-metre-tall cross, visible from more than 30 kilometres away, and its "basilica," a 262-metre long crypt with a 42-metre high vault cut out of the granite mountain rock, Valle de los Caídos is one of the world's most controversial monuments.
The structure was built between 1940 and 1959 partly by the forced labour of Spanish republican political prisoners. Next to the remains of over 33,000 fallen from both sides of the conflict (that were moved there from mass graves spread all over the country), the basilica features Franco's grave in its most prominent spot — and next to it the grave of the Falangist leader Antonio Primo de Rivera.
Over the past few years, there has been an intensifying discourse and controversial public debate in Spanish society and politics about the transformations needed at Valle de los Caídos. Nevertheless, there has

been no artistic approach to find new possibilities and paths to transform and reinterpret Valle de los Caídos.
The "Deep Space: Re-Signifying Valle de los Caídos" workshop by Hybrid Space Lab derived its strength from the potential of an "outsider" approach to bring a new perspective to a contentious and intractable situation. The epistemological contribution coming from an outsider perspective can initiate controversial debates, especially if the latter are characterised by impasse and a lack of recognition of certain phenomena. For example, foreign historians and researchers, including Robert Paxton, Robert Soucy, Eugen Weber and Zeev Sterhell, in their research on Vichy France, have shown how the French Pétain government pursued its own authoritarian and racist policy (entirely in line with Hitler's ideology). Similarly, Poland's anti-Semitism and involvement in the Holocaust is researched and reflected upon by Jan Gross, a Polish-US Jewish historian and by Polish-Canadian historian Jan Grabowski, both of whom left Poland. Films can also filter events so that the viewer gains distance. The more than nine-hour documentary *Shoa* by French journalist and filmmaker Claude Lanzmann in 1985 marked the beginning of the debate over the crimes committed at the various locations of the Holocaust in Poland. In Poland, however, he was understood as a charge of complicity in the National Socialist genocide.
Commenting on the Dutch colonial history in Indonesia, the Swiss-Dutch historian Remy Limpach remarkably pointed out the extent and sheer scale of Dutch war crimes, undermining the compactness of Dutch historical accounts of colonialism.
With these breakthrough historiographical precedents, the project created a framework where international experiences informed the Valle de los Caídos transformation process. The trans-disciplinary workshop that took place in October 2018 in Madrid brought together international participants from very different fields, including artists, architects, landscape architects, urbanists, art curators, (media) designers, technology experts as well as theoreticians, psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, contemporary archaeologists, forensic archaeologists, historians, and political scientists.
The "Deep Space" programme aims at developing such creative processes, concepts, and ideas that can transform the symbolic power of the place.

It focuses on artistic-, architectural-, landscape-, and media-proposals and creative processes that develop future visions, breaking through the biased discussions.
Complementary to the general public discussion in Spain mainly questioning the most appropriate location for the remains of Francisco Franco and Antonio Primo de Rivera, the “Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos” workshop focused on, the mostly anonymous, “fallen” and on the convicted that hauled up the lumps of rock.
The existing official printed, online and on-site communication of the monument today fails to integrate this troubled history. There is no information on the prisoners of war that were forced to work at the building site or on their families living in nearby barracks on the Valle’s grounds. Furthermore, there is no mention of the fact that the remains of fallen from the Republican side of the conflict were moved to the Valle de los Caídos from mass graves spread all over the country unbeknownst to their families.
The lack of recognition of the controversies characterising the monument and its construction is especially problematic, stemming from appreciating that for any process of healing and reconciliation, a moment of thorough acknowledgment is imperative. Informing the monument with the victims’ point of view casts a totally different light on it and is therefore essential for its re-signification. Documenting and communicating the history of its making would transform Valle de los Caídos into a testimony of totalitarianism and a tangible proof of its authoritarian mark, beginning the transition from acknowledgment and recognition towards reconciliation.
An approach integrating voices from the Republican side, from the victims of the Spanish conflict, meets today’s search for alternative narratives and historiographies. Such developments in memory making and collective processing echo the more general, further-reaching call for more inclusive historical accounts. Within this paradigm shift on whose narratives acquire prominence in history, such an approach strives to include voices from national liberation movements in the context of postcolonial processes and perspectives enriched by queer and gender studies.
As digital tools enable decentralised, democratised processing in the form of co-created, bottom-up initiatives, we are witnessing an explosion of

interest on memory and its multifaceted dimensions. The power relations intrinsic to the writing of collective memory are becoming looser and blurred because the pervasive and accelerating digital turn of memory-making is allowing for a multiplicity of voices to be heard and become alternative narratives. As a consequence, this trend implies that memory-making is morphing into a hybrid practice whose future is interwoven with physical and digital features and whose agents are becoming increasingly diversified.

The workshop developed ideas for transforming the site by means of networked digital and analogue tools without physically touching the monument. These tools enable the integration of sidelined voices within a polyphonic monument, counterbalancing the site's totalitarian narrative. Dynamic, digital, networked archives enable the integration of these voices within a polyphonic heritage site. In doing so, they counterbalance the predominant narratives and pave the way from recognition to reconciliation.

Intervening on the monument's perception first by digital means, without physically touching it, is of strategic relevance, as any physical transformation would demand long time-consuming decision processes. This focus also reflects the project's interest in memory spaces and controversial sites, memory politics and memory-making in the Digital Age.

Acknowledging the Valle del los Caídos polyphony, "Deep Space" responds with a solution-oriented design approach that proposes a collaborative, digital archive collecting the multitude of voices and individual memories connected to the monument, to look at it, see it, hear it and feel it anew.

DMZpace

The De-Militarised Zone marks the border between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the North and the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the South. Established at the end of the Korean War, in 1953, DMZ is a 250 km-long, 4 km-wide military demarcation stretching from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea. Since then, the DMZ has become a negative space, a negation of habitation, as well as of war violence, letting the void

replace conflict. The DMZ embodies politics as distance, as the latter is materialised in the no-go land strip.
As a consequence of the more than 65 years long near the absence of human activity, the land strip has become a verdant 984 square kilometres nature reserve where endangered flora and fauna species had the chance to regain space. The DMZ has, therefore, become a testimony to unintentional beauty. Thriving vegetation and undisturbed wildlife now cover the painful, conflict-born void along the military demarcation. Over the last few years, it has gathered international attention due to its symbolic value as well as to individual and bilateral bids by North and South Korea, securing UNESCO Biosphere status for areas of the DMZ. After being seemingly absent from mainstream news for many years, almost gaining a taboo status, diplomacy along the DMZ is now fast evolving and subject to sudden steering.
Within the DMZ, the passing of time is kept by nature, by the pristine vegetation, by thriving wildlife including endangered species and by the spontaneous growth of rare plants. The time of the landscape and the time of accelerating political events merge at the demilitarised zone, engendering a unique, hybrid timeframe.
The friction between the human desire to quickly process a painful past and nature's generous patience conveys this incompatibility. Environmentalists worry that the much-anticipated peace process will go through at the expense of the natural oasis. Such ecological concerns resonate with the risk that the speed and nervousness of détente will not leave thinking space to process change and envision how to unlock the unique potential of DMZ.
Given the unprecedented acceleration of diplomatic developments since 2018, now the risk is the possibility of missing out on exploring DMZ's potential. In the context of changing relationships and events, Hybrid Space Lab has been invited to work on the Civilian Control Zone of the DMZ between North Korea and South Korea.
Seizing the window of opportunity of this unique moment, Hybrid Space Lab investigates how to unlock the reconciliation potential of this buffer zone. Hybrid Space Lab's approach promotes the development of a creative outlook capable of transforming — inverting — the border phenomenology and performativity and turning DMZ into an eco-peace

projective and "positive" space.
Hybrid Space Lab's project *DMZpace* draws, therefore, on the tension between nature's generous patience and the nervous, un-reconciled historical wounds. By opening up the significance and multi-layered meaning of the buffer zone, the project *DMZpace* aims at facilitating co-creative engagement with the future of conflictive physical place as well as its possible digitally supported features.
The *DMZpace* project will be presented in 2020 in Berlin and Seoul.

Voiced Spaces

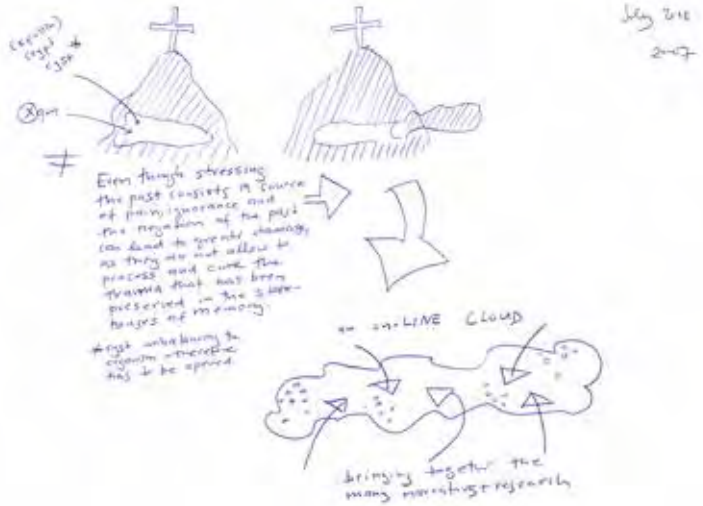
In our highly globalised and networked age, the polyphony of voices gaining and demanding recognition generates the necessity and the possibility to reconsider heritage sites and territories. Hybrid Space Lab is therefore initiating and co-curating together with the Rotterdam-based "Het Nieuwe Instituut" the "Voiced Spaces" international programme, that focuses on the re-contextualising and re-signifying the cityscape. The programme aims at making the propaganda dimensions of the landscape explicit and at exploring alternative systems that are capable of including other memories and stories, and other species, beyond the dominant ones. Bringing creativity into controversial situations informs engagement with conflictive landscapes, negotiation stasis and political reticence. By means of collaborative, artistic and hybrid processes, it aims at facilitating more integrated, collective processes of making memory and meaning.
Next to integrating creative design research methods into the processing of territories and heritage sites, the "Voiced Spaces" program bolsters innovative ideas on (the future of) memory places in the Digital Age: digitally supported co-creative processes potentially eliminate boundaries to engagement and visualisation, fostering radical re-signification of physical sites, monuments, and territories.
Such strategies help navigate controversial debates and facilitate the transformation of sites and territories in a "detached" way, without physically touching them. This method also values agile, light-format, flexible and temporary interventions allowing for thinking and re-thinking, looking and looking again under a different light.

The collective re-reading of territories, as well as the processes of re-signification of sites, deal with complex issues that have to account for a multitude of claims. We, therefore, need a fresh, radically innovative outlook with a solutions-oriented approach to address the various forms of contested heritage sites in a way that is fit for the twenty-first century.

Hybrid Space Lab, Humboldt Jungle. © Hybrid Space Lab (following).
Hybrid Space Lab, Humboldt Volcano.

Hybrid Space Lab, mapping of "Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos."

Valle de los Caídos.



Valle de los Caídos mass.
Hybrid Space Lab, "Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos" brainstorming.

Hybrid Space Lab, “Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos” workshop.

Hybrid Space Lab (www.hybridspacelab.net) is a Think Tank and Design Lab, a cultural breeding ground for incubating breakthrough ideas and concepts and fostering innovation contributing to positive societal and environmental change. Hybrid Space Lab focuses on innovative, high-quality design with a strong cultural component and develops spatial interventions that re-open, re-interpret and re-signify places. Hybrid Space Lab is an interdisciplinary platform where architects, urbanists, landscape architects, designers, filmmakers and artists collaborate with researchers and engineers. Elizabeth Sikiaridi and Frans Vogelaar are the founders of Hybrid Space Lab.

Elizabeth Sikiaridi has lectured since 1997 on design in the urban landscape at the University of Duisburg-Essen and at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Ostwestfalen-Lippe. Professor Elizabeth Sikiaridi was born in London and grew up in Athens. She studied architecture and urbanism at the École d'Architecture de Belleville in Paris and at the Technical University of Darmstadt (graduated with honours). She worked at the architectural office Behnisch & Partner (Prof. Günther Behnisch) in Stuttgart on the extension of the German Federal Bank in Frankfurt and on the German Federal Parliament in Bonn and at the Technical University of Berlin.

Frans Vogelaar founded, in 1998, the first Department of Hybrid Space worldwide at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, Germany, where he is Professor for Hybrid Space. Frans Vogelaar was born in Holland and grew up in Zimbabwe and Holland. He studied industrial design at the Design Academy Eindhoven (graduation with honours) and architecture and urbanism at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) in London. He worked at the architectural and design office Studio Alchymia (Alessandro Mendini) in Milan and at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA, Rem Kolhaas) in Rotterdam.