Glossary
of the Interstitial Space

Accessing - The act of making certain hidden or overlooked qualities in the landscape mentally, visually, or physically available to experience, through design interventions, storytelling, mapping, or other forms of creative engagement.

Aesthetics - Derived from the Greek *aesthesis* [sensation], meaning that aesthetics have to do with perception of place, of inviting a bodily response and full engagement, spaces that affect us.[1]
Landscape aesthetics refers to the perception and appreciation of the visual and sensory qualities of a landscape. It involves how people experience, interpret, and emotionally respond to natural and built environments, based on factors such as form, composition, color, texture, scale, spatial arrangement, and cultural or symbolic meaning.

Ambiguity - Spaces or conditions that are not fully defined or predictable, allowing multiple interpretations.

Appropriation - The informal and often unplanned use of space by people, through activities, traces, or adaptations that fall outside official design intentions. In interstitial spaces, appropriation reveals social value, routines, and ownership beyond formal planning.

Arcadia - Both the name of a region in Greece as well as a landscape for the imagination. During the 17th century, artists in Rome began to create the image of Arcadia based on the city's surroundings, with ruins and isolated pastures. It became a specific category in painting, which is often referred to as ideal or classical landscape.

Attunement - Our physical places are of utmost importance for our well-being. Drawing on recent work in embodied cognition, Pérez-Gómez argues that the environment, including the built environment, matters not only as a material ecology but because it is nothing less than a constituent part of our consciousness. To be fully self-aware, we need an external environment replete with meanings and emotions.[2]

City - A layered and evolving archive of social, ecological, and infrastructural systems. In this research, the city is understood not only through its planned spaces, but through its margins, leftovers, and unintended aspects.

Cues to care - Using cues to care in design is not a means of maintaining traditional landscape forms but rather a means of adapting cultural expectations to recognize new landscape forms that include greater biodiversity. cues to care make the novel familiar and associate ecosystems that may look messy with unmistakable indications that the landscape is part of a larger intended pattern. How these cues for care can look like totally relies on the vernacular culture of the place. In the US for example, mowed grass gives people a feeling that a landscape is cared for. Cues for care can be implemented in messy ecosystems for people to better understand the landscape.[3]

Design - In Cambridge dictionary (noun) a drawing or set of drawings showing how a building or product is to be made and how it will work and look.

Design paradox - A contradiction inherent in design where intervention is both necessary and potentially harmful. In interstitial spaces, the paradox lies in needing to intervene to protect or value a place, while risking the loss of its ambiguity, freedom, or informality

Disturbed soils - Soils altered by human activity such as construction, demolition, pollution, or compaction. These soils often host ruderal species and play a key role in spontaneous urban ecologies.

Disenchantment - A feeling of no longer believing in the value of something, especially having learned of the problems with it:

Enchantment - Enchantment lies at the intersection of possibility and imagination, where dreams of the future being to take shape. In the field of architecture and design, each project is a testament to this potential, offering new visions that challenge the boundaries of what can be achieved. We often find enchantment in unlikely settings.

Nature, ruins and temples have a captivating effect by removing us from the mundane struggles of daily life, transporting us to faraway places and bygone times, or connecting us to something greater than our morality.

Spaces designed with intention create atmospheres that exist independently of our awareness, though our perception of them varies based on our perspective.[4] (Maja Liro & Stefan Gzyl, 2024 in B-niews 5801, Enchantment)

Fringe (of the city) - A transitional zone where urban features gradually give away to rural ones, often hosting scattered facilities like airports, golfcourses, factories, waste centres, hospitals and major roads and trainlines.

Invasiveness - the idea that certain not native entities are, although often brought in by the humans making the claim, disturbing for the ecosystem in such a manner that they should always be eradicated. Where, how and the level of invasiveness or distrubance are however relative to context, which is spectrum that is not taken into account in the invasiveness discussion run by national policies, resulting in stigmatizsed image about all.

Indeterminacy - the quality of being uncertain, vague, or not capable of being fully defined or determined

Interstitial space - The space between spaces. Leftover spaces or interstitial spaces refer to empty, overgrown, or abandoned spaces within the city. Two reasons can be highlighted as to why these spaces come to exist: first, these spaces are often the result of urban transformation. As the former function or role of a space ceased, the piece of land was abandoned. Examples in this case are disused harbors and train yards, abandoned industrial areas, empty lots in the neighborhood, etc.
Second, leftover spaces are found in the gaps left between different urban tissues. The contemporary city is no longer designed as an overall plan, but is formed by different institutions and developers that sometimes fail to acknowledge each other. The resulting urban territory represents islands of defined urban use, with pieces of remaining land between them.

1   Bobbink, I., Cattoor, B., Cipriani, L., de Wit, S. I., Luiten, E. A. J., Nijhuis, S., Piccinini, D., Pouderoijen, M. T., Tillie, N., van der Velde, J. R. T., van Loon, F. D., & Verschuure, G. A., 'LA.X: Celebrating 10 years of Landscape Architecture Education: 2010/2011–2019/2020' (2022) p. 39
2 Pérez-Gómez 'Attunement: Architectural meaning after the crisis of modern science.' (2016)

3 Joan Iverson Nassaur,'Messy ecosystems, orderly frames' (1994)

4 Maja Liro, Stefan Gzyl, 'Enchantment'. (2024)

The examples in this category includes spaces between highways and industrial land2, neglected areas along waterfronts or pieces of overgrown or unkempt spaces at corners where streets meet [5]
Outside the usual system, unplanned. Not designated for certain uses. unofficial use. refuge for social interaction. unpredictable.

In-between spaces can be seen as a pause in functionality. Not yet defined what will happen there, they bear different potential futures which will be shaped by those who engage with the space.

Lost spaces - Trancik [1986] coined the term "lost space" to describe public spaces that need to be redesigned, anti-spaces that have no positive impact on their surroundings or users. He argues that the blame for leaving lost spaces is related to cars, urban renewal, privatization of public space, functional separation of uses, and finally the Modern Movement. [6]

Marginal - Referring to spaces, ecologies, or communities that exist outside dominant systems of value, visibility, or regulation. It can also mean to relate to the edge or margin, or bing minor or not important, which are all applicable.

Non-place - Marc Auge [1992] Anthropological spaces of transience where the human beings remain anonymous and that do not hold enough significance to be regarded as places[7]. Examples of non-places are airports, shopping malls or service areas. Non-places are not so much defined by what they are, but rather by what they miss; identity, history, relations.

Placelessness - A place that does not present any unique characteristic qualities due to the homogenization of cultural landscape, which causes a lack of sense and attachment to place.[8]

Pristine wilderness - An idealized natural area with minimal human impact, appearing untouched and in its original ecological state, serving as a benchmark for

conservation, but the concept is now viewed as a flawed myth, as no place is truly untouched by humans.

Rotterdam - The city I live in.

Ruderality - Plants that colonize disturbed or abandoned areas; often pioneer species that thrive in marginal conditions

Ruinosity - Refers to the quality or condition of being ruined, decayed, or in a state of disrepair, often carrying both physical and symbolic dimensions. It describes not only structural deterioration but also the aesthetic, cultural, and emotional resonances that arise from encountering a space or object in a ruined state.[9]

Ruinporn - Romanticized or aestheticized appreciation of decay, often applied to industrial or marginal spaces.

Spatial justice - The fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and opportunities to use them" (Soja 2009) (probably also see Greet de Blok)

Speculative research - Method of research that explores potential outcomes, it poses the question 'What if?'. It presents a design that might happen in the future. It is a tool for questioning and critiquing around us. It questions the present, explores future possibilities, sparks debate and asks for ethical consideration and responsibility.

Stewardship - Good stewardship, someone that performs cues for care or feels the responsibility to do so.

Succession - The natural process by which plant communities develop and change over time, typically from pioneer stage to climax stage.

Temporalness - the quality or state of being temporal, meaning related to or limited by time, rather than being eternal. Having temporal qualities means having the trait of being easily changed, or not being very fixed.

Threshold - The transitional zone between public and private, or between different types

of spaces. This could be entrances, gates, fences, spatial elements that let you move from one place to another.

Terrain vague - (French for Vague Land) term describing urban leftover spaces that are undefined, unprogrammed, and detached from formal urban order. Examples are vacant lots, industrial sites and forgotten infrastructure. Terrain vague resists clear function and meaning, allowing for ambiguity, appropriation, and spontaneous ecology. The term has been coined by Catalan architect and urban theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales in the mid-1990s.

Territoriality - The attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area

Urban ecology - the scientific study of interactions between living organisms (including humans) and their built environments, viewing cities as unique ecosystems to understand how nature and society coexist, and to develop sustainable strategies for managing urban biodiversity, resources, and human well-being within these complex systems. Important urban ecologists in this research are Herbert Sukopp, Ingo Kowarik, Matthew Gandy.

Urban Wasteland - Geography term: Area of previously built-on and used land, that is now abandoned and left for nature to take over - also known as a brownfield site. Urban wastelands include abandoned factories or routeways (e.g. railway lines), industrial waste dump sites, building demolition sites and old quarries.

Urban Void - An urban void is a broad term for unused, underutilized, or abandoned spaces within a city, like vacant lots, empty buildings, or leftover areas, representing both problems like crime and opportunities like community gardens, art and new development. Often seen as gaps in the urban fabric, these spaces can become temporary social hubs, cultural sites, or catalysts for innovative urban planning, transforming from neglected areas into dynamic parts of the city.

5   Luo, Sitong, Disclosing Interstices: Open-ended Design Transformation of Urban Leftover Spaces, A+BE Architecture and the Built Environment, no. 16 (2021), pp.1–370, doi:10.7480/abe.2021.16.6070
6 Roger Tranick, 'Finding lost space: theories of urban design.' (1986)
7   Marc Augé, 'Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity' (1995)
8 Mahyar Arefi, 'Non-place and placelessness as narratives of loss: Rethinking the notion of place' (1999)

9 Ellen Braae, 'Beauty redeemed: Recycling post-industrial landscapes' (2015)