



## Campo dei Giardini

workshop LandWorks Sardinia 2011  
Pozzo Sanna, Montevecchio  
08.-18.05.2011

with Marc Pouzol

The text is an unpublished manuscript.  
Thilo Folkerts 06/2011

*The ten day international workshop was aimed at realizing landscape projects in various sites of the former mine areas, now united as Parco Geominerario. With the support of local municipalities, the forest department and the mine company, the participants worked „in situ“ together with six internationally reknown landscape architects. There were four work-groups led by Stefan Bernard (Berlin), Christian Phongphit (Bangkok), Henri Bava (Paris) / Roberto Zancan (Milan) and Thilo Folkerts (Berlin) / Marc Pouzol (Berlin). Besides the inspiring sojourn in the extraordinary landscapes of the Parco Geominerario, the uniqueness of this workshop was the opportunity to directly and physically work on landscape architectural projects. Conceived to have a mainly ephemeral character, some of the realized installations will likely remain for a considerable amount of time.*

### The Garden as a Tool

#### Landscape

We arrive in the penetrated mine landscape of the hills and valleys between Montevecchio and the dunes at Piscinas beach. We will be conducting an international workshop to learn about landscape and to work with the landscape. We are not familiar with the place and its history. It would take a lot of studying to do justice to the complexity of a few thousand years of exploitation of place and people. During the workshop we have no time for this, but this should not keep us from touching the landscape sensibly and not keep us from learning. The first thing is to scout locations where to spend the next nine days with a group of students to learn hands-on. It is not easy to make a decision for a work-site. A whole day we drive the potholed tertiary gravel road, a „strada bianca“. More than a dozen times we get out of the cars in the hot, dusty air. We try to grasp the expansive landscape. We try to see. We try to understand.

*Concept and organisation of the workshop*  
Stefan Tischer, director  
International Master in Mediterranean  
Landscape Urbanism, College of Architecture at  
Alghero, Università di Sassari

*participants:*

„Sara“ Angelini (I), Mimi Coviello (I),  
Yasaman Donyagardrad (IR), Ozden Kaya (TR),  
Nilyour ‚Tour‘ Shayanin (T),  
Panicha Sirinyamas (T)

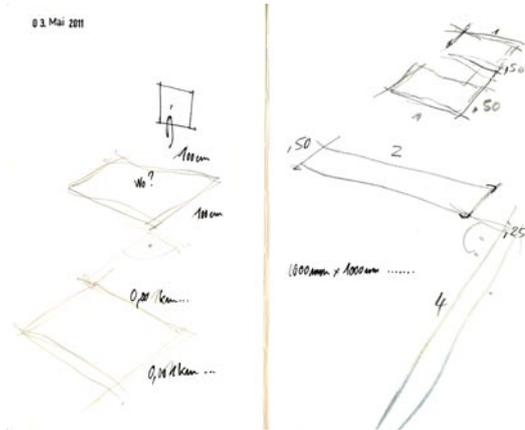


The area between Montevecchio and Piscinas is part of former mining areas all over Sardinia, which, under the name of Parco Geominerario, have gained recognition by the UNESCO as World Cultural Heritage. However, after the mines were exhausted and the buildings and facilities closed forever, some 20 years ago, most residents and workers have left this landscape. There is much abandonment, a vague future, but also slight hope. The industrial relics are a difficult crop to bait tourism, but a few hardy motorcycle tourists and devoted BMX cyclists seem to appreciate the rough and raw terrain. There are many layers of culture, nature, time. We encounter mountains that are studded with (now blocked) tunnel openings, open scars in the mountain ridges, derelict and stripped buildings and a variety of industrial structures of fantastic, unknown shapes. In the valleys the dumps of excavation material and the residues of the separation of ore from inert material are covering former buildings, roads and rail tracks. This overlay is a strange narrator. It bears impressive witness to the slow, but steady, industrious, and gigantic—even monstrous—movement of the mining venture through the landscape. Between the now vacated, idle buildings the upturned minerals have started a life of their own. Reddish oxidated surfaces, salt crusts and highly acidic seepage are shocking, yet amazingly beautiful features of natural life in the open wounds of the landscape.

For our study and work we have chosen the site of Pozzo Sanna. Open mine streaks overhead on the crest of the mountain range, a wide scope of former, now dilapidated processing facilities and the raw, dusty dump heaps in the valley cover a surface of many hectares. This is framed by an unending carpet of macchia vegetation on the surrounding hillsides. We are deep down in the valley, deep in the rugged mark that is only slowly scarring over. At Sanna a former guardhouse was made into a refuge, where (few) educational or leisure tours are supposed to start or end. Prof. Efisio Cadoni takes care of the place. He has the keys and he looks after two dogs that he brings food to every second day. This looking after the place is a first step in a cultivation of the new landscape. The refuge becomes our Palazzo and serves as our base. A table outside is blessed by the shadow of a young pear tree and a durmast oak. From here we can oversee the lower part of the valley. Here we share our meals, here we convene, and discuss. At the end of the workshop days we will feel as if we're leaving a home.

### Approach

*[08.05.2011 Easyjet flight Berlin - Cagliari] As I am looking out of the window of the airplane, seeing the wonderful patchwork of the fields and forests beneath, I wonder about our agency in landscape. It is slight. We cannot build or form landscape in itself. Within landscape, the garden is what we might call a format, a plot that, with a certain degree of immediacy, we are able to shape and give a story to. It is the garden where we our ideas, findings, and intentions find personal form and expression. It is here where we admit to direct action and responsibility. As landscape architects we can and must however conceive measures and strategies that catalyse, direct, generate landscape. We take up a venture for much that is beyond our immediate reach. Inasmuch as the garden is a media where concepts are expressed, we might claim that the garden is a tool that can be used in a larger context. Three things are important to note if I talk about the garden in such a way. (1) The garden—still—escapes easy control. This counts as much for its conception, and its making, as for the later development and effect it takes. (2) The garden that I talk about is not essentially about form, even though it is here that form finds its place, and its form and forms can certainly be described and grasped. The garden entails shaping the raw material of place and nature that willingly or unwillingly becomes the stuff in our hands. At least for a little while. The garden is thus initially about the relationship between the gardener and nature. The garden is a concept of (undefined) form and a forming tool in our hands. (3) The garden that I talk about is open. It is not bound by walls. Also in this way it is not restricted to form. And even though we may and should struggle over and over to define the garden's form and our efforts in giving it shape: There is no general form that makes a garden a garden. The frequent attempt to define and delimit even the garden of today along the etymological root of the enclosure or fence (paradeisos, grad, etc.) renders it dead: the hortus conclusus is closed off to the world. It is concluded, solved, benignly encased. In the best of all cases this enclosure is the proverbial golden cage. I believe the garden may better be kept outside of confines. For me the garden is a search; far from being concluded. It has a long history and it reaches out far in time. It also reaches far beyond its limits (geographical, intellectual, disciplinary). The garden is our tool at hand to start acting in and with nature.*



## Field of Gardens

Marc Pouzol and I conceived a careful and concise approximation to act in landscape during this workshop. We are aware of our limitations of understanding the place and of planning, designing, and acting. We believe that we have to start with small measures. The garden is to act as a conceptual tool in this inquiry. Each participant is to find her or his place of acting, and conceive and build a garden. Together they will form a field of gardens. Our original score for the workshop was:

(0) Exploration: Together we will assess the potentialities of the landscape. (1) Garden: Each garden measures exactly 1,0 m<sup>2</sup> in ground plane. Proportions, shape, height, depth and number of parts are facultative. Outside of the 1,0m<sup>2</sup> the placement of the garden may require more extensive interventions (f.e. slopes, fixtures, holding structures, topography...). The materiality is facultative. (2) Field: The gardens should be a concerted effort. In order to generate the coherence and strength between the single gardens to make a field, we ask to apply also the following rules: The distance between the single gardens is open, but a clear spatial relationship (at best visual) has to be established to at least one more garden. (3) Duration: The life-time of the gardens should be considered: How much and what can be seen of the efforts next year, and the year after. What remains? Conceive and predict the development. Does anything need to be done to the garden in time? By whom?

## Names

Our site is vast. Even at the end of the workshop we have not visited all corners of it. In exploring the site we try to communicate our findings among each other and try to establish relationships between places and elements. We look for possible sites for interventions. We give names. The Arch, the Three Seas, the Tubosaurus, the Labyrinth, the Fig-Tree, the Five Pines. Our little house becomes the s.



## Touching the Ground

Finally our group consists of six students from Italy, Iran, Turkey, Thailand and two teachers from Germany and France. The disciplinary background is mainly in landscape architecture, but there is also a media and communications student, an interior architect, a trained and practising singer, and there are knowledge streaks of architecture, dance and much more. Our inquiry is to look at the possibilities of revalorization of the specific qualities of the place. We study the place directly. We forego the lecture of maps, texts, sections, tables and chronologies. We take the place as it is with our eyes and senses. We try to gain an immediate understanding.



Are the tools our garden? The first morning, forest workers bring loads of tools, a wide and wild range of them. Hammers and chisels, gloves and safety glasses, helmets, picks, shovels, rakes and wheelbarrows, rope and buckets. But in fact, we have no plan yet. A helmet? What to use these tools for? As a first measure we decide to make an installation with the tools themselves. Measure their presence against the presence of the site, gauge the strengths of colours, distances, arrangements in relation to the space. Under the direction of the media and communication students from Bangkok we make a stop-motion film of the tools wiggling their way all the way from our Palazzo to the small stream that is hidden in a canyon washed out from the mining residue sediments. We scout the place further, searching for places to start our interventions. We search for relationships of the spots, visibilities, accessibilities. The materials as much as the ideas are forged from the places. Ideas are developed from initial sensibilities, small project plans from the ideas, and small garden interventions from matching these with the findings and hindrances during realization. Not all garden-pieces are realized on the spot where the original idea was found. Some spots prove to be better in showing the idea, some spots are easier to manage, some spots promise a better visibility. The realization is a testing of oneself against the site. Physical power (notwithstanding the frequent helping hand of others), climatic restrictions (the relentlessly burning sun) the materials at hand and new discoveries on the sites become part of building the garden.

## Gardens



Archeological Garden (Sara Angelini [I])



Labyrinth Gardens (Ozden Kara [TR])



The Window (Panicha Sirinyamas [T])

The Archeological Garden is a rather amorphous staging of part of the mal stream as an excavations site. While meticulously laying open and cleaning a number of infrastructures such as rail tracks, walls, foundations, a small path is the main build structure in this garden. The path enables and implies the possibilities of touring the remainders of the industrial past, which is now slowly reaching a higher complexity of landscape. The small mise-en-scene is in fact suggestive of the narrative potential of the whole dysfunctional, post-mining landscape. (Sara Angelini [I])

Taking the ruined, complex wall structure of a former building as a formal inspiration and as the spatial reference, the Labyrinth Gardens, are a field of micro gardens. These are made of collected and rearranged materials of the immediate surrounding. The micro gardens are an almost sketchy study of the minimum of textural modification of the ground that is necessary to become visible or sensible as a unit of its own. They are, however, as much an inventory and material reinterpretation of the arid site into a site that has been given sensible attention and care. (Özden Kara [TR]) The Window is a study on visual and spatial relationship. The original concept chosen for the intervention is to create an outlook, a window, onto a picturesque group of five pine trees from the other side of the valley. The intervention is turned into direct action in these trees, where the storyline issues of rhythm, melody, and accentuation are mounted as a swaying weave of white rope between the rigid, upright, black pine trunks. The Window becomes a textile notation, an abstract curtain in a landscape where only few of the abandoned houses have even window panes anymore. (Panicha Sirinyamas [T]) In trying to find perspectives of and on the site, and to reassure oneself of the visibility of one's efforts, assuming a photographic view is paramount. To permanently have a photographer on the team and to exchange views and vistas with him becomes an important point of proof for the gardeners. (Nilyour Shahanin [T]) On the level of our Palazzo a centrally positioned heap of mineral refuse forms a promontory into the valley. Initially used by the whole group for the best orientating view inside the valley (and possible placement of the gardens), the place is soon named the Control Tower. After unsuccessful attempts to give a more regular, geometric shape to the heap as a whole, the rectangular layering of black slate rocks in a one by one meter square follows an enhancing approach. The ensuing black block successfully marks the top of the heap and fixes the promontory's spatial position as a new point of departure. (Yasaman Donyagardrad [IR]) As we tread all day on the loose material of the dump heaps, the once lighter, once deeper cling clang of falling stones and gravel triggers the idea for the project Drama of the Fall. An almost natural amphitheatre space, albeit the ranks around the round 'stage' are formed by thirty meter high dump heaps. The relatively fresh poured dumps leak down the hillsides in different colours, visualizing the site's forming processes. During the presentation to the whole workshop group a sound piece is staged in this space. Triggered by the sharp bang of some explosives (dynamite being so much part of the history of mining at Sanna) and the pull of ropes, a stack of stones piled up on a wooden pallet is sent down the hillside like an avalanche, creating a long haul of different stone fractions hopping or trickling down the sides until there is stillness. (Mimi Coviello [I])



Control Tower (Yasaman Donyagardrad [IR])



La Caduta (Mimi Coviello [I])



## Map

As a gift to Efsio Cadoni and a possible inspiration for subsequent visitors, we draw a large map onto the wall of the Palazzo. The cartography is made with graphite, a rusty sediment from the industrial basins, and chalk-like white agglomerates. The rusty pigment is splashed on the wall where (in the map) the mined ores were transported over the Arch from the hilltops into the valley. The same colour marks the still raw dump heaps in the open valley ground. The names we gave to the places spot the map. The Big Garden, the Secret Garden, the Theatre, the Shadow ...

After a certain time, the rain will wash our marks and narrative titles from the wall. But with whoever has come to the house and with whoever that we talk to about our experience in the Parco Geominerario we will have left some of our gained sensibility for the place. This knowledge will also go to where we came from and where we will be going. I would claim that, in a very humble way, we have indeed created a new, hopeful context for a place that has lost its original working structure. We have left a fertile field of gardens. They must now continue to be cultivated. The tools are in our hands.

**„The meaning of a garden lies in its sensory effects and beauty. Alternatively stated, gardens are better experienced than explained.“**

Leonard Koren, Gardens of Gravel and Sand, Berkeley 2000.

