Occupied Peripheries:

Rethinking Landscape in the Anthropocene Visuality

A Master's Thesis for the Degree of Master of Art (120 credits) in Visual Culture

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Abstract

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Although landscape representations in the US-European culture have traditionally been acknowledged as a peaceful ordering of the world or the tool of imperialism, nationalism and private property (sometimes all simultaneously), a new shift in the landscape scopic regime seems to be happening. Produced by the current rise of concerns around climate change and environmental crisis, this shift seems to be related to a specific attention to land use and land value. In other words, instead of focusing on aesthetical conventions and on an idealisation of nature, the landscape is perceived as a relationship between human's socio-political activities and the nature where they take place. However, it is legitimate to ask how the aesthetical aspects of these new landscapes are constructed and wonder if it is possible to evade such problematic history.

In this context, where landscape topic is studied by different disciplines like art history and visual studies but also geography, anthropology and political ecology, the landscape definitions are diverted by activists and artists addressing subjects like the Anthropocene and the commons. This thesis analyses two European artists' video essays: *Deep Weather* by Ursula Biemann and *Everything is coming together, while everything is following apart: the ZAD* by Oliver Ressler. Their works, that have in common to depict peripheral occupied landscapes, are compared and interpreted, with the objective to discuss their different approaches. Applying theoretical tools as Nicolas Mirzoeff's visuality and Trevor Paglen's concept of experimental geography, the two artists' positions will be questioned: from the view from above to the people in the field, from the global to the local, from the observer to the viewer. These two artists offer landscapes, understood as a space and as its representation, that reveal the pointlessness of the war on nature and how communal activities could be a first step to rethink the relationship between human and nature.

Keywords: landscape, visuality, experimental geography, Anthropocene, The ZAD.

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Introduction

Research question: landscape and land use

With the constant rise of concerns around climate change and environmental crisis, I have noticed new forms of landscape discussed by scholars and artists. Although landscape representations have traditionally been acknowledged as a peaceful ordering of the world or the tool of imperialism, nationalism and private property (sometimes all at the same time), a shift in the landscape scopic regime is happening.[1] This shift seems to be related to a specific attention to land use and land value.[2] In other words, instead of focusing on aesthetical conventions and on an idealisation of nature, the landscape is perceived as a relationship between human's socio-political activities and the nature where they take place.[3] However, it is legitimate to ask how the aesthetical aspect of these new landscapes are constructed and wonder if it is possible to evade such problematic history.

Landscapes have historically been a visual tool for dominant relations to nature. They have shaped and have been shaped by people's behaviours within nature, influencing painters but also landscape architects and even ecologists.[4] This point has been discussed by many scholars. The edition *Landscape and Power* from the American art historian W.J.T. Mitchell regroups some of them.[5] Recently, some artists seek to use contemporary forms of landscape that instead divert or oppose these main ideological representations and to address subjects like political ecology and globalisation. These artists' positions present an important question: how can artists concerned with environmental issues, like climate change, still use landscape as their tool of representation and action?

To help investigate this question, two specific artworks from Ursula Biemann and Oliver Ressler were chosen. Their works lead into more defined and specific inquiries. First, of course, these new landscapes generate a need for a common definition: what is landscape, and how do these representations fit in? But quickly it expands into a reflection about how

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[1] Term developed in M. Jay 'Scopic regimes of Modernity', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality,* Seattle, Bay Press, 1988, pp. 3-28.

[2] E.E. Scott, & K. Swenson (eds) *Critical landscapes, Art, Space, Politics*, University of California Press, 2015.

[3] In this text, the word 'nature' have a capitalised 'N' when it refers to this idealisation.

[4] A. M. Ellison, 'The Suffocating Embrace of Landscape and the Picturesque Conditioning of Ecology' in *Landscape Journal* 32:1, Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 2013, pp.79-94.

[5] W.J.T. Mitchell (ed) *Landscape and Power*, University of Chicago Press, 2002.

does the 'observed' and the 'shaped' dimensions of landscape interact. How do the two artists use the landscape to challenge dominant occupations and narratives? Why does conflict seem to have a central role in the landscape they depict? By attempting to answer these questions, I will analyse the interconnection between the artists, the landscape they create and the land that is represented. Furthermore, since these artists have a clear political engagement, I will also deepen this connection to include the viewers and how these artists pay attention to the audience's active and participative look.

Background: when art history meets geography

A lot has already been written about landscapes. They have a long and complex history related to aesthetics, to the Beauty and the Sublime, to a form of world order. However, since the 1970's, more and more scholars have started to get interested in the political contexts supported by these aesthetics and what they say about the land, the space behind the representations. These researchers come from many different backgrounds. To name a few: John Berger, W.J.T. Mitchell and Michael Andrews, were or are art historians; Denis Cosgrove and Kenneth Olwig are geographers; Tim Ingold is an anthropologist. Their encounters allowed a whole new way of understanding landscape history but also landscape as a tool of social and political discourses that provides space to imperialism, private property or wilderness. They were influenced by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre and his book *The Production of Space*.[6] They offer to perceive the landscape as land use, a place where human labour and nature mutually affect each other. Today, art historians like Nicholas Mirzoeff, TJ Demos, and recently Emily Eliza Scott and Kristen Swenson continue this multidisciplinary approach, including in their research political ecology and visual culture. The approach taken in this paper is directly influenced by these last scholars.

One could still ask why it is pertinent to talk about landscape today after all the texts that have already been written on this topic. Mitchell states:

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[6] H. Lefebvre, *The production of Space*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991.

'[…] if one wanted to continue to insist on power as the key significance of landscape, one would have to acknowledge that it is a relatively weak power compared to that of armies, polices forces, governments and corporations.'[7]

In this quote, he stresses how landscape – even if weaker – is connected to powerful forces that dictates behaviours and have direct influence on the environment. There is today an urgent need to rethink the human relationship to nature in Western and globalised culture.[8] It is visible in all the environmental struggles occurring such as – among many – the US Dakota Access Pipeline protest in 2016, the demonstrations during the Paris COP21 in 2015 or Australian Aborigines opposing the use of their lands as nuclear waste bump site.[9] All of these struggles happen in the land but also in the landscape, in the choices made by some activists and/or artists to frame the land in a new way. Landscape, like the Mirzoeff's concept of visuality that will be discussed in this paper, is intrinsically bounded to conflict, a conflict between occupations of the land but also of the imaginary. Visual culture studies have demonstrated how today society is living through images, how people use narratives to understand and interact within the world. These artists want to change humans' relationships to the environment by offering new forms to represent these relations. In this context, the whole purpose of this thesis is to understand what these artists do, how they do it and why it may still be pertinent today even if it is 'a relatively weak power.' What kind of spaces can the artists create if they want to redistribute the viewers' positions about environmental issues and make a whole society react?

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[7] W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Preface to the second edition, Space, Place and landscape', in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed) *Landscape and Power*, p.vii.

[8] In this paper, the word western refers to US-European society. I also associate it with globalisation, following T.J. Demos' thinking about decolonizing nature and try to advance beyond anthropocentrism. By their current dominant position, the US-European countries have generated a system of productions that rests on the global resources of the planet. The Western capitalist attitude toward nature necessitates to consider a part of humanity above nature, perceived 'as a source of endless bounty.' T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* Sternberg Press, 2016, p. 19.

[9] J. Healy, 'North Dakorta Oil Pipeline Battle: Who's Fighting and Why' *New York Time,* 26 August 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/02/us/north-dakota-oil-pipeline-battle-whos-fighting-and-why.html (accessed 19.05.2018); E. Hilaire, 'Thousands defy Paris protest ban to call for climate action – in pictures', *The Guardian*, 0 December 2015 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2015/dec/10/thousands-defy-paris-protest-ban-call-climate-action-in-pictures (accessed 19.05.2018); B. Glowczewski, 'Résister au désastre: des Aborigènes d'Australie à Notre-Dame-des-Landes' (To resist disaster: from the Australia Aborigines to Notre-Dame-des-Landes), speech in Condorcet Conference: Aubervilliers, 20 November 2017 [online video] https://vimeo.com/256233441 (accessed 3.05.2018)

Empirical materials: filmed landscape

The landscapes that will be analysed in this text are produced by two artists: Ursula Biemann and Oliver Ressler. These two artists claim themselves as activists seeking resistance to corporate power and opposition to the exploitation of resources and misuse of state power. Their arts projects communicate strong political statements to which I can relate. These two European artists were deliberately chosen in order to explore how, after being positioned at the centre – Western culture having dominated the cultural space for so long – artists emerging from this same culture try to move in the periphery. Both these artists are considered essayists and produce video essays. This means that they have a defined understanding of the fiction/documentary dialectic, preferring to remain outside of it. In both artworks that will be analysed here, the artists problematize conflict happening in the land because of environmental struggles.

Ursula Biemann, Deep Weather*, 2013.*

Ursula Biemann is a Swiss artist working with video essays and a member of *World of Matter*, 'an international art and media project investigating primary materials (fossil, mineral, agrarian, maritime) and the complex ecologies of which they are a part.'[10] This aspect is significant because of her activist stance. Her affiliation to *World of Matter* also positions herself outside of the art world, providing free access to some of her video projects and dispensing pedagogical activities. Biemann is known for her complex spatialized installation that depicts topics from the migrant condition in the Sahara to the role of chemicals in Egyptian agriculture. She often offers hours of viewings supported by very heterogenic visual materials and experimental editing. *Deep Weather*, in the middle of these rhizomatic works, may seem less defined, but it shifts perspectives in a way that need to be investigated. I watched Biemann's video essay for the first time in an art museum, in the middle of the Alps in Switzerland. This context will prove itself useful considering the characteristic of Biemann's narrative.

Biemann's video essay *Deep Weather* is the encounter between two narratives she calls 'carbon geologies' and 'hydro geographies', focusing on two liquids: oil and water. The

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[10] 'About the project', *World of Matter* [Website] by labor b designbüro, http://www.worldofmatter.net/ (accessed 13.02.2018)

'carbon geologies' happen in northern Canada, in the region of Alberta that is 'the most capital-intensive development in the world' because of the extraction of tar sand.[11] The 'hydro geographies' depict people building an embankment to fight floods in Bangladesh, a country struggling against the consequences of climate change. Her use of the terms 'geology' and 'geography' should be noticed, since geology is a field of study that does not' consider any human activities or even human scale, which geography does. These two spaces are also addressed differently. 'Carbon geologies' last two minutes and is a sequence of aerial photography. 'Hydro geography' last seven minutes and is constituted of camera recordings shot on ground level. Ursula Biemann's landscapes take place in two very different environments still connected by globalisation and causality.

Oliver Ressler, Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart: The ZAD, *2017*

Oliver Ressler is an Austrian artist, filmmaker and activist who also positions himself critically in relation to the art world and market. He makes his works accessible on the Internet which is how I came into contact with it.[12] The video, *The ZAD, Notre-Dame-des-Landes, France, July/August 2017*, is part of the ongoing film and four screens installation project, *Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart*. In this work, Oliver Ressler questions the current time of climate change and how different popular resistance movements are emerging. These movements may help in imagining another future that does not include destruction. This paper will focus only on *The ZAD*, since it was the most relevant in relation to the landscape.

In *The ZAD*, the artist narrates the space in four sections spread over 36 minutes. These sections are named as follows: "The ZAD, Notre-Dame-des-Landes, France, July/August 2017," "Opération César (16 October – 24 November 2012)," "How do we live here together?" and "Pulling Down the CO_2 machine." Oliver Ressler's artwork focus mostly on the ZAD history in Notre-Dame-des-Landes. For those unfamiliar with this work, a short summary of its history will be included.

The ZAD (zone à défendre/zone to defend) is a place in the countryside of Nantes (western France) where the French state began planning the construction of an airport in the

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[11] U. Biemann, 'Deep Weather', Glasgow Economy exhibition CCA 2013, in *Geobodies*. [Website] https://www.geobodies.org/books-and-texts/texts (accessed 07.02.2018)
[12] O. Ressler*, Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart, The ZAD*, 2017, 36min [online video], https://vimeo.com/236277743 (accessed 12.08.2018)

1970s. To do so, they transformed the status of this place into ZAD (zone d'aménagement différé/holding zones.) This zone is a space where the state has a right of pre-emption on land sale the time to buy the farmers' lands. The current name is a play on words with this abbreviation. At the time, farmers' unions opposed the expropriations, which slowed down the buy-back process. For more than 30 years, the project has remained dormant, which also raise questions about the apparent necessity of this airport. In 2008-9, environmental activists started joining the ZAD. As some farmers had sold their land, the small territory had some empty housing and because of the pending airport project, no one had started any other projects in the zone. In 2012, the 'Opération César', a police intervention to evacuate the place, started intense protests because of the violence it generated. The spectacle of violence also attracted media attention, the status of the ZAD and of the airport were debated again. Their resistance ended up being stronger than the police and the eviction was abandoned, even if the airport project was still supposed to happen. The Zadists, as the people living there are called, now consist of a group of approximately 300 people trying to organise themselves. They come from different backgrounds including farmers, squatters, activists, ex-convicts, homeless peoples… Together, this heterogeneous group try to organise a common space outside of the state and the market, even if this task is complex. For example, the Zadists do not applied in democratic votes, because such elections silence minorities.[13] and where their illegal actions seem to have produced interesting ecological results for the protection of the landscape and the biodiversity.

In January 2018, six months after Ressler's video was published, the French government abandoned the airport project. If the Zadists had first rejoiced from the news, they are now facing another challenge. The state chose to expel them and began the evacuation on April 9, 2018. This has produced intense protests and the situation is still uncertain at the time of this paper.

Theory

My research as focusing on the contemporary landscape art history and the visual culture about nature. One of the recurring questions about landscape involves its political dimension. Art historians like Berger, Mitchell and Andrews have demonstrated the role given to landscape by imperialism and capitalism. They have established how landscapes, under these

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[13] Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017, Running time: 00:27:30.

ideological structures, promote a separation between human and nature through notions like wilderness and justify colonisation, privatisation and exploitation of natural resources. Influenced by geographers and anthropologists like Lefebvre, then followed by Cosgrove, Ingold and Olwig, these scholars have also started to address the landscape not only as a representation but also as the space behind it.

This becomes even more relevant when political ecology, a multidisciplinary academic field that works on the relation between the nature-society relations. It highlights that discourses surrounding the environment and nature have always occupied a large space in Western visual culture. TJ Demos, an American art historian, has written two books on the subject that are particularly influential for this thesis: *Decolonizing Nature* and *Against the Anthropocene.[14]* But he is not alone here. Emily Eliza Scott and Kristen Swenson's edition *Critical Landscape: Art, Space, Politics* offer interesting environmentalist inputs to the definition of landscape that will be developed in this paper.[15]

In relation to political ecology, both Jason W. Moore's *Anthropocene or Capitalocene*, *Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism* and Michel Serres' *Malfeasance* will be useful to question both the notions of 'Anthropocene' and 'commons' and how they can be articulated together in the context of the two video essays.[16]

When analysing the images, French philosopher Jacques Rancière's politics of aesthetics will stage the philosophical framework. Influential for both Mirzoeff and Demos, Rancière is primarily known for his theory of the 'distribution of the sensible' where the aesthetic field is understood as politically organized. Some voices and visions seem to matter while the others are assigned to the margins.[17]

The American art historian Nicholas Mirzoeff's concept of visuality is constructed on this structure of the sensible.[18] Visuality is a legitimizing discourse or narrative used by authorities to make both ideas and actions appear self-evident or natural. Landscape has always been a way to frame the land, which implies that it includes and excludes elements. Visuality is what influences this framing, touching upon both the landscape as a space and as its representation.

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[14] T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 2016 and T.J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*, Sternberg Press, 2017.
[15] E.E. Scott, & K. Swenson (eds) *Critical landscapes, Art, Space, Politics*, University of California Pres, 2015.
[16] J. W. Moore (ed), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Oakland: MP Press, 2016.
[17] J. Rancière, *Le Partage du Sensible,* Paris: La Fabrique Editions, 2000.
[18] N. Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look, A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2011.

The American geographer and artist Trevor Paglen's text *Experimental Geography* can help acknowledge this aspect.[19] He explains that art and landscape are spatial practices and that there is a connection between producing new spaces and developing new ideas. It will create an interesting angle to look at both artworks, since they are filmed landscape depicting struggles taking place in the land.

This leads to the final theoretical aspect. These landscapes are video essays. Because landscape has been and still is often associated to fixed images, it is important to acknowledge the role of the medium in these two art pieces. Video essay characteristic is described by Demos as 'a tendency to link documentary functions to imaginative scenarios', which allows to nuance creative interpretations.[20] In the case of landscape, this blurriness between aesthetical choices and the reality of the space is not new per se. It will then be interesting to examine how the idea of framing is considered by the artists.

Method

With the previous theoretical framework, in particular the notions of visuality and experimental geography, this paper will use mixed methodology to analyse and interpret the two empirical materials.

These two artworks at least partly try to depict real situations (Biemann even made a conference about *Deep weather* context), so one part of the analysis will consist of understanding the political context behind the landscape.[21] However, being a visual culture scholar, I will mostly base my investigation of these contexts through the images produced by the two artists. Additional information will sporadically be discussed them when relevant.

Nonetheless, the two artists reacted to something taking place in the land, which they then frame as a landscape. Their process of framing will be analysed to reflect on visualities but also the artist's positions. Where is the camera? What is included or excluded by the artist? How does the viewer relate to this positioning, not only in relation to the space but also to the images? Both artists clearly wish their art to trigger a reaction in the viewer and it will be interesting to look at their strategy to reach this goal.

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[19] T. Paglen, 'Experimental geography: From cultural production to the production of space', in Scott & Swenson (eds) *Critical landscapes,* pp. 36-42.
[20] T.J. Demos, *The Migrant image, The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis*, Duke University Press, 2013, p. 209.
[21] U. Biemann, 'Deep Weather', Glasgow Economy exhibition CCA 2013, in *Geobodies*. [Website] https://www.geobodies.org/books-and-texts/texts (accessed 07.02.2018)

Furthermore, I will investigate the place of discourses inside and surrounding the artworks. Because these artists show landscapes where interactions between nature and human beings take place, it will be important to consider who talks for whom and how these discourses are integrated within the images? This paper will also analyse the narratives that influence both the framing of the landscape and the shaping of the land.

Ursula Biemann and Oliver Ressler are both interested in environmental struggles and produce video essay to express their thoughts about them. However, they create distinct approaches when it comes to the structure of the video and the narrative they focus on. They position both themselves and the viewers differently. In this sense, comparison will be a useful tool, not in the idea of opposing the two works, but rather to have them discussed in terms of the ways artists can participate in the debate about climate change.

Disposition

Chapter 1 will begin by with explaining the term 'landscape' by elaborating on previous definitions. Two dimensions will be formulated: the observed landscape and the shaped landscape. If they have sometimes been presented as opposition, this text will rather inquire how these two aspects could be intertwined and how landscape was and still is one of the battlegrounds when it comes to humans' relationship with nature. This battle is supported by visualities and countervisualities that will be introduced there. I will also explain how the countervisuality concept can be associated with experimental geography to create a fertile theoretical ground to analyse at the two works. Finally, I will shortly demonstrate why the two artworks are political landscape video essays.

If landscape is always political, there is a need to specify the similarities and the differences of the landscapes chosen by these two artists. Chapter 2 will then focus on the space and the land behind the landscape. Both artists take interest in peripheral space as the place where the struggles need to be shown. I will introduce the idea of the occupied landscape, which will lead to question of conflict through the representations offered by the artists. I will then demonstrate how conflict is part of the dominant discourses on nature, the war on nature. But in landscape, the conflict has been erased more often than shown. It will then be interesting to ask why the two artists insist on revealing the conflict behind a landscape.

Chapter 3 will then step back and explain further how the occupation and the visualties are interconnected in the two artworks; how the occupation does not only happen in the land but also in the imaginary. I will discuss how the artists' different approaches position them as observers suggesting a global and a local perspective on environmental struggles. After developing their advantages and inconveniences, it will also question the position of the viewer in relation to both the land and the landscape.

Chapter 1: The question of landscape

Landscape: the production of a space and its representation

I would like to introduce the question of landscape with a performance created by Sam Durant, an American artist. [Fig.1] This art piece is not about the landscape per se; it is about black American identity. The image above comes from a performance that was acted in the installation called *Upside Down Pastoral Scene* referencing Robert Smithson's upside down tree, while associating it to the history of slavery and white supremacy. Each tree contains a speaker talking about black history or playing black music. During one performance, protesters hold signs proclaiming: 'Landscape art is good only, when it shows the oppressor, hanging from a tree, by his mother-fucking neck.'[22] The accusation present in this piece is haunting contemporary landscape practice as a history that cannot be unwritten. More than a history of the landscape though, this chapter will present different positions that exist in the theorisation of landscapes. These positions can emanate from sources like art history, but not only, since landscape is a multidisciplinary concept.

Landscape, in its European and North American cultural dimension, is a complex 'concept' and a complex 'space', as the Sam Durant's image reminds quite violently. It is also a word that has already been used many times to describe many things: a view, the nature, a geography, an imperial ideology, a national identity, a private property, the wilderness and more and more often environmental concerns and political ecology.[23] How can all of these dimensions coexist together?

Let's consider what could be the smallest common denominator of all these landscapes. It is a relation to the land resulting from the production of a space and its representation through the interaction between humans and an environment, whether it be an alpine view or the choice between cutting or planting a tree. This has been and still is expressed in different contexts: the mapping of identity in the Dutch 17th century, the nationalism of American pastoral paintings and the imperialist organisation of the land in the Danish or French colonies. More recently, Nicholas Mirzoeff also describes the aesthetisation of pollution by Anthropocene visuality, this new 'human' geological era, in impressionist

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[22] S. Durant, *Landscape Art (Emory Douglas)*, 2002, C-print, 127 x 152 cm. Photo Josh White.
[23] M. Jakob, *Le Paysage*, Gollion (Switzerland), Infolio, 2008.

paintings.[24] This idea of landscape as a relation to the land also appears in the awakening of the environmental concerns in land art and in the focus on the land use and value in political and ecological activism. Every time, the land is not a given, a neutral and fixed portion of the earth's surface. It is a space that has been mediated by history and politics, by conflict and adaptation. It depicts not only a view, a natural arrangement or a territory, but also an ideology and a social space, a place that is produced by the labour of the people living there.

The next section will illustrate this idea in detail with two visual examples. *Bliss* is a famous landscape. [Fig.2] It has probably been seen by more than 500 million people since it was the default wallpaper of Windows XP, one of the most used operating systems.[25] This image was chosen by Microsoft because of its beauty and its peaceful feeling. Neither conflict nor interference, this image's quality is its stable composition and colours, managing a calm 'bliss' for the eyes. Complying with the picturesque tradition, it actually manages it so well that some people later thought it was a Photoshopped image. This aspect reminds how Italian Renaissance painting created reconstructed spaces depicting the creation of a perfect heavenly order.[26] However, this is a real space. More precisely, it represents a unique instant in a place captured by an individual using a specific technology as it is narrated by the YouTube video posted by Microsoft NL, *The story behind the wallpaper we'll never forget.*[27]

The Swedish artists Goldin+Senneby also narrate this story in their video *After Microsoft*, but focus on different information. [Fig.3] There, they explain the very specific conditions that created this landscape. It is a result of the fluctuation of property prices and an insect infestation. A few decades ago, because the land prices increased in the region, all the owners started to plant vineyards as the most lucrative investment. By the 1990's, all of the land in the region was covered. However, a Phylloxera insect infestation destroyed all cultivation, producing the meadow visible in O'Rear's picture.[28] Today, the vineyards cover the place again.

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[24] N. Mirzoeff, 'Visualizing the Anthropocene', in *Public Culture* 26:2, Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 213-232.

[25] D. Athow, 'Windows XP end of life' in *techradarpro* [Website], 2014. https://www.techradar.com/news/software/operating-systems/windows-xp-end-of-life-what-you-need-to-know-1240791 (accessed 17.05.2017)

[26] K.R. Olwig, *Landscape, Nature and the Body Politic*, Wisconsin University Press, 2002, p. 31.

[27] *The story behind the wallpaper we'll never forget* [Online video], 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=43&v=AVXY8OEZAEQ (accessed 8.03.2018) A. Cain, 'The story behind the world's most famous desktop background', *Artsy*, [Website], 2017. https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-story-worlds-famous-desktop-background (accessed 8.03.2018)

[28] Information from the text on *Goldin+Senneby* [Website] http://www.goldinsenneby.com/gs/?p=81 (accessed 8.03.18)

This video is a good example of Tim Ingold's statement when he explains landscape as a constant fluctuation that one picture out of context can never completely relay.[29] What this isolated picture can pass on is a feeling, a concept, a global landscape, uprooted and emptied of all social dimension, as if it was the product of another world. Still, both the Window XP picture and the Goldin+Senneby's video are landscapes.

The 'observed' and the 'shaped' landscape: observer and geography

These images illustrate two different understandings of landscape, that I will call the 'observed' landscape and the 'shaped' landscape. Inspired by scholars such as Olwig and Ingold, who went back to the etymology of the word "landscape" and its history, I realise these two aspects of the landscape were always there. However, and maybe because of a possible misinterpretation of the word as Ingold suggests – focusing on the 'scope' instead of the 'scape' and providing to the landscape its natural place in the atlas pages – the 'observed' landscape seems to have dominated the landscape conception.[30]

The term 'observed' was chosen in connection with American art critic Jonathan Crary's following definition of 'observer':

'Though obviously one who sees, an observer is more importantly one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations.'[31]

Looking at how the *Bliss* landscape is narrated in the YouTube video, an' observed' landscape can necessitate two interconnected conditions. First, an emblematic point of view is needed. In this example, the photographer had to literally stop his activity – driving on a dangerous road to go see his wife – because it is so overwhelming. Second, a technology needs to be available. *Bliss* landscape is a medium format photograph on some Fuji film, which played a big part in the colours for his photographer. This last one does not have to explain his point of view more than by an instinctive answer to a moment. Nonetheless, Microsoft bought this picture for a high price for its total absence of tension. The 'observed'

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[29] T. Ingold, 'Landscape or Weather-World?', in *Being Alive, Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description,* London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 126-135.
[30] Ingold, pp. 126-127.
[31] J. Crary, *The Techniques of the Observer, On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, MIT Press, 1990, pp. 6.

landscape is 'seen within.' It looks like a natural or neutral narrative because it tends to have been filtered by choices (conscious or unconscious) about what was important or not. They are constructed natural spaces influenced by and influencing other landscapes.

With this in mind, how is Sam Durant's claim related? Because of its neutralising properties, the 'observed' landscape has facilitated the circulation of different ideologies of the European-US States.[32] Landscape has been the cultural expression of nationalist ideas and ownership claims but also of wilderness, when nature becomes a commodity that people feel the need to protect and to conserve.[33] Often, it has carried these narratives while artists and critics focus only on natural beauty criteria. It is still probably the case, when tourism industry sells the perfect view in a national park. It tends to ignore human labour and to isolate nature from its social dimension.

In this kind of landscapes, nature and humanity are separated. To use Michel Serres' words, they represent the social contract without any natural contract, following the idea that humanity became society by leaving the state of Nature without ever putting the world in this contract.[34] Leviathan, by its representative power, was then free to colonize the land in the name of sovereignty. In this context, Nature is conceived as a passive victim and the society/nature relationship reproduces a master/slave relationship. This relationship causes Sam Durant claims about 'good' landscape. He wants the 'oppressor' who becomes a metaphor for the master, the state, the colonizer, the market… to be revealed.

In comparison, the 'shaped' landscape does not separate human and nature. Nature takes rather an active dimension into it. Behind the representation or the observation, landscape is acknowledged as generated from a space wherein people live and act, as the social space in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*.[35] A landscape relates to a social space where people live, work and interact with each other and with their environment.

To come back to the *After Microsoft* video, it is the artists' voices that explain how this landscape history, economy and also natural intervention shape both the wallpaper and the image of its future. The human and the natural dimension are taken into account and it is their interactions that produce the 'Blissful' moment of O'Rear's landscape. Their narrative

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[32] Mitchell (ed), *Landscape and Power*.
[33] J. Berger, *Ways of seeing*, London: Penguin book, 1972; M. Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
[34] M. Serres, 'The Natural Contract', in *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Autumn 1992) English translation, The University of Chicago, 1992, pp. 1-21.
[35] Lefebvre, *The production of Space*, 1991.

does not only focus on the technicality and the idea of capturing the perfect moment but also on the reason why the land was shaped this way. Instead of a narration involving only the 'observer', it involves the geography as well. Geography, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is both a field of study concerned with earth, land and human activity and the analysis of these interactions.[36] The book *Critical Landscapes, Art, Space, Politics* expands this interdisciplinary view of the landscape. The authors point out 'representational and performative practices to reveal the social significance of hidden, or normalized, feature inscribed in the land.'[37] The 'shaped' landscape reveals what has been hidden or excluded behind the beauty of Nature. Consequently, it tends to be positioned in opposition to the neutralising 'observed' landscape, even if there is always an observed dimension in every landscape.

The landscape art tradition has excluded different groups of human beings for a long time, focusing on property marking, the picturesque, exploration and conquest, enveloping them in different aesthetics like the Beauty, the Sublime or the Exotic. Today some artists are putting the human back in the landscape and the nature back in the social contract. They represent a less utopic version of Serres' natural contract, more implanted in a specific space through representation. Here nature must be understood as the place humanity lives, not just as a 'distant, silent, inert, withdrawn infinitely far from cities and people.'[38]

The landscape is both a space and its representation. Both dimensions are produced together and influence each other. To use the words of Scott and Swenson, there is the landscape as a representation and the land use as the political actions implement upon the land. Both are connected and both evolve together. New definitions of nature find new forms of expression that produce new categories of landscapes through time. These categories influence in return how people interact with the environment.

Because of this, landscape is in constant movement, even if paradoxically, one of its oldest purposes was to fix and to order and to create a view, a vision that makes sense of the world. The conflict in landscape has often been erased to show the perfect balance, the

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[36] 'Geography: 1. The field of study concerned with the physical features of the earth and its atmosphere, and with human activity as it affects and is affected by these, including the distribution of populations and resources and political and economic activities; also as a subject of educational study or examination. 2. A depiction or analysis of the way the constituent parts of something interact, or of their arrangement in relation to one another.' "geography, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77757?redirectedFrom=geography#eid (accessed 18.02.2018)

[37] E.E. Scott & K. Swenson, 'Introduction, Contemporary Art and the Politics of Land Use', in Scott & Swenson (eds) *Critical landscapes*, p. 1.

[38] Serres, 'The Natural Contract', p. 8.

greatness of God's creation or just the rational pleasure of the perspective. However, the war on nature is never far and it leads to Mirzoeff's visuality concept.

Landscape's visuality?

Visuality englobes discourses of legitimization. It allows some thoughts and actions to become self-evident. It can be visual, of course, but not only so, since it incarnates an ideology. A part of visuality's purpose aims to project the future. As an authority's tool, it includes and it excludes, deciding what counts or not.

This concept is developed by Mirzoeff in his book, *The Right to Look*.[39] It comes from the idea of a general visualizing a battlefield, understanding more than what he can physically see with the help of information gathered by maps, reports and technologies. Visualities originate in the capacity to visualize history and then become the authorities' tools to legitimate their actions. Visualities are hard to see, because they surround society; people live into them. They pacify people, making them believe that everything will be fine, because the power is in good hands. On the other hand, they perpetually proclaim conflict to justify their right to exercise power. Mirzoeff coins this phrase: 'visuality is not war by other means: it is war.'[40] Conflict is an integral part of it, since it is used to make any other narratives sound disturbing or aggressive.

Mirzoeff first elaborates this concept in the context of imperialism and the military-industrial complex, but completes it a few years later with the Anthropocene. Anthropocene is the name given by some scientists to the current geological era directly caused by human activities, most importantly the consumption of fossil energy. In a way, Mirzoeff also integrates the nature back into the social contract, realizing that the relation between human action and the environment was entangled with imperial and military ideologies. He affirms, 'Anthropocene visuality keeps us believing that somehow the war against nature that Western society has been waging for centuries is not only right; it is beautiful and it can be won.'[41] US-European cultures have tended to think humanity as outside of nature, constantly battling to dominate it. For example, this is illustrated by how some researchers conceive climate change only as a technological problem that can be solved without a re-evaluation of human behaviours. This visuality has produced an aesthetic supporting people's belief that they can

[39] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*.
[40] Mirzoeff, p. 6.
[41] Mirzoeff, 'Visualizing the Anthropocene', p. 217.

continue destroying the planet in the name of progress and growth and that somehow, because some authorities allow it to happen, it will simply be fixed later. This war on nature is a narrative that need to be debunked today, since this Western model is also what brings humanity close to destroying its own place of existence.

Is landscape part of visuality? Was it a tool to legitimate an authority? I would answer affirmatively in most cases. Landscape representations have played the game of both imperialist and anthropogenic environmental visualities. Landscape has reinforced different authorities during its long history. It has produced self-evidence for the owner and the master in the case of the colonial landscape or for the nation in the romantic landscape. It has also incarnated an idea of progress or science in American pastoral landscape or impressionist paintings.

If the imperial use of the landscape has repeatedly been acknowledged, the Anthropocene is less commonly discussed. Mirzoeff offers the famous example of Claude Monet's *Impression soleil levant*, where the harbour pollution has been aestheticized in a colourful atmosphere. Because the Anthropocene is connected to imperialism, these two visualities can also work together as in George Inness's *The Lackawanna Valley*, where the American virgin land is depicted as colonized by progress through the railroad and the cut trees.

In all these cases, the observers – the ones visualising, exercising the act of visualisation on the landscape – are the authority's subjects within their own framing and limitation. They cannot produce something outside of the frame of visuality. Their visuality is exercised upon nature and all the living and non-living beings that belong in this category: the geological and biological resources, the animals, and some human groups too. Landscape, behind its excessively apparent concern with nature, actually becomes one tool of the domination by culture. Landscape's complexity resides in its inclusion and exclusion. As it has excluded the human labour that shaped nature, it has only allowed the perception of nature as an ultimate other.

Eventually, can landscape be used differently? Mirzoeff calls countervisuality the 'right to look.' It does not refer to this right in the terms of 'human rights'; it is not a demand, it is a process of consensus. In that sense, it really relates to the idea of commons or communal activities. Commons is an interesting concept historically linked to land management. It

relates to both the undivided land and the community it belongs to.[42] It includes both the human and the environment, which will turn out to useful during the analysis of the two empirical materials.

The 'right to look' is also 'the attempt to shape an autonomous realism that is not only outside authority's process but antagonistic to it.'[43] This notion of realism is important because while trying to undo the power of authority, one of the main tasks is to produce new narratives outside of what this authority can conceive. In other words, alternative realities need to be created. Mirzoeff further explain that 'the project is to create a mental space for action that can link the visible and the sayable.'[44] Associated to the double aspect of the landscape as observed but also shaped, this link between 'the visible and the sayable' reflects the interaction between the space and its representation. Through landscape, some artists also try to link the visible and the sayable. Beside, because of what they learn from the past utilisations of the landscape, they also aim to make some actual change.

Experimental geography

Visuality seems close to the observer's position of the landscape, but it implies transformation in the land too. This is why Trevor Paglen's idea of 'experimental geography' is useful.[45] Coming back to the definition of geography that concerns itself with the earth's surface and what is happening on it, Paglen associates these ideas with both materialism and the production of space. Materialism, if sometimes problematic, is interesting in this context because it insists on the fact that the world is made of 'stuff' and that even the most deconstructing poststructuralism will never be able to deconstruct that. The production of space is a reference to Lefebvre's book of the same name, but it actually has a longer history that defines space not as the container of humans' activities but as the product of these activities. These two notions are applied in geography but they can actually be applied in other academic fields as well.

This is where the 'experimental' aspect matters; it mostly means that there is no guarantee in the result but it is still worth trying. Indeed, experimental geography means:

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[42] "commons, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2018.
http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37214?rskey=1t4bXx&result=1#eid (accessed 19.04.2018)
[43] Mirzoeff, *The Right to look*, p. 25.
[44] Mirzoeff, 'Visualizing the Anthropocene', p. 217.
[45] Paglen, 'Experimental geography', pp. 36-42

'the practices that take on the production of space in a self-reflexive way, practices that recognize that cultural production and the production of space cannot be separated from each other, and that cultural and intellectual production is a spatial practice.'[46]

This is where it meets with Mirzoeff's project of countervisuality, adding the doable to the visible and the sayable. It asks artists to be aware of the production part of their work, which can be important if they claim themselves as both artist and activist. How do they participate in the production of the space they depict? Where do they position themselves? Are they a global reader or a local supporter? Experimental geography highlights the importance of the notion of position and distance.

To summarise, landscape has been a tool of dominant visualities since the beginning of its history. Today, both landscape's scopic regime and production are considered again, not only their visual, aesthetical level but also the inclusion of human labour and land use. The artworks of two different European artists will be used to investigate how these artists try to oppose the main visuality and how their works could offer a form of countervisuality. Because their work is so rooted in landscape as space, experimental geography will be used as a theoretical framework bringing back the third dimension.

Contemporary landscape and political ecology

To come back to Sam Durant's image, I really appreciate how the protesters end up in between fake trees, not claiming that good landscape does not exist but more that the power relations of it should be reversed. If landscape has been the tool of oppression for so long, can it now become a tool of resistance? It is in a way what some artists are trying to create by taking into account the influence of different academic fields on the notion of landscape. They do not forget that landscape is not only a peaceful image of the order in nature, but a place of struggle and conflict where ideology offers and controls one main visuality. In today's contemporary landscape, the space of the landscape is used to create opposition to this visuality, for example when artists participate in the activist discourse of political ecology.

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[46] Paglen, p. 38.

They affirm the political dimension of their art, using another form of realism and description to address a message to the spectators hoping to provoke a reaction.

Ursula Biemann and Oliver Ressler are two artists working with landscape in the context of environmental struggle. These two artists focus in peripheral space, insisting more on the 'shaped' landscape than the 'observed' one. However, this does not mean that they do not play an observer's role as well, by their use of a documentary discourse in their video essays. While conscious of the complexity of dealing with land use and landscape, Biemann and Ressler speak about landscape while according space to the human dimension. It is not Nature at the centre anymore but the result of human action on the land.

Ursula Biemann's video essay *Deep Weather* depicts two types of landscape 'Carbon Geologies' and 'Hydro Geographies', respectively placed in Canada and in Bangladesh, connecting them together while opposing them. These landscapes focus on the interaction between different human groups and their environment. They are landscapes because an observer witnesses the land being shaped in front of her eyes.

'Carbon Geologies' is constituted of aerial pictures crossed by a slow travelling from the left to the right, like a reading. This view from above strategically positioned to understand movement through the land, but here, because it is a photograph, there is no movement. As an example, in the following screenshot, a road can be seen crossing the totality of the top section. [Fig.4] The land beside the road is dark, muddy and looks cold. Because of the aerial perspective, the depth and the scale of the image are hard to read. The uniformity of mud and water is only broken by some yellow machines. A voiceover explains to us that 'the oil miners arrived and began to dig out the tar sand in an area the size of England', which gives some idea of the size. It is almost like an impressionist landscape, playing with colours and perspective, but at the same time it is a military visuality. Its shape is destruction.

In the second extract, the landscape is very different, both in the position of the observer and in the shaping. [Fig.5] The camera, on a boat in the middle of water, is also in a strategic position, allowing the viewer to understand what is happening. It is a central perspective, even including a symmetric approach of the embankment being built. It is interesting to notice that this image comes only at the end of the video. Biemann chooses the pace by which the viewer can understand what happens. It is a process. 'Hydro Geographies' shows people throwing bags into the water in a constant flow. A few military personnel can

also be identified, inactive silhouettes that seem to be there to supervise the work. In this part, if the observer's position is troubling, the shaping of the landscape is underlined by the visible human labour necessary to resist against cyclone and flood.

Oliver Ressler's video essay *The ZAD* is centred on the *bocage*, a small grassland with thickets for borders. [Fig.6] This landscape is disappearing because of the intensive agriculture established in the 1990s in France. This artwork is strongly involved in the present and the recent events have put this space under the light of the media as was described in the introduction. This space is currently highly disturbing to the French laws and institutions. This is even reflected at the academic level. Just recently, a university was organising a talk by Barbara Glowczewski in the context of the campus CONCORDET, where she made a connection between aborigines' resistance and the ZAD. She also invited two inhabitants of the ZAD to talk with her. A video of the conference was recorded, but when it was first uploaded, the university cut off the 15 minutes where the ZAD topic was discussed. They justified themselves by stating that the legal status of this space was not clear at the moment and they wanted to respect the legal caution. At the end, they acquiesced and shared the full video, but this demonstrates how complicated the recognition of this space is.[47]

I mention this conference for a specific reason. During their speech, one of the ZAD inhabitants underlines: *'L'environnement n'est pas distinct de nous-mêmes. Nous sommes aussi le bocage' (The environment is not distinct from us. We are the bocage, too.)* Identifying with the landscape is not uncommon, as romantic nationalism has demonstrated before. However, in *The ZAD*, the landscape is related to the *bocage*, a relation to nature that can exist only if humans accept to position themselves locally. In opposition with the state's identity-base landscape that seems fixed in time, the Zadists interact with the landscape through time. Since the inhabitants of the ZAD choose to use the *bocage* as a symbol of the kind of lifestyle they want to defend, the film gives its definition: 'a bocage is a pastured land divided into small hedged fields interspersed with groves of trees.'

Another definition was brought to my attention by Kristin Ross, an American specialist of the Paris Commune.[48] In the preface of a book about the ZAD, she writes:

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[47] J. Lindgaard, *La ZAD, les aborigènes et l'université* (the ZAD, the Aborigines and the University), 28 February 2018, available from: Mediapart. https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/culture-idees/280218/la-zad-les-aborigenes-et-l-universite (accessed 12.03.2018)

[48] The Paris Commune is an 'insurrection of Paris against the French government from March 18 to May 28, 1871.' "Commune of Paris" *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Website] Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc, March 11, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/event/Commune-of-Paris-1871 (accessed 20.05.2018)

As Anne Berger points out, it is, by all measures, a modest landscape, one that is on a human scale, or to be less anthropocentric, a scale conducive to humans and smallish animals like rabbits and small deer, or river fish. There is nothing sublime or transcendent about a bocage — the vast vistas needed to unleash soaring sentiments are lacking. The eye is always stopped by a hedge which, even if it limits the gaze, does not block physical entry.[49]

This shaped landscape is a traditional way of dividing land in this region of France, coming from the feudal system. It is depicted in the first image, while a man's voice compares what the viewer see, from a slightly elevated point of view, with what would have been there if the airport project would have been completed. [Fig.7] This moment is focused on the landscape, because as an observer, the spectators can realise that what they look at – a soft and sunny countryside landscape (quite boring if you come from France) – is actually a space that is not a given. It could be destroyed and replaced by an airport. Even more interesting, if the airport project had never happened, it would have probably still been destroyed by intensive agriculture exploitation. Because the *bocage* is an old form of landscape, according a lot of space to biodiversity and natural rhythms, it may look like no one is there. This will be an important point of the battle between the Zadists on one side and the airport supporters and the State on the other.

As it is already visible here, both Ressler and Biemann have a very different approaches to the landscape, which will also influence how I discuss the two videos. Indeed, Biemann gives a strong attention to the ways the landscapes are depicted. The actions on the land are presented through a very controlled frame. Ressler, in turn, is more focused on the actions, the images serving as support. Consequently, this discussion will focus more on the framing for Biemann and on the actions for Ressler, even if both aspects will be addressed in both cases.

First, however, the medium of these two artworks need to be addressed. Both happen to be video essays and this could already be a point of discussion, since they relate to landscape.

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[49] This quote, extract of the preface of the book *The ZAD and NoTAV* was made available during the first month after its publication in June 2017 on the Verso book website. It is currently not available anymore. K. Ross, ''The ZAD and NoTAV: making a territory' in Mauvaise troupe collective, *The ZAD and NoTAV*, London: Verso book, 2017. https://www.versobooks.com/books/2503-the-zad-and-notav (accessed 15.05.2018)

The medium

The landscape has traditionally been the topic of painting and later of photography. In their book, *Critical Landscape*, the two editors ask:

> 'Indeed, the question seems to hover in the background of whether or not painting and photography – as media that collapse the worldly into the static and the two-dimensional – are capable of relaying the frictions, layers and interrelations of landscape. Are there inherent limits to using media that in essence translate their subject into a scene?'[50]

This question requires further reflection. Remembering the wallpaper landscape of the Sonoma Valley, its main quality that Microsoft was ready to pay for was its absence of tension. In this case, static techniques of depiction allow erasure from the image all the actual struggle that is later explained by the Swedish artists.

However, to explain landscape as an unbalanced and always fluctuating story, Goldin + Senneby have to create a video. Video is probably not the only medium allowing such an explaination. It could have been a performance, a text, or maybe a photo-montage or a collage. In the case of the two artworks of interest here, they use actually video for this same propose, showing how landscape is a multilayer space of struggles touching upon nature, social constructs and human activity and evolving through time.

More specifically, both Biemann and Ressler's works are video essays. Video essays could be described as an in-between medium. Neither completely fitting the documentary aesthetic nor being classified as video art. As Biemann explains: 'For a documentary, they are seen as too experimental, self-reflexive and subjective, and for an art video they stand out for being socially involved or explicitly political.'[51] If this could have first sounded like a disadvantageous position, this video practice is today largely explored by artists for its capacity to mix art, theory and politics. It has developed its own distinct aesthetic strategy. Its recurrent aspects are the mix of visual sources and a close relation to texts. Sometimes it also includes a voiceover or a *mise en espace* through installation. For Biemann again: 'Its strength lies in the quality of the mediator and communicator between differential cultural

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[50] Scott & Swenson, 'Introduction, Contemporary Art and the Politics of Land Use', p. 4.
[51] U. Biemann, 'The video essay in the digital age', in U. Biemann (ed), *Stuff it, The video essay in the digital age*, Zurich: Voldemeer Edition, 2003, p. 8.

spaces.'[52] It is a valid point that video essays tend to mediate theoretical concept through visual image. However, it also sometimes results in some quite obscure art piece, complicated to watch and to understand, if the viewer does not feel the pleasure of learning academic knowledge.

      If Biemann and Ressler create video essays, and therefore do not claim any writing of history, they are still very concerned by a certain form of realism and definitely insist on the reality of the problems and events they depict. This tends to complicate the distinction between the space and its representation. In the following chapter, both artist' works will be analysed in details and the shift between both the 'observed' and the 'shape' will be constant.

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[52] Biemann, p. 8.

Chapter 2: Visuality and 'occupied' landscape

Peripheral space

As introduced in the last chapter, *Deep Weather* and *The ZAD* are landscapes, both observed and shaped. I will now investigate further their characteristics. This chapter will explain what kinds of space and place are represented in these landscapes and how they are represented including the notion of periphery and occupation. It will also show how the conflict plays a big part in the two artworks and how the artists divert or oppose the main visuality, more specifically that of the Anthropocene.

Today the ecological awareness is stronger than before. I would assume most of the Western countries' populations feel concerned when an image of an altered or polluted place is shown to them. However, as explained by Adam Brenthel, feeling concerned – or maybe even guilty – does not mean they feel like acting upon it. This could be associated with the way these images are constructed and presented, but it is also happening because the actions of pollution, destruction and sometimes resistance tend to happen in peripheral space.[53] This notion of periphery is important. In the Western conception of 'urban' as being the space of culture, the peripheries maintain a special relationship to nature. As Henri Lefebvre explained:

> 'These spaces [peripheral spaces] are produced. The 'raw material' from which they are produced is nature. They are products of an activity which involves the economic and technical realms but which extends well beyond them, for these are also political product and strategic spaces. The term 'strategy' connotes a great variety of products and actions: it combines peace with war, the arms trade with deterrence in the event of crisis, and the use of resources from peripheral spaces with the use of riches from industrial, urban, state- dominated centres.'[54]

The centres always tend to rest on the margin, perpetuating the dominant/dominated relationship that exists between the colonizer and colonised, but also in dichotomy the city/countryside, populated/empty or the domesticated/wild, shaping them according to their

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[53] About this question and the problem of communication about climate change, I would advise the reading of A. Brenthel, *The Drowning World, The Visual Culture of climate change*, Lund University, 2016.
[54] Lefebvre, *The production of Space,* p. 84.

needs. This relationship is not the fruit of symbolism only; it finds its roots in the interconnection of economics and politics. Sometimes, people can get the feeling that these spaces have been abandoned, or rather disinvested, but the reality is more complexed. Lefebvre's definition is important because it underlines the fact that peripheral spaces, instead of being disinvested, have rather deliberately been maintained in the margins, away from the gaze of the public and sometimes of the states. These are the spaces that incarnate the environmental struggle of the present. They are related to the notions of land use and land value, in other words to a place, and give rise to the problems of different narratives that frame them.

The landscapes depicted in the two artworks are peripheral spaces: the far north in Canada, the south for Bangladesh and the countryside in France. They are radically different in their climate, geography or socio-political contexts, but they can all be connected to this idea of periphery and how it makes them invisible. They are peripheral spaces in their location and the dynamics that cross them. This is reflected in the way both artists have represented them. This section will use the artists' representations as discourses that describe their peripheral characteristics of these spaces.

In the far north, life is hard and difficult, so natural landscapes are abundant and human presence is very sparse. In these conditions, where the rules and regulation seem loose, the indigenous population struggles to have their territorial rights respected and the resources exploitation appears 'easier.' As Biemann narrates, they are chased away by the miners working for companies that come here only because they can make profit. The way they treat the land would never be accepted in the public space of Ottawa, but it is possible in the remote, privatised areas along the Athabasca River. It looks like there is no one there.

In the South, represented by Bangladesh in Biemann's video, the costs of the Canada's extractivism are being payed.[55] It is not new that when looking at the Anthropocene idea and the climate change implication, the relation between the ones that pollute and the ones that have to live in the pollution is unequal.[56] Here people are present but they seem to be considered as the subaltern, people that European are used to see struggling.

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[55] 'In an attempt to arrive at a comprehensible definition, we will use the term extractivism to refer to those activities which remove large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or processed only to a limited degree), especially for export.' A. Acosta, 'Extractivsim and neoextractivism: to sides of the same curse' in M. Lang and D. Mokrani (eds), *Beyond Development*, Amsterdam, Quito, Transnational Institute / Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Editions, 2013, p. 62.

[56] This idea is present in Mirzoeff's 'Visualizing the Anthropocene' but it is also clearly explained in the following text: A. Malm, A. Hornborg, 'The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative', in *The Anthropocene Review* Vol.1 (1), London: Sage Editions, 2014, pp. 62-69.

On a smaller scale, the countryside is also peripheral even if located in France. Notre-Dame-des-Landes, the region where the ZAD is located, was perceived as emptied. In the case of *The ZAD*, the airport project was acceptable because there was no one living there and it was only when the few inhabitants started to be expropriated, to resist and to question the reasons for the airport existence that the reality of their presence became visible.

In peripheral spaces, the dominant visuality shows only one possible interpretation, justifying the exploitation and the expropriation, be it for profit or for expansion. For example, tar sand companies do not seem to care about the indigenous population's land use. Their understanding of the land, described by Biemann as 'seismic lines across the land to sound the depths with sonar waves', renders completely invisible what is already there and does not fit their sonic vision. What they want is underground, in the layers of earth. The Bengalese fight against water invasion does not seem to matter as well in this perspective, underlined in the opposition between the machine and the human labour. They are too far away for that – out of sight – even if, as will be explained later, the representation of their position is the most precarious. Finally, the French state seems to think the western French countryside is underdeveloped and offers an airport to economically stimulate the region instead of acknowledging its understaffed welfare. The State's visuality imagines a future where massive number of people will fly to this region to invest and prosper and where the farmers' historical connections to the land and the ecological consequences of the project are relegated to the margins.

These visualities tend to legitimate only one vision of the future – progress and development – and one purpose: profit. This shapes the landscape recovered by them, making them strategic in the military sense, where the environment and its inhabitants are supposed to move as planned. Sometimes, a space's invisibility becomes the proof of its importance. If people try to reclaim these spaces and make their vision of landscape visible, the conflict inevitably resurfaces.

For this reason, Lefebvre's use of the word 'strategy' echoes strongly with Mirzoeff's visuality. Strategy is a practice of planning, often associated with military. It has a direct relationship with perceiving the future and as explained in the previous chapter, this is also the origin of the concept of visuality.[57] In both videos, the conflict is present and the land

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[57] 'Strategy: A plan, a scheme, and related uses. The art or practice of planning or directing the larger movements or long-term objectives of a battle, military campaign, etc. The art or practice of planning the future direction or outcome of something; the formulation or implementation of a plan, scheme, or course of action, esp. of a long-term or ambitious nature. Also: policy or means of achieving objectives within a specified field, as political strategy, corporate strategy, etc.' "strategy, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018.

is strategically occupied. In both videos, this dimension is strategically represented, diverting or resisting the usual landscape utilisation in visuality. This is what will be developed in the following section.

Occupied landscapes: Entering the space

In different books about landscapes, when focusing on the question of land use, writers tend to use the terms 'political landscape' or 'critical landscape' since these landscapes do not only narrate the Nature beauty, but also their socio-political dimensions.[58] My position, though, as developed in chapter 1, is that even the landscapes representing aesthetic conventions are political, because of their capacity of to include and exclude. So, in this paper, I decide to use 'occupied' instead since it also fits perfectly the two artworks.

First, the notion of 'occupation' needs to be explained.[59] Its definition is connected to both conflict and protest at the same time. Therefore, it is particularly appropriate to describe the landscapes of interest to this paper. To become an occupation, a space needs to be occupied, by the state, military forces or protesters. Occupying a space requires exercising some sort of control over it, marking it as its own and creating borders. It also marks it as worth narrating, assigning it a place in a form of history, since it is not considered empty anymore. These signs of occupation are really visible in both Ressler's and Biemann's images, primarily signified by the artists stressing their 'access road.'

Indeed, *Deep Weather* starts with a view from the upper deck of a boat, near what appears to be Bangladesh coasts. [Fig.8] The presence of mist makes it difficult to identify the landscape. Its only evident characteristics are the flatness of a coastal land and the presence of a pipe. The boats offer more hints. The trucks carried by the boats are covered with inscriptions written in Bengali, even if this detail may not be very significant with the global transport industries. The light is actually the main indicator, since both landscapes have very different luminosities. This shot is just an introduction, but it underlines that both the artist

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http://www.oed.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/view/Entry/191319?rskey=qcSz2d&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed 21.03.2018)
[58] D.E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape,* The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998 (1984); Olwig, *Landscape, Nature and the body politic,* 2002; Scott & Svenson, *Critical landscape*, 2015.
[59] 'Occupation: 1. The action of taking or maintaining possession or control of a country, building, land, etc., esp. by (military) force; an instance of this; the period of such action; (also) the state of being subject to such action. 2. The action of occupying a work place, public building, etc., as a form of protest'. "occupation, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2018.
http://www.oed.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/view/Entry/130181?redirectedFrom=occupation#eid (accessed 21.03.2018)

and viewer travel through spaces connected by water, one of the two important liquids for Biemann.

In *The ZAD*, the access road is an actual road, the D218, and it is still a space where the police and the Zadists oppose each other in April 2018, now that they need to legalise the latter's one occupation. At the beginning of the video, Ressler takes a lot of time on this road, showing for example how the Zadists renamed the places on the signs as a marking of their presence. [Fig.9] This road is covered with barricades and obstacles that seem like warnings or protections of the ZAD area.

In both videos, the occupied landscapes are territories that need to be entered through a specific access. Occupation means a delimited space, either forbidden or defended. This also implies a conflict between those inside and those outside and most of the time, tension rises between them.

Mirzoeff, while developing the idea of Anthropocene visuality writes:

> 'the power to imagine has itself been colonized and dominated so that we understand the fundamental human impulse to be one of conflict rather than communal action.'[60]

This opposition as underlined by Mirzoeff between conflict and communal action quite useful in the context of the landscapes analysed here. The former belongs to the Anthropocene visuality while the latter seems to be the key of a form of emancipation. Actually, both of these notions can be connected to particular occupations present in the artists' works: the Anthropocene occupation and the commons occupation. They confront each other, from both sides of a conflict where the landscape plays the role of an ideological battlefield, sometimes literally.

The act of occupying asks for representative strategies. If the occupation comes from a dominant power in place, this power still needs to communicate about it in the proper way. Otherwise, the violence of the act of occupation becomes visible. Again, Anthropocene visuality, the legitimatising discourse of certain land uses above others, is what allows Anthropocene occupations. It makes acceptable projects like the tar sand mining or the airport because, instead of seeing them as environmentally destructive or pollution, they are

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[60] Mirzoeff, 'Visualizing the Anthropocene', p. 226.

perceived as progress and profit. Biemann intensively works with this visuality, where Ressler chooses to only evoke it.

On the other hand, the commons occupation often needs to be explained in details. When occupation takes place in the context of protest and resistance – by reclaiming a space and producing a new common territory – it works against the obvious like the property laws. This will require a lot of energy spent in explanation, intervention, communication to show that the violence does not always come from the collective occupants. It is also a reaction to the Anthropocene occupation. It is illustrated in Biemann's work by the time spent on the 'Hydro Geographies' in comparison to 'Carbon Geologies'. She takes three times longer to explain the situation in Bangladesh. This is also why the ZAD had to create a communications team who happened to be the people discussing the situation in Ressler's video.

Because landscape is both space and its representation, I will first analyse how the artists reveal the physical occupations of the land through their images. Specifically, what they include and what they exclude. Later, in chapter 3, I will come back to the legitimizing discourses that underline these claims of space and how the occupation may happen not only on the land but also in the imagination.

Anthropocene occupation

In *Deep Weather*, the 'carbon geologies' are a landscape that depends on water, on the Athabasca River, which was providing the whole ecosystem of the region and the indigenous populations living there. However, oil and the subsequent industries that support it have taken over the land. The previous inhabitants have been chased by other human beings hiding behind yellow machines. Their actions are shown through aerial views of an exploited landscape of tar sand and boreal forest. The land is dark and drained. First, the viewer seems to follow a road but humans' presence is almost invisible. Progressively, the machines and the industry take more and more space, showing the acid cloud and the destruction of the crust, both consequences of the extraction of oil from tar sand. [Fig.10]

These machines occupy the landscape created by Biemann. It is a destructive occupation, where the landscape looks like victim of a spreading disease. It is organised, without movement, since the images comes from pictures. A very calm and ineluctable feeling comes out of it, as if this happens in a different time scale. This geological event is

depicted in a cold military aesthetic: aerial view, zoom and travelling, while hearing a voice explaining to us the political and cultural background of this topology. This landscape illustrates the inhumanity of a geology where water is taken over by oil. It underlines the struggle between a prior era, characterised by animal and Indigenous population and the current time, occupied by oil miners but making the land progressively toxic and inhabitable for anyone but machines.

However, in the margins of Biemann's images, whole cities supported by what these machines are producing, like Fort McMurray. This is not the reality the artist decides to point out. For example, Biemann does not include in her images the spatial scale, the scale of the exploitation and of the destruction. Through the voiceover she tells the viewers the occupied land is the size of England, but this is never visible. This comparison refers to the whole reserve oil sand in the Athabasca region, the largest of Canada.[61] The zone currently occupied is smaller. To put Biemann's images into perspective, they can be compared first with a satellite view of the Athabasca River and the Fort McMurray region and second with a photograph on the ground level of the mine. [Fig.11-12]

These views create very different landscapes: the satellite renders the whole space even more abstract but shows the exploitative spatial organisation; the ground view allows to see the human scale in the middle of the machine. Instead, Biemann chooses to produce an observed landscape where the viewer is placed in the position of the general, looking at the battlefield photography and evaluating the damages and results of this production of space. She does not want to look from too far away, where the occupation would be clearly delimited, but not from too close either, where the human dimension starts to matter.

In this part, she does not seem to fight the main visuality. Rather, she is inviting the viewer to embody both the military and the Anthropocene visualities. Indeed, as described in *The Right to Look,* the aerial view 'tells us nothing at all about those who wanted the visualization made.'[62] In Biemann's images, the machines seem to be their own masters. Quickly she whispers about oil miners but they are never seen, nor is the company profiting from all this labour. The landscape produced is disconnected from the social dimension that explains the meaning of all this. Indeed, visualisation is also about gathering all the knowledge facilitating an understanding of aerial images, which the artist does not really

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[61] C. Davidsen. "Oil Sands". The Canadian Encyclopedia. Toronto: Historica Canada, 2014. Web. 19 Mar 2014. http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/oil-sands/ (accessed 12.05.2018)
[62] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, p. 279.

share in her artwork.[63] This makes the destruction of the landscape even more terrifying, since its purpose is dissolved in the aestheticisation of the pollution, typical of the Anthropocene visuality. The slow pace crossing through the pictures gives the viewers time to be hypnotized by the toxicity of these landscapes, enough to grasp information, but never enough to fully understand the whole political conflict happening in this landscape. By using a point of view that people have grown accustomed to, Biemann catches the viewers in their own habits of seeing, or as Kaplan explained in her book *Aerial Aftermath*:

> 'Aerial images are so much a part of our everyday life as image consumers, (…) that we take them for granted. We absorb these views to such a degree that they seem to become part of our bodies, to constitute a natural way of seeing. But we are not "born this way."'[64]

Kaplan's statement strangely echoes the end of 'Carbon Geologies', where the artist give the order to 'Mutate' before shifting the perspective a little, revealing the horizon.[65] [Fig.13] At the same time, she admits that there is nothing to see here anymore. For her, this place was already lost. She describes how the natural environment of the Canadian region cannot catch up with the damages. This 'mutate' injunction could then be understood as a way to become a machine, the same machine that gives human beings the capacity to see from above and to survive in the toxic clouds. This occupied landscape implies the mutation of its occupants.

Oliver Ressler never goes this far in the visualisation of the *bocage* landscape. However, in the passage already introduced in the previous chapter, the visuality of the airport project is implied when the filmed landscape is compared to the map of the airport. The man talking can see the map or more precisely the schematic, though the viewer cannot. [Fig.14-15-16]
He says: 'If you look at the map, there is probably the duty-free around here and the control tower just over there. And as you can see now it is free, but there is not so much duty going on.'[66] The map, like the aerial view, is one of the visuality named by Mirzoeff.[67] It marks the ownership of the land. It recovers the territory, including or excluding and creating borders.

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[63] This aspect is addressed by Mirzoeff, but a more in-depth read about this is: C. Kaplan, *Aerial Aftermath, Wartime from above*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2018. [html] https://monoskop.org/media/text/kaplan_2018_aerial_aftermaths/
[64] Kaplan, *Aerial Aftermath*. [html]
[65] Biemann, *Deep Weather*, 2013. Running time: 00:01:54.
[66] Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:00:02-00:00:22.
[67] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look,* p. 37.

The map is a tool of visualisation because it allows the projection of the future over the space. While looking at the map, you can see its future space, where the merchandise and the people will flow, consuming in the duty-free zone while the control tower ensures that all the aerial traffic can go on without interruption. But again, what is visible instead is the common *bocage*, the sound of the insects. Ressler implies the visuality the ZAD had to resist, never showing the viewer what would have been, maybe also because this is already well known. Instead of the airport occupation, the only depicted occupation is that of the protesters, through the commons and the resistance.

Using the landscape to show these visualities – aerial views and destruction, maps and ownership – is not a complex or surprising association. People are used to seeing these representational codes. They are familiar, even if the two artists divert them in a certain way so that their problematic is revealed. What is more difficult to produce is countervisuality. If Mirzoeff defines countervisuality as 'the right to look', he also remains quite vague about the form it can take, each cases necessitating a different strategy depending on their context. This may be why if the concept of the commons is really important for Ressler's *The ZAD*, it appears more ambiguous in Biemann's *Deep Weather*.

Commons occupation

Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart: the ZAD is structured in four parts: the contextualisation, 'Opération César', 'How do we live here together?' and finally 'Pulling down the CO_2 machine.' The map comparison as previously described is part of the contextualisation. It is next followed by a sequence that illustrated very well the core of Ressler's visual strategy. The ZAD has a very distinctive aesthetic. It looks like an activist place, with a lot of dynamism and collective projects. To reveal it, Ressler based most of his editing choices on the discourse of the Zadists. It is their story that shapes Ressler's images, and their story is about the landscape.

The video starts with the view of a field full of very tall wild plants. A man, not visible at first, explains that the airport project started in the 1970s. It is where the term ZAD comes from and it actually means 'zone d'aménagement différé' (holding zones). Then the man talking appears on the frame, with a woman behind him. He does not look directly at the camera, which later becomes more understandable since he is sitting within a group of five

people on a semicircle bench. [Fig.17] They are listening while he talks. He explains how ZAD, in its primary sense, is a way to slowly take over the land so that the airport can be built, before it became the 'zone à défendre' (zone to defend). Then he continues by describing the different phases of occupations resisting the project. The first inhabitants, of course, were the farmers that refused to leave their land. The squatters and the activists came in the 2000s, building cabins in the woods. During the man's talk, Ressler has inserted images of a roadside, where a lot of signposts have been placed. They are remembrances of historical events where the farmers' struggles in France, as well as of other places in the world concerned with resistance against polluting projects. There are pieces of clothes, tied around a wire fence making it look colourful. [Fig.18] This is a place of memory since the struggle against the airport in the ZAD has lasted from 1972 and 2018. This sequence is also the first time the term *bocage* is introduced with its definition.

From this moment in the video, Ressler will always come back to these five people discussing different aspects of the ZAD, where it feels like the viewers are attending a discussion, completing the circle. In his editing, Ressler is very sober. He tends to alternate between these five people's discussion and different places in the ZAD relating to it. In a way, this sobriety allows the viewer to focus mainly on the landscape as a space instead of his choice in its representation, while placing it in a discourse. In the case of *The ZAD,* the visual space of Notre-Dame-des-Landes by the Zadists may already be strong enough that Ressler could remain in the margin. His images do not really question his position, which may undermine his purpose if the viewer is not already convinced of the importance of the Zadists' actions.

In Ressler's video, different commons occupations are shown. The main one, and probably the most important in term of countervisuality, is present in the interaction between the Zadists and the environment of Notre-Dame-des-Landes. This aspect is mostly developed in the first contextualising part and the third part, 'How do we live here together?' The way they occupy the space is in a sense quite simple. They live into it or within it. While living there, they work the land. This is illustrated, for example, in the sequences where Ressler shows people building a stable together. Then, he follows a man and his cows from the field to the completed stable, where the cows are milked. [Fig.19-20] He also films a group working the soil to grow vegetables. [Fig.21] These actions generate products which then circulate in the space of the ZAD nourishing the people living there. Ressler also shows other kind of spaces like the library or workshops organised by the inhabitants where people can learn how to cane

fruits or repair bicycles.[68] [Fig.22-23] This may appear a little too perfect, like a nice holidays camp. However, the Zadists explain how the space they try to create is the product of constant negotiations.[69] They create the commons in the ZAD, by human social interactions connected to and shaping the space. The Zadists also take a lot of pride in practicing more respectful agriculture on a living scale, preserving the *bocage* while modifying it. As visible throughout the video, people come and build houses, all different in size and form, and often precarious since they are built with whatever materials can be found and they can also be torn down soon. [Fig.24-25-26] And if these constructions are destroyed, they promise to build them again.[70] Indeed, in *The ZAD*, the commons occupations happen first through resistance. This resistance implies a direct action to the land, which then also expresses itself visually. The violence against the ZAD plays an important role in the creation of the identity of the space.

This implies a radically different position from the one chosen by Biemann for the 'Hydro Geographies' even if, like Ressler, she talks about resistance. 'Hydro Geographies' is longer than the previous part 'Carbon Geologies' probably because it necessitates more time to be really understood.

It starts with radical change of landscape and perspective. The camera first appears on a boat again. In front of the camera there is again another boat, a lot smaller than the one in the introduction, with two men paddling. On the horizon, there is a white construction like a wall or a bridge made of sand bags, with hundreds of people moving across it. After getting closer, it is apparent that the boat being followed by the camera, carries the same kind of bags. This is also the time of the first 'gaze' back when one of the men paddling turns back and stares at the camera insistently. The white construction, which appears to be an embankment, is not finished. People carrying sand bags on their back walk and throw their loads in the water. The camera traces back the constant flow of people, until the viewer can see the field of sand and mud where the bags are filled. The task seems daunting and there is no machine, only human labour. A lot of the male workers look back at the camera and at the viewer – sometimes interrupting their work, sometimes just having a look. [Fig.27-28-29-30] Their gazes are never followed by a smile, which creates an uneasy feeling, reinforced by the realisation that the camera disturbs the labour flow. During these moments, the sound relays the clamour of the crowds and some men talking in a microphone.

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[68] These works and products echoes the two modalities of occupied space of Lefebvre *The production of Space*, p. 77.
[69] Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:13:55-00:14:05.
[70] *The ZAD*, Running time: 00:26:42-00:27:22.

In this part, the occupation is performed by human beings, moving and chaotic, instead of the machines' immobility of the first part. They resist against the rising water, a consequence of global warming, reminding the viewers of the unpredictability of human actions. They shape the landscape by building embankments, moving the sand. They are shown through a survival aesthetic, where adaptation is the key. When talking about commons occupation, these images produce a complex feeling. What is shown is clearly a communal action, a large group of people acting together for their survival. However, their action is against something as big as weather. By underlining the disturbing effects generated by the camera presence, Biemann does not put the viewer in a comfortable position. People interrupt their actions when looking at the camera. Consequently, the viewers feel like they have disturbed them. It is not a comfortable place to be. They fight against cyclone and water, build a gigantic embankment, but the problem comes from somewhere else. The way those people look back at the viewers may then become an accusation, particularly if, like me, they come from some Western countries.

The commons occupation in Biemann's video remains inaccessible. The collective actions happen without the viewers nor do they need them. What they need is the exploitation of 'carbon geologies' to stop and it may be where they will require help. In this moment of vain resistance, the whispering voice is sometimes even harder than the images. While showing the Bengalese people acting against the flood, the voice explains that they are dying in their sleep because the cyclone alarm system built on the mosque fails. The violence of the situation is palpable.

In this sense, Biemann reminds the viewer that both the Anthropocene and the commons occupations are not easy actions. There is an oppositional dynamic between the two of them. This opposition produces a lot of tensions because of the destructive futures projected on the landscape by pollution or by natural catastrophes, creating the conductive conditions for conflict to reappear even outside of the main visuality. Resistance is not welcomed. Indeed, these two notions are inseparable in Ressler's work. He pays a lot of attention to the everyday life of the ZAD, also acknowledging the inevitability of conflict. One of the Zadists at the end of the video stresses that alternative is not enough. You need resistance too, creation and resistance.[71] For Biemann, this aspect is even more ambiguous, since she places the viewers outside of the communal action being performed.

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[71] *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:35:00

The conflict

As was shown, there is a close relationship between occupation and conflict, because some violent acts are perpetrated, but also because the resistance to certain logics generates violent reactions. In *The ZAD*, the conflict has two wholes parts devoted to it: 'Opération César' and 'Pulling down the CO^2 machine'. In *Deep Weather,* the conflict may seem a bit more discreet than in Ressler's work but it is definitely there, diffused in the air, hiding in the margins. Its presence is not surprising when looking at Biemann's previous work. She has always addressed conflict zones. Her concern for ecology grows from them.[72] Consequently, if the two artists have intentionally depicted conflict, the way they introduce it to the viewers is again radically different.

In Biemann's work, the conflict is clearly between visions of the world, with one dominating and damaging the other. The aerial, anonymous views aestheticising the destruction of the boreal landscape, the relocated population having to leave their homes and the extreme labour to build the embankment demonstrate that all violence is interconnected. The consequences of climate change, where the 'ideology of the oil' the Anthropocene visuality, creates conditions that destroy a variety of landscapes, as evidenced by those depicted in Canada and Bangladesh. Both landscapes shown by Biemann seem to be living in a post-apocalyptic age, even though they are actually in the present. In her vision, Canada, what it represents, has given up resisting letting the machine occupy the space, where in Bangladesh, they are still fighting and resisting. However, the conditions of these fights seem unfair. How many sandbags will be needed to accomplish the task and how long will it last? There is also the presence of the military men standing on the banks, looking at the other people working, merely supervising the situation. [Fig.31] Who are these men? Why are they not helping more, carrying the bags too? The situation in Bangladesh seems a lot more complex, but as for Canada, there will be no more information about it. Once more, Biemann seems to have deliberately chosen to focus only on one scale. In 'Hydro Geographies', it is the ground level, where these human activities shaping the land can be observed but where the organisation supporting these actions remains unclear.

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[72] *Sahara Chronicle*, *Egyptian Chemistry*, *Black Sea files…* 'Ursula, Biemann, *World of Matter* [Website] by labor b designbüro. http://www.worldofmatter.net/ursula-biemann (accessed 11.04.2018)

A visual choice illustrates this for me. 'Hydro Geographies' is also intersected by some of the workers' full-length portraits. [Fig.32] These portraits share split screens with strange, blurry, shaking, slowed-down shots of the Bengalese coasts, like an unsteady horizon line. During these split screens, the voice keeps whispering that cyclones are frequent in Bangladesh, that they had to build a meteorological station filled with scientists, that they need to keep order, that the mosque is used as an alarm system and that the coastal population had to adapt quickly to their transforming living space. They have to become amphibious. After the 'mutate' injunction of the 'Carbon Geologies' to become a machine, another transformation is forced to take place here. These portraits then become mute witnesses of an infinite task. Biemann whispers in the spectator ears, but she is the only one to talk. Sadly, repeating how these people have to keep quiet in the main visuality.

The conflict then secondly takes place within the viewers' mind. Indeed, the particularity of *Deep Weather* is to place the viewers on the side of a passive and rather perturbing position where they are left alone in front of the gigantic problem, a little like the military men on the bank: looking but not participating.

Ressler, in turn, tries to create the opposite effect. In the history of the ZAD, the 'Opération César' is an important moment. Seeing more and more people opposing the airport project, joining the zone and living there, François Hollande's government decided to send the police to evacuate the place between October 14 and November 24, 2012. Numerous cars of CRS (republican security companies) – a general reserve of the French National Police, mostly used for crowd control – arrived at the border of the ZAD and started destroying the different unplanned constructions, even collecting the debris. The video shows a shovel destroying a house in the woods while a woman explains that the police expressed their clear will to 'erase history and traumatise the people.'[73]

However, the police force had not expected the intensity of the resistance they had to face, with some people climbing and tying themselves in the trees, some throwing stones back, some singing naked. These images certainly have a strong 'zone of war' connotation. During the same period, several protests were also organised in the Nantes region. Instead of discouraging people, potentially thousands of them joined in the cause to aid reconstruction, creating an alliance in very different social groups: the farmers, the activists, people from the

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[73] Ressler, *The ZAD,* 2017. Running time: 00:08:33

regions, some local politicians and others, all finding a common enemy in the airport project and the police intervention.[74]

The ZAD actually became a communal project when they were attacked. Some people, with the will to occupy the space, started building collective spaces where the protesters could get food or clothes before joining a group in the purpose of further building. This resulted in the failure of the 'Opération César.'

Nevertheless, this event is so important in the identity of the ZAD that Ressler prefers to add footage from another director, Jean-François Castell, instead of not having it represented.[75] This 'attack' by the state against the Zadists actually made them stronger. Similarly, this moment of conflict plays a very important role in the structure of Ressler's video. The way it transforms the *bocage*, this banal French landscape, in a surreal event of war is impressive. In the images chosen by Ressler, the police forces, which are more often seen in urban space, are repeating their procedures in the forest. [Fig.33-34] It is a very strange sight depicting an advantage of the countryside landscape over the urban one, since the police forces are not used to it. Castell's footage has an urgent feeling, the same as when something happens and people express the urge to film. The images show how people, mostly French citizens, were treated with violence by agents of the state because of their occupation of the land. It is also because of this violence that the Zadists actually gained support from outsiders.

This attack provoked a wave of resistance where, instead of simply squatting the land, people began to act communally which afterward generated the commons occupation described previously. In all of these moments, the landscape played an important role, both as representation (like for the police in the forest) or as a space to defend with the purpose of producing another way of living.

Finally, another kind of communal actions that took place in this landscape, 'les bâtons de la révoltes', (the sticks of the revolt) was symbolic, a little like the signposts. This action left traces, reminders of the history of the place, but perhaps more spontaneous.[76] . [Fig.35] During a large protesters rally in 2016, people came with wooden sticks that they planted in the bushes on the border of a field, promising to come back and get them if the ZAD was attacked again. Two signs also proclaimed, 'nous scellons notre serment collectif: défendre la

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[74] These people are interviewed in the documentary film *Notre-Dame des luttes!*, dir. Jean-François Castell, France, 2012. [online video] also used by Ressler for its recording of the 'Opération César' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ipy01M4Bci4 (accessed 11 April 2018)
[75] *Notre-Dame des luttes!*
[76] Ressler, *The ZAD,* 2017. Running time: 00:21:47-00:22:35.

ZAD, Nous sommes là… nous serons là!' (We seal our collective oath: to defend the ZAD, We are there… we will be there!) This symbolic act, quite strong in its solemnity, is now part of the landscape as described by Ressler while one Zadists tells the story.

My impression watching Ressler's movie is that he assumes the viewer is an ally. He offers the Zadists a platform to express their vision of the society without confronting the viewer with the other discourses about the ZAD that are currently happening in French society. By clearly supporting the Zadists, he may be unable to reach an audience that would be more sceptical about their project. This will bring consequences that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Why does conflict seem necessary?

As this comparative analysis has now confirmed, peripheral spaces – as those described in both artist's videos – are among the places where the struggle of visualities and their consequences for the land occur. Both the Anthropocene and the commons occupations are present in both videos. Each artist elaborates on more one kind of occupation, but there is sign that they are aware of the other type and suggest its presence without expanding on it. Considering these two artworks together has allowed highlighting of parts of their narratives that were only suggested.

Biemann questions the visuality of the dominant globalizing Anthropocene, which legitimates destruction of the land and of the living beings interacting with it. She also shows how this destruction can have unexpected consequences in other areas of the world. She does that: by creating different positions for herself and the viewers, shifting the perspectives and revealing the complexities of the relationship between humans, geology and geography.

Ressler rather tries to root the countervisuality of the Anthropocene in the local. He explores the commons occupation of the ZAD and gives time and space for the elaboration of a different understanding of the human relationship to the landscape and the land behind it.

Occupying the landscape has precedent for either the industrial-military complex or for protesters. It is part of landscape history. However, insisting on the occupation through landscape is a new strategy set up by artists to deal with environmental issues. It creates resistance. As essayists, Biemann and Ressler investigate landscape, working with climate change and giving considerable space to conflict in their videos. Behind the fact that conflict

and tension are efficient narrative structures, one question needs to be asked: Why does conflict seem necessary?

This question is pertinent in relation to the war on nature legitimised by Anthropocene visuality. Mirzoeff has clearly positioned himself regarding this question:

> 'I do not wish to participate in their visualization of the planet as a battlefield and hence presume that to mitigate the effects of climate change, they must somehow be defeated. Rather, I think that the reclaiming of the imagination entails an undoing of their authority, which they themselves literally cannot conceive. The theory of society as permanent war cannot envisage an alternative.'[77]

I have explained how Mirzoeff conceives visuality as war and, in the case of the Anthropocene, as a war on nature, implying its domination and servitude. I agree with him that this idea of war against nature needs to be deconstructed and that new narratives need to challenge it and decolonize the imaginary.

However, landscape has its own history of hiding conflict. As introduced in Chapter 1, the absence of tension in *Bliss* was valorised by Microsoft. Still today, conflict should not be part of the landscape aesthetic, the landscape losing its connection to reality. Aaron M. Ellison, an American ecologist, develops the idea of 'suffocating embrace of the landscape' in his text of the same title.[78] This suffocation can be found in both the images and the actual landscape designed by architects or taken care of by ecologists. It is an idea of nature as a perfect balance, something that should only be observed. However, this does not take into account what really happens, even in a landscape out of reach of humanity. In this sense, the absence of conflict can be held as being as problematic.

In this regard, if I understand why Mirzoeff takes this stand, I think, in the case of landscape and land use, it is still important to reveal the conflict. Projects like tar sand mines and airports are being sold as if they were not violent, making invisible the environment and the people living there. To show this violence, or to show what happens when people try to resist these projects, is definitely a way to reconnect landscape with the land and the representation of the space with the space itself.

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[77] Mirzoeff, 'Visualizing the Anthropocene', p. 226.
[78] Ellison, 'The Suffocating Embrace of Landscape', pp.79-94.

Maybe this means that landscape can never be a countervisuality, since it is too close to the dominant visuality. But I think what happens in the landscape – what shapes it through representation – can. The conflict needs to become visible to realise that the war on nature makes no sense.

Behind these conflicts happening in physical places, an ideological battle also takes place, raising questions about how US-Europeans look and behave with nature. Chapter 3 will expand on how the narratives of the Anthropocene and the commons are articulated and show the importance of the position of the artists and how the conflict is not only in spaces but in the imaginary as well.

Chapter 3: The artists' positions and the triangulation

One step in, one step back

At the beginning of this text, the landscape was explained as being both observed and shaped. After both *Deep Weather* and *The ZAD* have been analysed and compared, I will come back to these two distinctions. Landscape is always a 'frame', a selection from the land, to go back to Malcolm Andrews' words and his classic book about Western landscape.[79] In both videos, the artists have selected places and events. What has changed, in comparison with traditional landscape, is that they are not only looking for a 'good view' anymore. They focus on the human/nature relationship and try to reveal the invisible: the conflict.

These conflicts are located in peripheral spaces, because of land uses and occupations occurring in the present. The artists film and edit their images, in the form of video essays, so that they can at the same time testify of the conflict existence but also take a side. By revealing these occupations, they want to have the viewers question not only the geographical occupation but also the occupation of the mind.

The previous chapter explained how the conflict was acknowledged and depicted through two different occupations: the Anthropocene and the commons. This paper will now return to these two narratives, the Anthropocene visuality and the commons' potential countervisuality, and show how they are involved in the positions chosen by the artists. In *Deep Weather*, Biemann explores the violence behind the Anthropocene visuality that aestheticizes the destruction of the land and the disappearance of the commons. In *The ZAD*, Ressler, in turn, offers a vision of an ancient countervisuality that keeps resurfacing, by showing the communal activities of the ZAD. These narratives are not only the results of the way the artists framed the landscape, they are what influenced the shaping of the landscapes that the two artists observed.

In other words, in the previous chapter I stepped into the two artworks, looking at what the artists observed and how, through their works, they explain occupation and conflict shaping the land. Now, I will step back and reflect on the narratives their works excavate from the land and how they reflect the Western relationship to nature. I will also explain in which ways these two narratives can be connected and confronted.

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[79] M. Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 4.

Anthropocene

The Anthropocene, as it has already been defined, is the idea that humanity's impacts on the earth are so profound that it has provoked a new geological epoch, even if scientists and geologists still seem to disagree on when it started.[80] Because it is an extremely debated word, it needs to be developed a little further here.

The points of view about the term "Anthropocene" change a lot depending on which academic discipline talks about it. It depends whether its focus is on its geological idea or on the discourses that accompany it. This is actually one of the primary characteristics of the word: it is multidisciplinary. In humanities and social sciences, some researchers, like Jason W. Moore, Donna Haraway, Anna L. Tsing, Bruno Latour, T.J. Demos and Nicholas Mirzoeff focus on the discourse behind it. If they tend to recognise its key role in making climate change and other environmental concerns a global discussion, in academia and beyond, they also strongly criticize it.[81]

They first warn against its apparent neutrality and generalisation. The Anthropocene idea declare all humanity responsible for the alteration of Earth, while erasing the other living and non-living forms that share the same planet. Some cultures and politico-economic ideologies have also more destructive behaviours affecting environmental resources and a lot more impacts. This is why some scholars have proposed alternative names for it such as Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Euclidocene or Chthulucene, depending on which problematics they focus on.[82] They are secondly concerned by the idea of 'good Anthropocene' that instead of questioning the ideological mechanisms behind human beings' alteration of the ecosystem right now, simply want to involve more technologies to fix it.[83] For them, the problem results from the fact that the Anthropocene still reproduces the separation between human and nature as conceptualised by US-European philosophy. This is where it joins the question of the landscape.

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[80] X. Bai et al. 'Plausible and desirable futures in the Anthropocene: A new research agenda', *Global Environmental Change* 39, Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd, 2016, pp. 351–362.

[81] D. Haraway, N. Ishikawa, S. F. Gilbert, K. Olwig, A. L. Tsing & N. Bubandt, "Anthropologists Are Talking – About the Anthropocene", in *Ethnos*, Vol 8:31, London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 535-564.

[82] T.J. Demos in his conference 'Anthropocene post-Nature', speech in *Artificial Nature – Potential and conflict in the age of the Anthropocene*, Overgaden, Copenhagen, 5 Oct. 2017 [online video], about his book *Against the Anthropocene, Art and Ecology: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (accessed 19.04.2018)

[83] J. Kunnas, "Storytelling: From the early Anthropocene to the good or the bad Anthropocene", in *The Anthropocene Review*, Vol. 4(2), Sage, 2017, pp. 136–150.

In this paper, I use the word 'Anthropocene' as the visuality that legitimizes the Capitalocene developed by Jason W. Moore, an American environmental historian.[84] The Capitalocene idea refers to not only capitalism, it is a 'way to organize the relations between work, reproduction, and the condition of life.'[85] In his essay, *The Rise of Cheap Nature,* he develops in detail how 'To turn work into labor-power and land into private property was to transform nature into Nature.'[86] Without expanding too much on all his interesting ideas, it is important to remind that Capitalocene or all the other 'cene' concepts show how the Anthropocene idea covers only a limited perspective of the problem. 'Shaped' landscape, as land use, is concerned with human labour, the claims of ownership and the interconnected relationship to the environment. Therefore, it can only either reveal or oppose the Capitalocene ideologies that hide behind the Anthropocene, obscuring the fact that not all humanity is equally responsible.

Demos and Mirzoeff, as visual culture scholar, have definitely coloured their definition of Anthropocene with pessimism and distrust. 'Anthropocene' becomes a discourse legitimizing the exploitation of the resources and the destruction of the landscape by commodifying them. Therefore, 'Anthropocene' was the term that corresponds the best for the questions raised by Biemann and Ressler.

As it appeared in the analysis of Biemann's video essay *Deep Weather*, she mostly confronts this term, its visuality and its occupation. Her position, conditioned by the Anthropocene discourse, is global. By her choice of aerial views and their aestheticisation of the tar sand pollution, she shows how people may have grown used to accepting this kind of occupation of the land. It is sad, but necessary. The whispering voice reminds the viewer of what they cannot see, while the narrator herself remains vague and poetic about what she shows. This is not some kind of dystopian future. It is a present-day dystopia happening in the margins. She shifts perspectives. From this paradoxical anthropogenic occupation by machines, she next positions herself and the viewer on the ground perspective of the disappearance of the commons. Where the others – in this case Bengalese people – are shown struggling against the water that progressively invades and erodes their lands. Biemann still does not let them talk, continuing her whisper as the only person in control of the narrative of her video. In a way, she illustrates how the causes in Canada and the consequences in Bangladesh are treated

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[84] J.W. Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene, Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, PM Press, 2016.
[85] J.W. Moore, 'The Rise of Cheap Nature' in Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene,* p. 85.
[86] Moore, p. 88.

in discourses in the globalizing narrative of the Anthropocene: 'We are all responsible, right?' All treated the same as part one new geological era, while her images tell a different story. She makes the contradictions of this globalising discourse visible and audible.

Ressler only outlines the Anthropocene discourse in the fourth part of the video, which functions to bring the artwork back into its global context. In 'Pulling down the CO_2 machine', the camera films very close to the ground, placed on a car that drives away from the ZAD territory on the D281 road. [Fig.36] While showing this, two Zadists connect what was narrated beforehand to the concern of climate change, how communal actions and positioning itself can help against it.

This last section is an attempt to build a bridge. Ressler's work *Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart* is supposed to be a video installation about climate change. Ressler's project plans to collect different local initiatives and popular resistance that may be the start of the climate revolution.[87] The ZAD is definitely an example reflecting on that but it needs to be connected to the bigger picture as well. However, the narrative the ZAD confronts the most is a specific aspect of the Anthropocene visuality: private property, one of the motors of Moore's Capitalocene. Consequently, one narrative particularly comes to mind: the 'Tragedy of the Commons.'

The Tragedy of the Commons

The commons are an old concept closely related to the history of landscape. Indeed, as Olwig explains: 'A landschaft was more than a place; it expressed the very idea of political representation as manifested in the representative body that stood for a political community.' The landscape was built together by the laws that rule the space and by the people living there. Today the commons have a long history of opposition with private property and ownership and also sometimes with the state, since the state enforces the laws and collects taxes on the land.[88] In this ownership/common dynamic, they both can be perceived as positive or as negative.

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[87] O. Ressler 'Everything's coming together, while everything's falling apart' www.ressler.at [Website] http://www.ressler.at/everythings_coming_together/ (accessed 09.05.2018).
[88] J. Radkau, 'The "Tragedy of the Commons" and the Plaggen Plague', in *Nature and Power, A Global History of the Environment*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

The Tragedy of the Commons is a text written by Garrett Hardin, an American ecologist and philosopher.[89] In this text discussing the problem of overpopulation, he defended ownership as a means of assuring the preservation of a place. This is an idea that many landscape paintings have illustrated, as John Berger described in *The Way of Seeing* with the Gainsborough example, where the landowners Mr and Mrs Andrews claimed a certain part of nature as their own.[90] The tragedy of the commons relies on the idea that since others cannot be trusted to act fairly, the most rational position is to be selfish. In Hardin's text, individuals, being intrinsically selfish, will always take advantage of others, since they are not the only ones responsible of the common good. This always ends up with the deterioration of the commons, which explains why it is sometimes perceived negatively as a wasteland. For Hardin, if the land is owned, the owner becomes responsible for it, and will prevent its deterioration.

This narrative has often been criticised a lot since the 1960s, but it still remains present today.[91] The state of the ZAD in April 2018 illustrates it well. Because the airport project has been cancelled, the state, some media and a part of the French population think that there is no reason for the Zadists to stay, since they do not own the land, which then legitimates violent attacks from the police.[92]

On the other hand, Michel Serres addresses the connection between pollution and ownership in *Malfeasance* in a completely opposite way. For him, the feeling of owning the Earth is actually where the problem resides. Simply summarised, the owners pollute to mark their territory.[93] Serres urges readers to become renters and reintroduces the idea of communing as a positive action. In this context, the land should belong to no one and to all at the same time. People still occupy the land but they reflect on the fact that they will have to pass it on.

Personally, I think that if Anthropocene and commons are not a duality in themselves, they reveal an interesting dynamic between visuality and potential forms of

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[89] G. Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons' in *Science* Volume 162, Issue 3859 (1968), G. Hardin, 'Extensions of `The Tragedy of the Commons' in *Science* Volume 280, Issue 5364 (1998)

[90] J. Berger, *The Ways of Seeing*, Penguin classic book, 2008 (1972).

[91] J. Radkau, *Nature and Power*, 2008, but also to name of few: E. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action,* Cambridge University Press, 2015 (1990) and D. Harvey, *Space of Hope,* Berkley: University of California Press, 2000.

[92] C. Guengneau, J. Lindgaard, 'L'évacuation de la ZAD de Notre-Dame des Landes a commencé' (The evacuation of the ZAD in Notre-Dame des Landes has started), 9 April 2018, available form: Mediapart. https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/090418/l-evacuation-de-la-zad-de-notre-dame-des-landes-commence (accessed 19.04.2018) and C. Guengneau, J. Lindgaard, 'Sur la ZAD, "On tue l'espoir et on sème la colère' (On the ZAD, "we kill the hope and we plant the seed of anger"), 9 April 2018, available from: Mediapart. https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/090418/sur-la-zad-tue-l-espoir-et-seme-la-colere (accessed 19.04.2018)

[93] M. Serres, *Malfeasance, Appropriation through Pollution?,* translated by Feenberg-Dibon, Anne-Marie, Stanford University Press, 2010.

diversion and even countervisuality, as the two artworks discussed here make visible. I then agree with Naomi Klein, a Canadian social activist known for her political analysis of globalisation. During an interview about the ZAD, she explains that if commons may not guaranty a change – even less when they happen to be converted in a management trick – their absence definitely will make it worse.[94] Commons, when related to space, are one of the ways to counter power relationships in the Anthropocene visuality.

Biemann's work does not really focus on this idea. More than commons occupation, what she depicts is the dispossession of the commons and how the energy of communal actions can be desperately caught in a survival loop without the possibility to bloom into something more. In Canada, the boreal forest was the commons, where Indigenous population lived and some still lives, but her images witness their disappearance. On the other side of the planet, in Bangladesh, the water is rising and needs to be stopped. It works, but emergency do not allow for conditions to reflect around the idea of building together. If many communal actions may have emerged this way – because there was no other choice – it is a lot more complex to have them last, once the threat is passed. The presence of the military men on the embankment seems to confirm that, the whole action is probably supervised and the population of Bangladesh is mobilised on a war on nature. They spend all their energy in a survival battle of which the outcome remains unknown, where what would be necessary would be to rethink the human/nature relationship.

        In Ressler, the whole 'How do we live here together' part is dedicated to this reflection: How can the ZAD go on when the threat is passed? To show this communal aspect, Ressler has focused on giving the floor to these five representatives of ZAD and to show how Zadists are living there, building housing, cultivating the land and educating each other. People there are trying to create another kind of society outside of the state and the market. It may sound utopic – and Ressler's enthusiasm to narrate their experiences probably added to the feeling of utopia – but the violence perpetrates against the Zadists shows that their position may be more achievable or more frightening than expected. The viewers are invited by Ressler to be their allies in this fight, even if the Zadists are breaking land ownership laws. On the other hand, the space was supposed to become an airport, in a zone

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[94] J. Lindgaarad 'Naomi Klein: la ZAD est un modèle' (Naomi Klein: the ZAD is a model) in *Mediapart*, 23 April 2018, https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/230418/naomi-klein-la-zad-est-un-modele (accessed 23.04.2018) and M. Saidel, 'The common(s) in neoliberal capitalism', *The Foucauldian Seminar*, Lund University, Mai 2018.

where people ultimately agreed there was no need for one. Owning and using the land for an airport would also not really involve taking care of it.

Through their two video essays, the artists have described landscapes shaped by people in very different contexts. While observing and framing by them, they have connected these landscapes with different discourses but also have acknowledged the conflict and the inherent tension in the landscape. These narratives – Anthropocene and commons – are rendered visible by the artists' representations but also because they are present on the land. They are not conventionally associated and opposed. Nevertheless, it has been made clear that in the context of landscape and land use, and maybe more broadly in the context of nature, these two discourses must be discussed together for a new approach of the human/nature relationship to be produced.

The strength of the landscape resides in how it relates both the space and its representation, which are shaped and observed together. If this has once made the conflict invisible, it now works to make it visible. The conflict also becomes sayable as both of the artists surround their images with discourses. Biemann tells the consequences of ignoring the destruction of the land and Ressler gives space to people rethinking the commons. These discourses have always been there, but they were muted by the legitimatized visualities of the Anthropocene and the tragedy of the commons.

However, as has become recurrent by now, the two artists have chosen two different observer's positions to look at these narratives and their shaping of the land. Biemann is observing from a global perspective, coherent with her confrontation of the globalizing Anthropocene visuality. On the other hand, Ressler positions himself in a very specific and local landscape, the *bocage*. Likewise, his stance is coherent, since humans and nature always interact somewhere and in a specific manner. The interaction of these positions bring into focus their advantages and inconveniences.

The global-local position

The global-local relationship could be understood as a duality. It is associated with the Anthropocene and the commons, which are respectively globally and locally oriented and perceived narrative. It is again more complex than that. In fact, they do not have to be opposed and they are not here. I use these terms more like spatial positions: where is the artist

speaking from? From the outside or from the inside? From far away or close by? Or maybe they are in between?

The positions of global and local, in the context of environmental struggles, are always interconnected. Capitalocene concept demonstrates the impact of certain human behaviours on the whole planet, although it expresses itself differently depending the location. However, some prefer to focus on the global like Biemann, where others, like Ressler, imagine a more local approach.

Global and the dystopian narrative

Biemann, in a talk where she expands on *Deep Weather*'s socioeconomic-political context, affirms: 'But the response is not always local.'[95] What she wants to stress there is the fact that to be able to understand all the causes, there is a need for a global view. Canada, by the carbon dioxide released by the tar sand mining, may be part of the reasons why the Himalayan glaciers melt, which causes the sea level to rise, which may generate floods in Bangladesh. In this sense, her global narrative connects different locals together. These locals are put in relation, not just represented.

Biemann's work joins the position defended by Demos, where he supports artworks, among other things, to intervene in the big picture and:

> 'to consider ecological formations and conflicts in their global dimension — the convergence of politics and aesthetics in the Global South as well as the North, regions filled with continuities and differences that are economic and geopolitical as much as sociocultural and environmental.'[96]

Demos greatly appreciates Biemann's works, having written two books that reference them.[97] For him, she and the group 'World of Matter' cleverly investigate how modernity colonised nature, focusing particularly on the different industries dependent on fossil oil.[98] I agree with him. *Deep Weather* reflects on different locations that seem so far from each other but are at the same time connected through oil, water and sand as well as human uses and adaptations of

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[95] Biemann, *Deep Weather*, p. 1.
[96] Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, p. 11.
[97] Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 2016 and Demos, *The Migrant Image,* 2013.
[98] Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, p. 207.

these materials. She shows how the deterioration of one landscape can influence another landscape.

However, in his text 'Idle No More', Demos also focuses intensively on the 'real' shaped landscape. For example, he explains how the 'carbon geologies' landscape is:

'a conflicted zone contested by environmental activists, indigenous people, the energy industry, and the Canadian and American governments (the plan includes the vast 'Keystone XL Pipeline' that will deliver Albertan crude oil to Gulf Coast refineries in Houston, Texas, at great environmental risk).'[99]

This information is valuable for understanding Biemann's work. It initiates more detailed inquiries into the conflict hiding behind the Anthropocene visuality than what is revealed by Biemann's video.

Indeed, Biemann does not simply offer a report on the situation of the two countries. Maybe it means that Biemann is conscious of the fact that global narrative does not always mean clearer discourse. Her aerial images focus on the machines, these potentially mutated observers. At the end of 'Carbon Geologies', she admits that there is nothing to see in the tar devastated landscapes anymore. It gives the impression that this conflict between the machines and the landscape is already lost and that no human remains fighting to claim the land for either sides.[100] This is part of the dystopic aesthetic that has been commonly used for showing damage to the environment. It can be found in Greenpeace ads, in the news, in the film *Blade Runner 2049* and in many other artworks, just to enumerate a few examples.[101] This dystopic aspect also reappears in 'Hydro Geographies', although not in the same way. People are visibly fighting a natural force: water, which may be stronger than any of the sand bags that they can throw. The imbalance between them is unfair. As described before, this is still war on nature, a narrative that limits the way to react to it by maintaining the human/nature dichotomy. I think it is really important to stress these storytelling and aesthetical choices.

Biemann's way of filming the embankment construction is really disturbing. Biemann's 'Hydro Geographies' are a complex part to analyse for me, because I feel the way it positions me as a viewer is extremely interconnected with who I am and where I come

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[99] T.J. Demos, 'Idle No More', in *Spectro-Aesthetics* 4/4 Column in Camera Austria 124, 2013.
[100] Biemann, *Deep Weather*, 2013. Running time: 00:02:12.
[101] A recent example in Malmö Konsthall, Rosa Barba *Elements of Conduct*, 18.02.2017-14.05.2017, https://www.konsthall.malmo.se/utstallning/english-rosa-barba/ (accessed 21.04.2018)

from. As a white, Swiss, European woman like Biemann herself, I probably interpret this artwork differently than, for example, someone working in the mines in Canada or fighting the flood in Bangladesh.

As a European, I have become accustomed to see population from the global South struggling. It happens in the media every day, but normally the tone is different, more compassionate, sometimes even paternalist. In Biemann's work, I can feel that I am not part of the attempted communal action trying to protect Bangladesh's coasts. They are looking back at me. I disturb them just as the artist did, by filming while they were working. I hear only Biemann's voice and not theirs. I become aware of my passive gaze at them and my lack of knowledge, feeling affected but not acting. And this, in my experience as a viewer, undermines the Anthropocene narrative, because it shows me how I am used to looking and not reacting.

Following this idea, Biemann's work is not only about the situations in Canada and Bangladesh. It also raises a lot of questions about the viewer's watching habits. She observes the landscape in a way that shifts the viewer's position. First, they float in the sky. The aerial views, which people may have grown accustomed to, give the impression of understanding what happens when she has actually made numerous aesthetical choices and limitations there. Later, the viewers are back on the ground. They stand in a chaotic mass of active bodies and labour, but do not belong within them.

The problem is the dystopian aspect of the aesthetic developed around this question. Dystopia combined with the global position is intensely overwhelming. Personally, I end up dragged into a terrible vision of the present, where some people have destroyed the landscape while others die fighting the consequences and I do not feel I belong with any of them. Should I just passively watch which one wins? How can I or any viewer bring back an active and embodied vision in this artwork?

I think a solution to this resides in me as a viewer. I watched this video in an art museum in the middle of the Alps and this could actually give me some keys of how to deal with the powerlessness the global dystopian narrative can provoke. The Alps are the place where I grew up and where I know climate change is directly visible because of the melting of the glaciers, as is true of the Himalayas. I also know what is done and what is still to be done there to counteract its effects. From there, I can probably deduce that the same actions are conducted in Canada and in Bangladesh. Some people are fighting as well, so that the last option is not mutation.

But this asks me to bring my local into the global narrative Biemann offers me to watch. I also need to accept to question my way of seeing. I have accepted to do it and I hope other viewers also find their way to deal with this artwork, but it is not in itself an easy thing to ask.

At the end, the global situation is ungraspable. Scholars like Kenneth Olwig, Scott F. Gilbert and Donna Harraway all agree on this point in *Anthropologists Are Talking About The Anthropocene*: 'Earth is not a unified space. It is not a globe.'[102] The global position, if it makes it possible to understand or visualise a situation, tends on the other side to make any actions impossible. It is too imposing for the human scale, at least if you are not a general ready to exclude what and who you think is not important. The local then seems more reachable.

Local and the utopian narrative

Ressler inscribed the ZAD in a local narrative even if the last part of the video tried to connect it with climate change and the rest of the *Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart* corpus of videos. He chooses to present the ZAD through its history, introducing the context, then talking about 'Opération César' and how the movement began and then discribing their vision for the future and their place in the world. It is not a very complex structure, but it allows a lot of space for the Zadists to express their ideas. The ZAD story is intrinsically connected to the *bocage* and the regional political context of Notre-Dame-des-Landes. This place is peripheral, without any special history or extensive rich resources. It is a small place in the French countryside who does not want an airport, so on could ask why does it matter?

The strength of the local perspective is that it makes all the theoretical debate space-specific, almost down to earth. Ressler, from the start of his video, chooses to show the protesters as sympathetic people, playing music, dancing while protesting in the mud and producing colourful posters for a better world against a polluting airport. He lets them explain how people have started to build cabins in the woods and to take care of the land.

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[102] D. Haraway, N. Ishikawa, S. F. Gilbert, K. Olwig, A. L. Tsing & N. Bubandt, "Anthropologists Are Talking – About the Anthropocene", pp. 535-564.

Therefore, when the police operation starts, it feels like an invasion. Jean-François Castell's images edited by Ressler bring spontaneously the spectacle of violence and the indignation of injustice. Because it is grounded in the land and the people living there, the conflict becomes somehow simple. As Kristin Ross explains while talking about the ZAD by using a quote from Karl Marx:

> 'Demands, concerns, and aspirations that are place-specific in kind create a situation that calls for an existential and political choice —one is either for the airport or against it. In the words of Marx to Vera Zasulich, writing in the context of an earlier rural battle against the state, "It is a question no longer of a problem to be solved, but simply of an enemy to be beaten ... it is no longer a theoretical problem ... it is quite simply an enemy to be beaten."'[103]

The conflict with the state unified the Zadists and all their support against an unfair situation happening in a specific landscape. This makes all the discourses of the Zadists about the commons occupation a lot more concrete because they have this specific landscape to occupy. The third part of the video shows exactly that. It is not impressive; it is familiar. There is a bakery, a library and people working together and discussing how to imagine a different future. These elements allow the viewers to identify and connect, at least they are rather favourable to the ZAD claims like I am.

However, this positional choice may also lose some viewers. Ressler assumes the viewers will be supportive to the ZAD cause, that they will be willing to look and to listen. However, because of 'Opération César', the ZAD that was previously covered very sporadically by the media became a spectacle. The images of violence in the ZAD have today become quite frequent in the French media. The Gendarmerie films its own images; a lot of journalists are visiting the place.[104] This implies the presence of many other narratives circulating around the ZAD and some voices are quite virulent in conservative media.

This can be illustrated by two examples that were discussed on a French independent online TV channel called 'Arrêt sur Images', on their program on January 19, 2018, a few

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[103] This quote, extract of the preface of the book *The ZAD and NoTAV* was made available during the first month after its publication in June 2017 on the Verso book website. It is currently not available anymore. K. Ross, ''The ZAD and NoTAV: making a territory' in Mauvaise troupe collective, *The ZAD and NoTAV*, London: Verso book, 2017. https://www.versobooks.com/books/2503-the-zad-and-notav (accessed 15.05.2018)

[104] Gendarmerie is a French para-military force mandated with civil law enforcement.

days after the airport project was cancelled by President Macron's government.[105] This decision gets the attention of some media back on the ZAD, in which they narrate in a very different way from Ressler. The two main media sources discussed here are TF1, the oldest and main French TV channel, and BFM TV, a newer news TV channel.

I described in the previous chapter 'les bâtons de la révolte" – or 'le champs des bâtons' as it can be also called – as a memorial place, which looks almost like a contemporary art piece and where people have made the oath to come back to help the ZAD if needed. [Fig.37] In *The ZAD,* Ressler shows this as a symbol of unification and support to the movement. On BFM TV, this installation suddenly becomes a barricade, while a man, Johann Cavallero, who is the national delegate of the CRS Alliance Police Nationale (this republican security company) explains that the ZAD is dangerous, full of wooden stakes and fox traps. [Fig.38]

The lighthouse, which was built from the remains of an electricity pylon, also undergoes a radical change in its interpretation. In *The ZAD*, it becomes the site of a concert of three musicians, which will be the main soundtrack of the video. For TF1, this is a watchtower allowing the Zadists to see the police coming and to prepare the hostilities. [Fig.39-40]

These two examples illustrate how some French media are focusing exclusively on the spectacle of violence in the ZAD. The ZAD is frightening because it offers a vision of an alternative, challenging norms and breaking the right of ownership and state laws. Some people feel attacked by this attitude and these media reflect these parts of the French population.

One of the five Zadists says it himself in *The ZAD* that they try to create 'this kind of laboratory of social invention, agriculture invention, agriculture invention, new ways of educating, new ways of living together, new ways of living with domination or new ways of dealing with mental health.'[106] They are in a utopian narrative, but one that they aim to realise and are ready to defend.

This local utopian narrative is supported by Ressler and I think it is a fair choice in the end. Of course, he is not objective and he does not give the right to speak to all the sides, but on the other hand, he gives the times to the Zadists to really develop their thoughts. His

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[105] 'ZAD: Maintenant des magazines de design viennent nous voir' (ZAD: Now design magazines visit us), 19 January 2018, available from: *Arrêt sur Images*. [Website] //www.arretsurimages.net/emissions/arret-sur-images/zad-maintenant-des-magazines-de-design-viennent-nous-voir (accessed 22.04.2018)
[106] Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017, (24:45)

video is an art project, freely accessible on the Internet, but realistically speaking, how many people will he reach in comparison to TF1 and BFM TV? He is probably right to assume that the viewer is an ally, because the people taking the initiative to watch his video are probably more interested by the local utopia than in the spectacle of violence anyway. His video, in a way, also questions the viewer's watching habits. Instead of seeing violence, he asks the viewer to see climate revolution; instead of illegal actions, he wishes to show a collective project. It is all about which future people want to believe in and to conceive.

The ZAD knows this too and they really try to communicate about what they do so that they can counter the position offered by these conservative media. Ressler's work is helping them, by contributing to the debatr in a society where the conflict is as much on the landscape than on the images.

After questioning the two artists' positions and exposing their strengths and weaknesses, it becomes evident that both local and global positions need each other to be effective. I mean 'efficiency' here in the sense that both artists clearly wish to have their viewers react to the artworks. But they have opted for different approaches in calling upon the viewers to take actions. Biemann's viewers see their perspective shift. Even more than having to understand the relation between Canada and Bangladesh in a globalised world, they are sent back to their own location in the world as observers and potentially as actors. Ressler's viewers, in turn, are given one project, precisely localised and attacked by its detractors, to realise that things are possible: that action is possible. In other words, both artists' positions are dependent upon the viewers' positions as well.

The triangulation: an act of interpretation

Biemann and Ressler have produced two video essays that clearly demonstrate the relevance of the landscape to react to contemporary environmental issues. Their works use the fact that these landscapes are both observed and shaped to investigate and reveal what happens in the land. They focus on peripheral spaces that need to be made visible because they are the spaces where the struggle takes place. These struggles are indicative of the relation between human beings and their environment. Actual occupations and conflicts taking place on the land are also legitimized or contradicted by visualities and narratives, such as the Anthropocene and the commons. By choosing positions – and therefore a distance – from which they observe

and narrate, they offer the viewers access to the space and how its landscape is shaped. However, their positions differ. Biemann prefers the global, the view from above that allows zooming in while remaining distant to keep a sense of understanding. Ressler enjoys the local, the close encounters and the interactions that allows sympathy and alliance and makes things look relatable. As explained in the previous section, both positions need each other.

Reusing Biemann's words, these two video essays, more than trying to 'document realities', are 'organizing complexities'.[107] They reveal how spaces and their representations are constituted of layers of meanings and actions, hidden or exposed by visualities. These layers are organised both in the land and in the landscape by the choices the artists have made.

Eventually, the artists produce all this because they want to denounce a situation. Humanity, or at least the one contributing to the Capitalocene, needs to change behaviours with nature so that another future becomes possible. There is a feeling of emergency guiding their artistic production. Somehow, they both hope to change the world. This implies that they also want to have an impact on the viewer; to have the viewer watch actively. They decide on a distance that would bring their concern into light but also allow the viewer to participate in their vision. They try to create a connection between the space, its representation and the viewer.

This connection between three positions, through the frame of experimental geography, can create a triangulation which – like a mobile tracking device – allows a fourth, the viewer's localisation. Triangulation requires three coordinates and the distance between the points can either be far or close. These points influence each other, shaping and transforming what is seen, what is said and what is done. So it is not about the where the artists position themselves but about the fact they articulate different positions in their works. The triangulation works first by looking at where the artists position themselves, in relation to the land and to the landscape. Then the viewers shift position with them and look at what their own localisation can bring into the artwork.

This triangulation is what I apply in the previous section about the global-local position. In the interpretation and comparison analysis offered in this text, I have paid attention to the artists' positions as indicators from where they wanted the viewer to observe. Taking myself as the receptor of both artist's images, I tried to integrate my own position. For Biemann, as a European viewer, I have questioned my relation to the visuality she diverts and bring my own

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[107] U. Biemann, 'Performing Borders: the transnational video' in *Stuff it: The Video Essay in the Digital Age*, Zürich: Institute for Theory of Art and Design, 2003, p. 83.

local in her global narrative. This allows to localise her narrative somewhere else and to imagine some action and resistance to this dystopic present. For Ressler, as an ally viewer, I have taken the time to watch and listen to *The ZAD*. I accept to give priority to his representation among all the other representations of the space, because I could relate it both to climate change and to my own localisation in the landscape. This localisation then becomes the fourth coordinate, the space where it is possible to act.

But I am also conscious that I am a very enthusiastic viewer, a scholar in visual culture interested in contemporary art. *Deep Weather*, for example, is only accessible in a very specific location, an art gallery or a museum, which implies a rather small accessibility to a limited segment of the public. Ressler, as it has been indicated before, makes his videos available on his website. It is a significant gesture, but it is unclear how significant this is in relation to the number of images present on the Internet.

My point here is not to make a judgment or to ask whether the artist's efforst are sufficient. Through their two art pieces, they have shown their concern and engagement. Biemann has stated in her conference paper about *Deep Weather*:

> 'Artistic practice is not standing apart, at a distance, representing. It's a full engagement in the material-discursive processes that shape the earth system and our reality. The very least it involves thinking of how content makes its way into the world and back in the form of material relations. To think from in the midst, not from outside.'[108]

This quote is somewhat contradictory to a global position or with the fact that she remains a person from Switzerland talking about Canada and Bangladesh. However, it perfectly illustrates how she conceptualises the artist's position. She must feel concerned by what happens in the world. The way *Deep Weather* deconstructs the Anthropocene visuality shows where her strength is and how she wants to engage with what she observes. Oliver Ressler, on his side, remains an ally of the people he filmed. It was confirmed again when he used his newsletter to share the call for solidarity in the ZAD on April 11, 2018.[109]

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[108] U. Biemann, *Deep Weather*, Glasgow: Economy exhibition CCA, 2013, in *Geobodies*. [Website] https://www.geobodies.org/books-and-texts/texts (accessed 07.02.2018)
[109] O. Ressler, *Urgent: A call for intergalactic solidarity actions everywhere to end the destruction of the ZAD*, Newsletter, 11 April 2018.

My point is that asking for the viewer to watch and to act sounds appealing in theory – it is almost a contemporary art cliché – but it is actually complex to concretise. Indeed, distance tends also to create a hierarchy: the ones that know and understand and the others that need to be taught. By expressing themselves through images, through video, the artists firstly want the viewer to look. Yet, vision is often perceived as a passive act: if someone just watches, it is as if she or he is doing nothing.

In the context of landscape, this brings back the difference between the 'observed' and the 'shaped' landscapes. The main criticism against landscape and its observer is that it erased all the tension and all the labour taking place in the land. It presents nature as given. But as has been elaborated in this text, the current landscapes ask for more than that. As Tim Ingold underlines in his text,

> 'Rather than thinking of ourselves only as observers, picking our way around the object lying about on the ground of a ready-formed world, we must imagine ourselves in the first place as participants, each immersed with the whole of our being in the currents of the world-in-formation: in the sunlight we see in, the rain we hear in and the wind we feel in. Participation is not opposed to observation but is a condition for it, just as light is a condition for seeing things, sound for hearing them, and feeling for touching them.'[110]

For Ingold, the observed dimension of the landscape needs to be associated with participation. But how can this participation be produced? That is where the triangulation can signify some shift. Because the artists are actively observing, the viewers can also actively watch, at least if they want to. By allowing the viewers to include their localisation in the perception of the landscape, the artists offer a first step for an emancipation against the passivity associated with the observer position.

In *The Emancipated spectator*, Jacque Rancière tries to demonstrate how the relation between the people who actively know and the ones who passively learn needs to be rethought completely. This is particularly true if there is a will to help deconstruct the frame produced by the dominant visualities. He explains:

> 'Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relation

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[110] Ingold, *Being Alive,* p. 129.

between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection. It begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions.'[111]

Biemann and Ressler are two artists that try to redistribute the position of the viewers by focusing on the shaped part of the landscape and questioning its observed part. They offer to rethink the positions to look at things as critical observers (albeit perhaps still too Euro-centred) or as allies. The viewers have the final choice. They can agree to shift their perception and take the place the artists offer them. They can open their set of conventions to rethink the relationship between humans and nature not as being something fixed but something that can be modified. By showing that this shift is not only possible but even necessary, the artists can reorient the problem. The conflict can be acknowledged not as a war against nature but as a war against human ideologies that either include or exclude nature.

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[111] J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, translated by Gregory Elliott, New York: Verso Book, 2011, p. 13.

Conclusion: landscape and the narrative crisis of climate change

Ursula Biemann and Oliver Ressler are two significant examples of how artists question and divert the definition of landscape and transform it in activist arts. They illustrate how landscape as a space and as a representation can show the pointlessness of the war on nature or how communal activities can be a first step to rethink the relationship between human and nature. They also stress the importance of addressing land use and land value, where conflict between different visualities is currently happening.

This conflict takes place in peripheral landscapes that have usually been understood as empty. These spaces are or should stay outside of human reach, at least in the Western definition where "human" means civilisation and culture. Because of this emptiness, land resources have been exploited and actual inhabitants have been evicted. Today, it is important to notice how artists like Biemann and Ressler focus on humans' presence in these empty spaces. They show that these space are not as empty as they may look; that they can actually be filled by something else beside the destruction of the landscape. Biemann and Ressler point out how some people fight both against occupation and for the right of occupy. The first occupation is a traditional military tactic, where the second has been witnessed in movements like Occupy and other demonstrations. The fact that nature can be occupied as the public space in the second kind of occupation also reconnects it with the idea of commons that is connected with the origin of the word 'landscape.'

Through occupations, the space behind the landscape allows ideological conflicts to concretise and become visible. Indeed, these conflicts are incarnated in the dark sand, in the yellow machines, in the people carrying bags, in the fields full of smoke and in the strange houses. This reveals some double transformations. The narratives influence the shaping of the land depending on the relation between humans and the environments they imagine. The land then processes and digests them, through the actions and reactions that are produced. This production can then be observed back, framed into landscape video essays in the case of Biemann and Ressler, sometimes even leading on how to deal with these narratives. Their filmed landscape become a way to reveal that process, allowing the periphery to become part of a central gaze.

The methodology of thesis is theoretically framed interpretation and comparison, influenced by political ecology and the visual culture of nature. As complementary parts of a whole, both artworks demonstrate relevance to the topic. Behind their similarities – they are both video essays about climate change and the occupation of the landscape – they have also very different positions: one is a global dystopic narrative questioning Anthropocene visuality, the other a local utopic narrative rethinking the commons. The former one could appear overwhelming, while the latter one may sound unrealistic. However, the artists, by producing landscape, anchor these narratives in the space, concretising them in local places. They can then be reoriented if the viewers shift their position with the artists. This creates a triangulation that allows these viewers to watch how the land is used and consider how this can be related to their own localisation.

Since I have experimented with triangulation through my own position as a viewer, I am aware that this interpretation depends on this position – a European visual culture scholar concerned with environmental struggle. It also reflects the fact that the artists are according a lot of significance to the viewers' participation, which is hard to guarantee. Although these two artists create promising conditions for this triangulation to happen and allow the observers to actively watch the artwork and question the distribution of the positions, they have no effective way to know if these observers will be willing to do so. Indeed, watching requires work by the viewer, and as with all work it is tiring.[112] This limitation occurs in almost all artwork, but it is maybe more dramatic when the artists try to convey a political message.

However, even if these artists would end up only reaching a few, what they do by challenging the obvious is important in the context of climate change. Just recently, I visited an exhibition in Skissernas Museum in Lund called *The Weather War*.[113] The two Swedish artists, Mats Bigert and Lars Bergström, address the same issue but from the perspective of art and science, how science and science fiction could help deal with climate change. The museum also organised a seminar about 'narrating climate change', where they exchanged ideas about the crisis produced by climate change narratives. Indeed, climate change is currently perceived as a very mortifying narrative that brings humanity into crisis because of its potentially fatal consequences in the future. Offering openings to this narrative is then necessary, but it is also difficult, because it asks people to accept changing perspective.

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[112] N. Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009 (1999), p. 9.
[113] Bigert & Bergström, *The Weather War*, Skissernas Museum, Lund, 22 Mars-9 September 2018.
https://www.skissernasmuseum.se/en/exhibitions/bigert-bergstroem/ (accessed 11.05.2018)

In this regard, the artists' works – and this was particularly visible in the context of Ressler – are inscribed, directly or indirectly, in a larger conflict, a war through images. As many scholars in visual culture have noted, the war through images results from the realisation that images can be produced by all sides. Today, when a political event happens, such as the occupation of a landscape, visual sources are created to either legitimate or discredit these actions. This causes challenges for the viewers who end up surrounded by many versions of what happens, but it is also a chance to attract attention to counter-narratives that need to be said. The different versions then have to coexist and the tension rises. Mirzoeff associates this form of conflict to Rancière 'distribution of the sensible', where some voices get more attention than others.[114] Mirzoeff also states: 'By "forcing" a conversation, the people have been and will always be accused of violence.'[115] The artists' landscapes then become a tool of resistance because they demand to rethink the relationship between human and nature. By showing presents and imagining futures that question the permanent fear of the destruction that comes with climate change, it creates representations of landscape that embed people's actions. These actions could be the first step in creating a countervisuality to the Anthropocene and I think it is one of the roles of visual culture studies to give a platform to these other narratives, whether they are expressed in the arts or in other visual practices.

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[114] Mirzoeff, 'Watching War', in *An Introduction to Visual Culture,* pp. 298-310.
[115] Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, p. 10.

Image Appendix

[Fig.1] S. Durant, *Landscape Art (Emory Douglas)*, 2002, C-print, 127 x 152 cm.
Photo Josh White.

[Fig.2] Microsoft, *Bliss,* Windows XP, default wallpaper (2001) Photo Charles
O'Rear.

[Fig.3] Goldin + Senneby, *After Microsoft* (*Photograph of the hill at the Bliss location, Sonoma Valley, CA),* 2006. [Digital Image]

[Fig.4] 'Aerial view, Canada,' U. Biemann, *Deep Weather*, 2013, Video essay, Musée d'Art du Valais. Running time: 00:00:42.

[Fig.5] 'Embankment, Bangladesh,' Biemann, *Deep Weather*, Running time: 00:08:38.

[Fig.6] 'Bocage definition' O. Ressler, *Everything's coming together, while everything's falling apart: the ZAD, 2017*, video essay, vimeo, Running time : 00:04:22

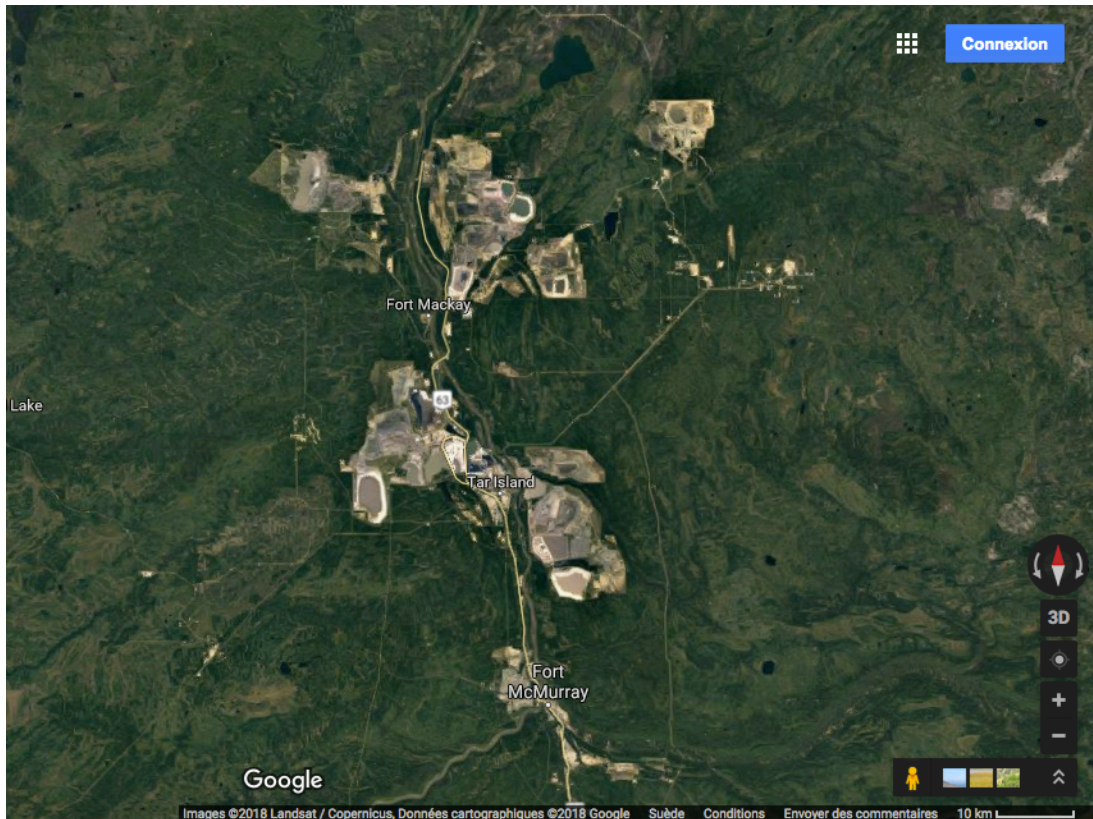[Fig.7] 'Bocage' Ressler, *The ZAD,* 2017, video essay, vimeo. Running time: 00:00:43.

[Fig.8] 'Introduction Plan,' Biemann, *Deep Weather*, 2013. Running time: 00:00:01.

[Fig.9] 'Départementale D218,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:00 51.

[Fig.10] 'Aerial landscape, Canada' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* Running time: 00:01:02.

[Fig.11] Google map satellite view of the tar sand mine near Fort McMurray, 26 April 2018. https://www.google.fr/maps/@57.07165,-111.9506849,106947m/data=!3m1!1e3 (accessed 26.04.2018)

[Fig.12] Giant dump trucks haul raw tar sands at the Suncor tar sands mining operations near Fort McMurray, Alberta, on September 17, 2014. (Reuters/Todd Korol) https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/9/the-alberta-tar-sands/100820/#img03 (accessed 26.04.2018)
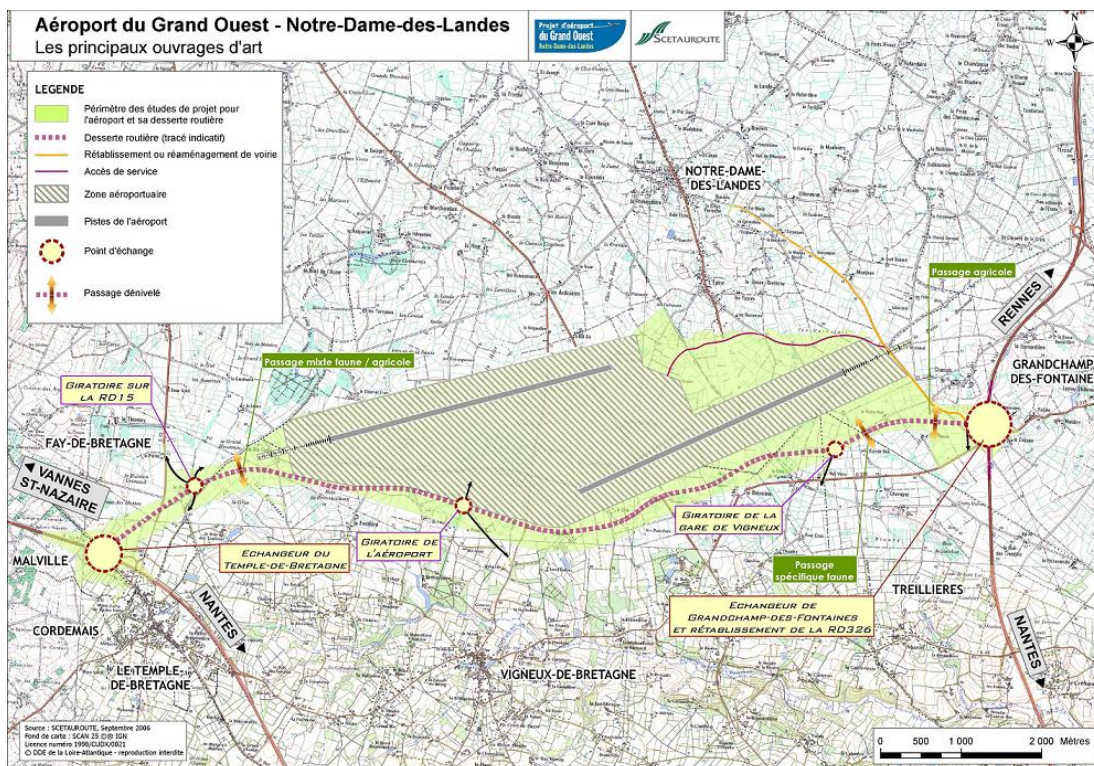
[Fig.13] 'Mutate!' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:01:57.

[Fig.14] 'Common landscape,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:00 06.

[Fig.15] 'Airport projection,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:00:23.

[Fig.16] The map of the airport project, 2011, from 'Revue de presse du projet d' "Aéroport du Grand Ouest"', *CitizenNantes* [Website]. https://imageshack.com/f/76sanstitre4modifip9j (accessed 08.05.2018)

[Fig.17] 'The Zadists,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:03:57.

[Fig.18] 'Memories and signposts,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:03:36.
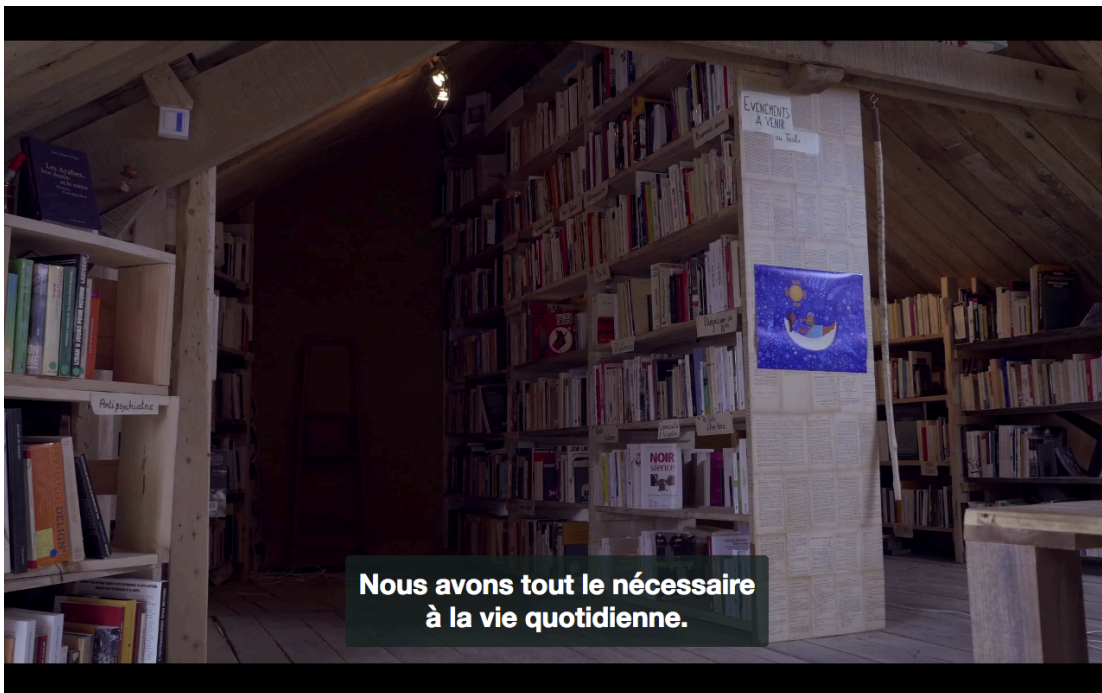
[Fig.19] 'Building a stable,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:18:06.
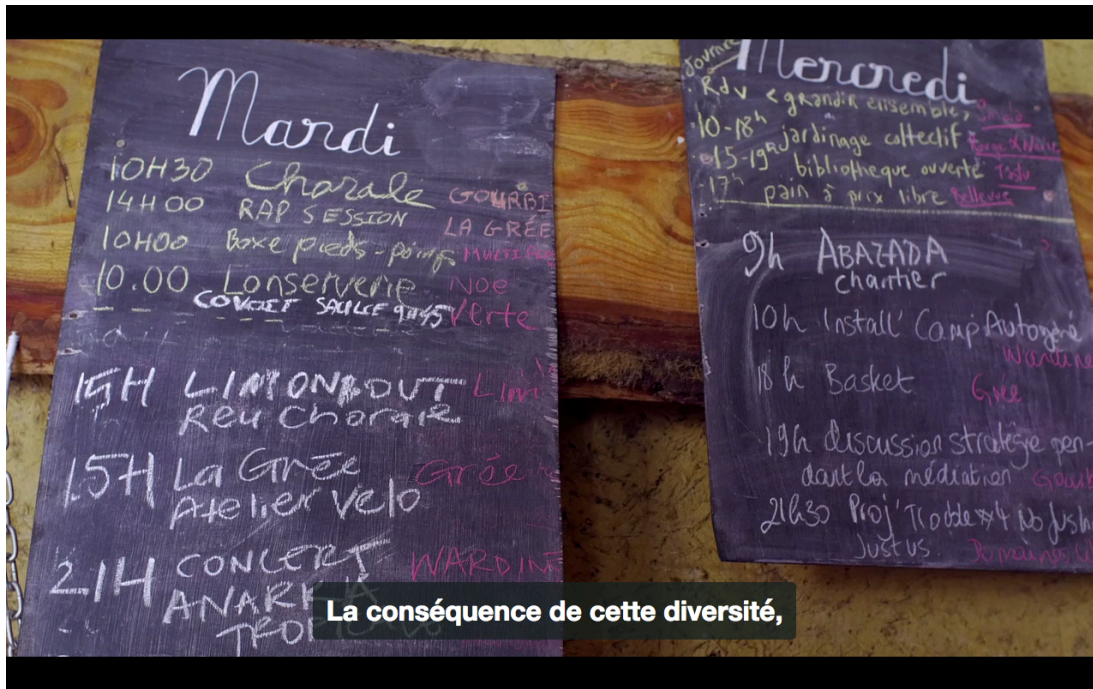

[Fig.20] 'Following the cows,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:19:15.

[Fig.21] 'Growing vegetable,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:24:24.

[Fig.22] 'The library' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:26:04.

[Fig.23] 'List of activities,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:26:24.

[Fig.24] 'Grey house,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:28:11.

[Fig.25] 'House on water,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:29:28.

[Fig.26] 'Le p'tit jardin qui soigne,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:30:38.

[Fig.27] 'First look,' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:02:59.

[Fig.28] 'Look back' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:03:05.

[Fig.29] 'Look back, again' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:04:25.

[Fig.30] 'Interruption' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:04:57.

[Fig.31] 'Military man' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:07:27.

Élever sans relâche des digues plus hautes

[Fig.32] 'Portrait' Biemann, *Deep Weather,* 2013, Running time: 00:06:31.

[Fig.33] 'Opération Césare' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:07:11.

[Fig.34] 'CRS in the wood,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:08:11.

[Fig.35] 'Serment,' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:22:09.

[Fig.36] 'Pulling down the CO_2 machine' Ressler, *The ZAD,* 2017. Running time: 00:31:00.

[Fig.37] 'Les bâtons de la révolte' Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:22:30.

[Fig.38] BFM TV, 17 January 2018, 12:48, From 'ZAD: Maintenant des magazines de design viennent nous voir' (ZAD: Now design magazines visit us), 19 January 2018, available from: *Arrêt sur image*s. [Website]

[Fig.39] Ressler, *The ZAD*, 2017. Running time: 00:35:27.

[Fig.40] TF1, *20 heures*, 14 January 2018. From 'ZAD: Maintenant des magazines de design viennent nous voir' (ZAD: Now design magazines visit us), 19 January 2018, available from: *Arrêt sur images*. [Website]

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