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Poetics of place

A Glissantian take on revisited Paldiski

In my post-doctoral work within the frame of the original Landscape, Law and Justice project, my objective was to recover, or at least rediscover, a coherent past as manifested in the landscape and to find the symbolic in the landscape.[1] Exploring a peninsula in which landscape was simultaneously familiar (coastal) and strange (highly militarized), my aim was to discover how the town of Paldiski with its environs fitted into ideas of Estonianness and to tentatively question such claims. The objective of my revisit to Paldiski now is to examine the choices and connections made throughout history, discuss the "facts" both highlighted and hidden in its past and connect new ideas with the old. I have focused on two questions: Can one place be destined to fail (in everything), including in being representative of something, while at the same time having considerable symbolic power in many histories? What kind of ramifications can failure have for landscape and heritage?

In much of my previous work, I have strongly felt the need for explaining the context and providing the empirical data, hence my writing has been heavy with footnotes and figures. This time I have made a conscious choice of sketching the background in broad strokes only, except in a few cases where more detail is presented to support an alternative interpretation. Generally, my approach aims at leaving space for a more general discussion of an edgeland determined both mentally (academically and theoretically) and physically (the meeting of sea and land, rural and urban, foreign and own, universal and local). The processes of adaptation, persistence and disruption in legitimizing the past in any present, as well as both the individual and the communal dimensions of an edgeland, are here scrutinized with the help of the place poetics and

1 Peil 2005; 2006; Peil & Sooväli 2005.

vocabulary of Martinican poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant (1928–2011). He is acknowledged as one of the most prominent thinkers of the Caribbean; his work is widely adopted in postcolonial research, but is generally unknown to geographers.[2] Yet, his ideas about landscape, roots and connections resonate with the cultural and phenomenological turn in geography of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as with the geopoetics of today.[3] Landscapes have been examined as being in a state of becoming. As such, the landscape includes a limitless number of pasts to be discovered through material traces left in them, as well as the stories told. The metaphor of the palimpsest, combined with Glissant's poetics, encourages us to embrace the processes of change in the landscape and its interpretations.[4] An image of a place thus emerges that can be used in very different contexts to support arguments far-removed from the physical setting of their creation. The poetics may also be used to skim failure of intentions or in doing justice to the place and its people.

The edge, in this case that between the sea and land, imagined and physical, can be examined through the ways of organizing such space and commemorating (creating memorials for) certain events while ignoring others. Legitimacy in the landscape and in presenting the landscape stretches in this perspective to questions of what options may be available for ownership and conservation and what compels taking action to erect or reject monuments. In addition, landscapes (physical and imagined) are increasingly (re)created in cyberspace, presented by writers, artists and cartographers, and competing and contesting for legitimacy and representation. After briefly discussing Glissant's poetics of landscape, I illustrate the claims made to legitimize the creation of landscapes by two cases—first, the imaginary Swedish harbour and, second, various memorials erected and erased on the Pakri peninsula, Estonia. The peninsula also forms an edgeland, which is often interpreted as a border warding off the foreign and the strange, a no-man's-land better not accessed. Nevertheless, it could also be seen as a meeting point. Edward S. Casey talks about "the edge of hospitality" as a liminal phenomenon. He describes edges as a matter of thresholds in human social-

2 For Glissant's work and interpretations on it, see, for instance, the Library of Glissant Studies (n.d.). I was introduced to his thinking through the project 'A New Region of the World? Towards a Poetics of Situatedness' initiated by Charlotte Bydler (Södertörn University, Sweden) and funded by the Foundation for the Baltic and Eastern European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen n.d.; Peil & Wiedorn 2021).

3 Meinig 1979; Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove & Jackson 1987; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988; Cresswell 2015; 2019; Edensor 2020; 2022; Magrane *et al*. 2020.

4 Glissant 1989; 1997. The discussion is based on and the quotes are taken from the English translations of his work and excellent commentaries by his translators, especially Betsy Wing and Michael Dash, as well as on my correspondence with Michael Wiedorn (1977–2022), thanks to whom I became fascinated by Glissant's play with words and paradox.

ity over and through which significant exchanges and interchanges, transmissions and trespasses take place.[5]

Being on edge or inhabiting an edge can thus be both physically and mentally destabilizing. Abundant possibilities create new connections but also sever existing ones, which contribute to an environment in persistent change and adaptation, as well as to the existence of parallel stories and abundant physical remains. Hence attempting to find an anchor in the persisting elements of its landscape, or enforcing the legal system to support, for instance, conservation or ownership, seem only reasonable. The anchor, however, may take the form of persistent fabulation. The specific case may be seen as located between the Old and the New World and has experienced a colonial project of its own. For Glissant, geographic terms did not indicate places but projects (processes), hence for him these were metaphorical places. In this spirit, after briefly introducing the concepts and arguments for applying them, I argue for the universal, instead of the specific, in which a perspective from afar can provide a fresh understanding of the local around the Baltic.

GLISSANT'S POETICS

Glissant, who disliked precise definitions, argued for a poetics of place that would not presuppose an immediate or harmonious world, either physical or mental, but that would open up for new connections, or for "Relation". He unfailingly rendered the latter with a capital "R" in his writing to underscore its import as the cornerstone of his thought.[6] His play with words extends to the idea that everything is connected, an archipelago of understandings that are as distinct as they are interconnected.[7] Relation and poetics (in general or in the landscape in particular) do not need to be consciously acknowledged because culture for Glissant is an unconscious creation, a process happening all over the world, what Glissant refers to as a "composite culture".[8] It is a process he called creolization, which he saw as not limited to linguistics but as adaptation to the physical and social conditions connected to the dislocation of people. Transcending boundaries, this process brings people together and replaces separatism with relationality, growing on plurality, instead of springing from a singular root. Creolization is not confined to the Caribbean in Glissant's eyes; it is the composite, non-linear and unpredictable culture generated by lived experience that evokes an aesthetic expressed in land poetics. Carine Mardorossian, for instance, sug-

5 Casey 2011, p. 42.
6 Peil & Wiedorn 2021.
7 Wiedorn 2018.
8 Glissant 1999, p. 114.

gested that Glissant's "poetics of landscape" can function as an alternative creolized environmentalism[9] and may thus be doubly relevant and actual in landscape studies, especially when discussing more-than-human aspects in landscape. She argues that creolization in the ecological sense can result in degradation of the habitat and alienation (of humans from the land), thus becoming a threat to the landscape and the lived environment. Mixing can end in chaos.

In Glissant's writings, times and spaces are superimposed on each other. His approach resonates with the idea of studying landscape as a palimpsest that was seen to provide a possibility for erasure and overwriting but also for the co-existence of several different scripts.[10] The latter implies not just different historical eras but several historical and contemporary actors existing in parallel. In Glissant's first novel, *La Lézarde*,[11] landscape functions fairly conventionally as an allegory for history, according to Mardorossian.[12] Later, the landscape stops being merely decorative or supportive and emerges in his stories as a full character that Glissant described with the help of the most insignificant to the glaringly obvious, such as the physical landmarks, legal documents and artistic images. In his later work, the individual, the community and the land became inextricable in the process of creating history. In *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant also discussed legitimacy, which he saw through filiation in relation to land but also to violence.[13] He stated that a claim to legitimacy allowed a community to claim its entitlement to land(scape) and settlement. Instead, by addressing notions of wandering, errantry and rootlessness, Glissant theorized about identity by pushing against fixed and unchanging notions of being. He advocated nomadism and recommended errantry as a way of life. Landscape for Glissant was often a land of wanderers (*terre de passage*), a zone in which no one had permanence or roots. This is a very different approach to that of finding legitimacy in land law and proprietorial rights. Hence, his ideas provide an angle for examining a landscape where no people in history have had a chance to settle for longer than a few generations, but rather have been chased away by acts of violence that have also erased the physical traces of their existence.

Glissant saw a history of layers where tensions prevailed between the past and the future, between the existing and what was to be. In scoffing at the traditional linear, one-dimensional view of history and geography's spatial organizing powers, history in his writing is registered in a space whose properties it takes on. In this process, the land is so transformed that it no longer allows for the exploration of past associations

9 Mardorossian 2013.
10 Schein 1997, p. 662.
11 Glissant 1958.
12 Mardorossian 2013, p. 983.
13 Glissant 1997, p. 143.

or encourages fabrication of them. Its history becomes one of missed opportunities, downright failures, or invention. Nevertheless, Glissant described the future as one of abundant possibilities amidst a landscape bearing relational moments. The ways in which people adapt to change become the beginnings of a culture. Attention to transcultural exchanges both inside and across national, linguistic, social and physical boundaries can challenge the conventions through which landscape studies as a discipline has framed its subject. Glissant's approach may seem chaotic and arbitrary, but by carefully picking the landmarks—real and imagined—it allows a fresh approach to be taken to the landscape and its inhabitants—both human and others—along with their connections in time and space.

THE HARBOUR

The Pakri peninsula and the town of Paldiski have a complicated and myth-bound history, in a sense, a colonial past, which fits well with Glissant's Caribbean landscape. Paldiski is a town of displacement and newcomers who have arrived in waves throughout its three-hundred-year existence. It was originally built by prisoners and soldiers. The civilian population has had to share the space with unpredictable neighbours; then to be removed due to the assumed strategic significance of the town. This pattern of extensive colonization, military build-up and then desertion has been repeated regularly. The town has therefore often been described as a place of lost opportunities or, at least, one of untapped potential.

Specific landmarks connect the past with the present and hoped-for future accomplishments. Central in the history of the town is its harbour—supposedly, the town proclaims, an ideal location for one, even though the land and the sea have no real connection with one another. The up-to-28-metre-high Baltic Klint around the peninsula effectively limits easy access to the seashore. Nevertheless, the attempts made with varying energy and results to establish a port define the town's history, which is fragmented and full of failure. Hence turning to the landscape to find permanence and join people's lives, not only to each other but also to the environment, seems logical. The sea and land, history and geography, real and imagined are, nevertheless, in Relation in a Glissantian sense. The mix on the Pakri peninsula is tangled enough without including the virtual, although it should be mentioned that Google provides an easy tour with views of the town and the fort.[14]

14 Co-ordinates 59°20'50.4"N 24°03'34.1"E, https://www.google.com/maps/place/Muula+mäed, accessed 23 March 2023.

A harbour is simultaneously symbolic and real in many ways. In principle, it permits new connections and possibilities, but the area is often highly regulated when it functions as part of a state border for both humans and goods. A curious phenomenon is the so-called free harbour—ships can come and go, transporting cargo in and out by sea, but the movement inland is strictly controlled both for goods and people. The limits of an edge become more tangible, since the sea is cut off from the lives of the locals as access to the beach is restricted; for instance, no swimming or coastal fishing is allowed. The locals face a dilemma—they are dependent on work in the harbour for their livelihood, but a port changes their life environment in a multitude of ways from the practical to the understanding of their home environment. An attempt to establish such a port was made in Paldiski in the 1920s, when a large area of the seashore was fenced off. Although the legal framework was completed, the free port never took off as a commercial hub. The fence was taken down and sold to the locals as building material. Fences and sheds were built using this material in the town and its environs, scattering the remains of a physical edge over a large area.

The first attempt at establishing a fortified military port on the peninsula was made by Russian tsar Peter I (1672–1725, r. 1682–1725) in the 1720s, which failed. Empress Catherine II (1729–1796, r. 1762–1796) named the port (and town) Port Baltique—the Baltic Port. The five-cornered fort (*Figure 1*)[15] was completed in 1768, only to be abandoned soon after. Land on the top of the hill on which the fort stood was given to the town to be used as pasture in 1869; reclaimed for the military in 1911 and abandoned again in the 1920s. The fort has always been a curiosity, never successfully used for its intended purpose. Its history is full of extraordinary events, from the Swedish "conquest" on 18 March 1790 to the British aborted attack on the town during the Crimean War in 1854 to the German bombing of the town on 29 October 1916. All these attacks made little sense from a strategic point of view and actually weakened the attackers' positions in the respective wars. The idea of the port's military significance has thus had more impact in history than its physical existence. The final military attack was in November 1944 when the Germans burnt down the town and blew up the petrol store in the fort.

The town was rebuilt as a Soviet-style military base and step-by-step was closed to the civilian population, culminating in 1968 with the total closure of the peninsula that lasted well into the 1990s. Today Paldiski is part of a large rural municipality in north-west Estonia. These events have enforced the image of an unknown land not really fit for habitation. Although an edgeland, Paldiski's potential to welcome and make

15 The National Archives of Estonia (EAA, ERA): EAA.854.4.49 Профиль местности заштатнаго города Балтийский-Порт, 1872.

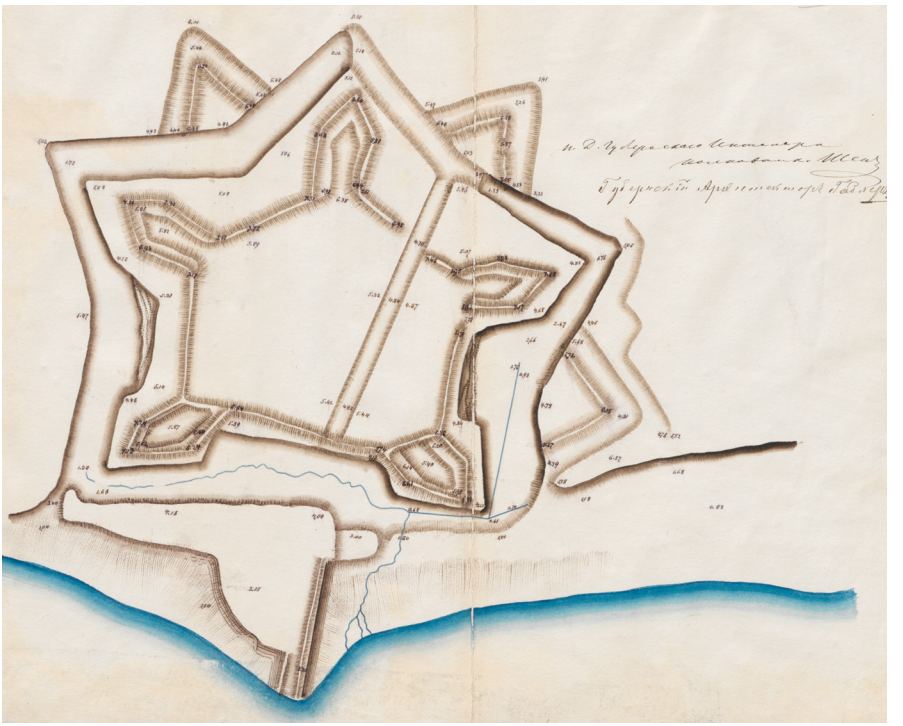

Figure 1. Map (1872) of the Muula Hills, also known as Peter's Fort, on the Pakri peninsula. Source: Natonal Archives of Estonia.

new connections possible has never been unlocked. Instead, an image of a closed, dark and failed place has strengthened—yet it does not lack poetics, if only the poetics of an imagined heroic past.

The impact of the ports (North Port, located in the area of the historic harbour, and South Port, on the location of the Soviet submarine base) on the landscape and local life is considerable. Again, large areas have been fenced off and covered in concrete. Reserved for storage of goods in transit, these areas mostly stand empty today due to recent global and regional crises and sanctions against the Russian Federation. However, access to the sea, as well as including these areas in any other local activity, such as spontaneous attempts at gardening, have been effectively cut off. Here the right to the (cultivation of) land plays a role. Legal ownership gives the privilege of leaving the land unused rather than allowing (just) local gain from it. Ironically, the only route to the seashore on the peninsula's west coast passes through what remains of the 18th-century fort; thus, the locals have claimed part of the military past as their own for

their everyday use. The military port has failed, although the commercial ports keep up the struggle for their existence, but as an archipelagic global enterprise with little local social or cultural impact. The persistence of the idea of an ideal harbour place despite all the failed attempts needs closer scrutiny.

'ALREADY THE SWEDES'

Common histories of Paldiski and its landmarks refer to possible Swedish predecessors.[16] Justification for the choice of location for the harbour, its potential so obvious that "already the Swedes" had supposedly claimed it, and reasons for its failure have been sought in the past; that is, in Glissant's terms, in history registered in space. This reference to the Swedes is taken to summarize the statement that all of the conquerors for the last 800 years have seen the strategic significance of the location. The belief is so deeply rooted and seldom questioned that, as I have argued elsewhere, it has limited the options for the peninsula's future.[17] I use the examples of the Paldiski harbour, first, to examine the evidence from the final years of the Swedish Empire as a Baltic superpower in the 17th century and, second, to dig into the origins of the statement concerning Swedish landmarks on the peninsula.

The Swedish maps of the environs of Paldiski

The Swedish kingdom launched an extensive land survey of its Baltic provinces in the 1680s in an attempt to reorganize taxation. These maps were made for the Swedish state with no reason to omit any landmarks. Although the surveyors were not the most experienced, what they managed to complete was rich in detail. The Pakri peninsula was surveyed in 1697 and several versions of these maps have survived.[18] They depict a rural periphery with about two dozen farms that belonged to estates a considerable distance away. No naval landmarks or fortifications were mapped.

16 Good examples are webpages in various languages on Paldiski and its landmarks, but the fabulations extend to professional and encyclopaedic sources (for instance, exhibitions at the Estonian Maritime Museum and the National Heritage Board; Vedru 2015, p. 3); discussed in Peil forthcoming.

17 Peil 2021.

18 EAA.1.2.C-II-7 Axell Holm (1697) En Del Packers Byar Under godzet Kegel ähro i S.Matthias sochen J.Harrien belegne & EAA.1.2.C-II-31 Axell Holm (1697) Packers Byar höra Under Godzet Kegel; ähro i S.Matthias Sochen belegene i Harrien.

These maps are not the only documents attesting to Swedish ignorance of the peninsula's significance. Half-a-century previous to this mapping, the Swedish navigator and naval cartographer Johan Månsson (d. 1659) had described, only in passing, the bay between the peninsula and an offshore island as a possible anchoring site.[19] He named the peninsula *Stoore Rågön* (Great Rye Island), and the eastern and larger of the two islands (which lie together to the west of the peninsula), *Lilla Rågön* (Little Rye Island; Väike-Pakri/Little Pakri Island today). The latter diminutive name stuck and thus Månsson may be a possible source for the confusion concerning the island names (today the slightly smaller, western island is known as Suur-Pakri, Great Pakri Island). Swedish settlers populated the islands and maintained their language, customs and a Nordic understanding of landscape as a polity[20] representing farmers to manage island matters well into the 20th century. There is no evidence, however, that the Swedes saw the location as a place of strategic significance, or that "the ideal harbour" played any role as a foothold in their colonization of the eastern provinces. Only in the early 1700s, when the territory was slipping away from their empire, was the first serious attempt to map the bay made (*Figure 2*).[21] No harbour or lighthouse was marked on this map either. Some hobby historians have speculated that the Swedes embarked on a construction in the 1710s, but this is considered highly unlikely due to the wide extent of the Great Northern War (1700–1721) from the Baltic to the Black Sea and the peninsula's unfavourable geographical location.[22] In comparison, Russian knowledge of the Baltic Sea relied heavily on the Swedish maps, to the extent of referring to it as "the eastern sea" although the sea is located to the west of Russia (in Estonian today the Baltic Sea is known as Läänemeri, i.e., "western sea").[23]

19 Månsson 1677, p. 34: "[...] ther ifrån i Wästsödwäst ligger en Udd som kallas lilla Rågön/ ther emellan är en stoor Wyk/ ther kan man sättia när man wil Wäster åth [...]."

20 Landscape as polity is discussed in Jones & Olwig 2008.

21 Swedish Military Archives (KrA) Sjökarteverket Äldre hydrografiska kartor. Rysslandskust; KrA: G1 017, Hÿdrographisk Charta öfwer Lilla och Stoora Råger-Wÿk med dess rätta Situation, Sampt bottnens qvalitet och diupleek; efter undfängne Ordres med flÿt affatat och beskrefwen uti Julii Månadh Anno 1705. af Carl Eldbergh.

22 For instance, Treikelder, Ivar (Manuscript 2014), Rootsi militaarehitustest Pakri poolsaarel 17/18, sajandil vanaaegsete maa- ja merekaartide valguses; for the Swedish historiography, see Munthe 1908.

23 Map sheet N7, National Library of Russia (NLR online exhibitions n.d.).

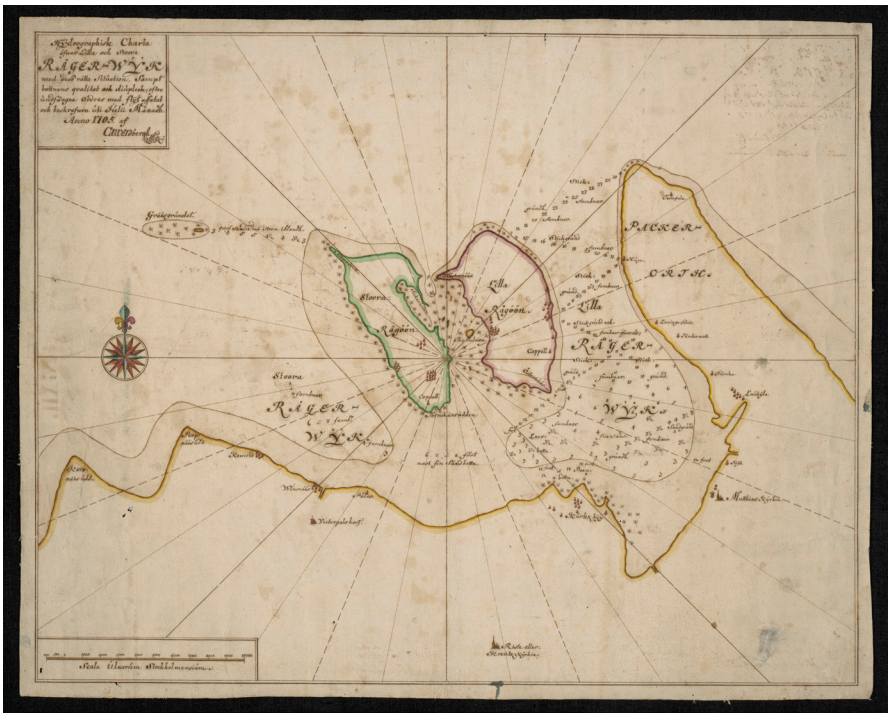

Figure 2. Carl Eldbergh's map (1705) of the Pakri bay (Packerort). Source: Swedish Military Archives.

The Swedish harbour in history writing

The idea of a harbour established by the Swedish kingdom on the Pakri peninsula can be ascribed to Baltic–German chronicles of the second half of the 18th century, generally well known for their precision and academic ambitions. August Wilhelm Hupel (1737–1819) was the first to mention a Swedish harbour on the peninsula, in 1774, but he relied on data collected from others.[24] Ludwig August Mellin (1754–1835), who leant heavily on Hupel as a source, added "a former Swedish harbour" to his map sheet of the province in his atlas of 1798.[25] The authority of these two has been such that later scholars have speculated freely about the reasons why the Swedish sources do not mention the port instead of questioning these chronicles. Other authors from the period do not mention a harbour north of the town at all or point to a differ-

24 Hupel 1774, p. 347.
25 Mellin 1798; for the map, see, for instance, Library of Congress n.d.

ent location. For instance, in 1785 the provincial surveyor August Friedrich Hauff (*c.* 1757–1806), who was based in Paldiski, located a "former Swedish harbour" south of the town where a landing site of the Pakri islanders had been,[26] and in 1802 Johann Christian Petri (1762–1851) mentions a Swedish harbour in general terms only.[27]

Parallel with the scholarly writing and mapping, folklore picked up the theme of the Swedish harbour. Placing more recent events further back in time is relatively common in folk stories. Thus Peter I's failure of the 1720s turned into a Swedish one. These stories were recorded in the 19th century and, in their turn, used to support the "fact" of the existence of a Swedish harbour. Failure to establish a flourishing port was eased by the failure of others. The power of the narrative was such that the military harbour's existence was widely believed in Europe and explains the historical attacks on the town. The physical remains of Peter's and Catherine's breakwater ironically constituted a hazard for the commercial fleet as numerous ships were stranded on it in the 19th century. The harbour had become a memorial to failure.

MEMORIALS AND MEMORIES

Estonians demonstrated little interest in either landmark—neither the port nor the fort—in the early days of the independent state of Estonia. Although also believing in the idea of the ideal harbour, they regarded what remained of the breakwater as a source of building material. In 1922, in an answer to vague protests about the destruction of heritage, "E.K." explained the ongoing quarrying in and around the fort: "Every gravel heap does not need to be left untouched only because it was shovelled up a few hundred years ago." He concluded: "Let's not honour heaps of gravel just because they are old, let's use them as is best for the town. This is the opinion of the councillors of Paldiski."[28]

A decade later, the "heap" had become slightly more appreciated, since it started to attract wider interest. A few times every summer, a special train brought visitors to the town, who picnicked in the grounds of the fort while the islanders of Pakri performed folk dances wearing national costumes to add exotic local colour. In 1934, what remained of the fort was given legal status as a heritage site; the act was repeated in

26 EAA.2072.2.22 Hauff, Friedrich August 1785, Geometrische Plan von der Gegend um der KreisStadt BaltisPort.

27 Petri 1802, p. 277.

28 E.K. 1922 [my translation]; E.K. was probably Eduard Kansmann, head of the local school, member of the town council and at the time the only Estonian born in the town with a university degree, hence a person with high authority; the term he used for councillor translates word-for-word as town father.

1974 and again in 1996.[29] This did not save it from huge alterations made during World War II, extensive quarrying north of the fort in the Soviet years and extension to the historic harbour (now Paldiski North Port) in the 21st century. Today, the top of the hill is used as a leisure area of sorts with a disc golf course and campfire sites. The official management plan has remained on paper only, while the spontaneous use continues.[30]

Officially, in addition to Peter's Fort, the Pakri coastal cliff (Baltic Klint) with its nesting black guillemots is protected as natural heritage. Similarly, it has little symbolic value to the current inhabitants. They walk, play and camp in the area, but the protected status is not of particular significance. Hence the legal status of these areas is not currently experienced as unjust and no conflict is evident in the landscape.

I now turn briefly to other landmarks of various pasts that, although they have physical presence, are hard to trace and connect to any history. The aim is not a comprehensive coverage of their pasts, presents, or futures, but to illustrate the aspects in history that for Glissant lie "dormant in the landscape".[31] Around the peninsula are scattered memorials to persons and events as embodiment of this history. Some have been erected with the aim of commemoration in mind, but in different ideological contexts; others—such as the submarine on dry land, had it survived, or the chimney of the Soviet training centre that has survived—have gained a symbolic significance for some as markers of home but they mark loss, destruction and occupation for others and are thus more problematic.

In contemporary political controversies over the establishment and management of memorials, they tend to be deemed either valuable or worthless, good or bad. Soviet monuments that have remained in the landscape for more than 30 years of Estonian re-independence have now, as a reaction to the war in Ukraine, evoked an urgent need to remove them, as decreed by the Government in Estonia in 2022.[32] Their artistic value has always been questionable. Now being dragged out physically from ruins and dense vegetation and into the debates, they have gained a significance they never had in the past when they were mostly ignored. Markers of graves are especially sensitive. In some cases, where false graves are marked, the removal of the markers is relatively easy. In other cases, human remains have to be moved as well, which is more complicated. But in some cases, a new meaning is attached, as with the monument in the Paldiski Orthodox cemetery to the Soviet submarine crew who perished in a training accident due

29 National Cultural Heritage Register: object N2760 Bastions, breakwater and moats of the fort in Paldiski (Kultuurimälestiste register 2009).

30 ERA.5025.2.11075 Paldiski Peetri kindluse ja sellega piirnevate alade detailplaneering. P–15818, 2010, Paldiski linnavalitsus, koostas Erki Ruben, 2010.

31 Ormerod & Glissant 1974, p. 364.

32 Republic of Estonia, Government Office 2022.

to negligence in 1956. This has become a place to celebrate the victory in World War II and to honour its heroes; the grave is covered in red carnations every 9 May. This memorial day seems to need a physical anchor, but causes the greatest tensions today not only locally, but more widely in Estonia. The Russian-speaking population celebrate the heroic liberation, while Estonians see the war through the loss of independence and the start of the forced ideology of communism. The most visible landmarks from the Soviet era are either envisioned as a tool to preserve a former way of life or seen as a hindrance to achieving something new. Locals often interpret monuments and attempts at conservation or removal as an imposition by outsiders.

Other monuments scattered around the peninsula mark the crimes of totalitarian regimes: the holocaust memorial, the memorial to the deported Ingrians and the memorial to the people deported (through Paldiski to Siberia) from the Estonian islands. There are also statues of an Estonian sculptor, Amandus Adamson, who was born on a farm not far from the town, had a summer residence (which is preserved as a museum) and lived in the town in the early 20th century, and of a Bashkir rebel, Salawat Yulajew, who was deported to here in the 1770s by Catherine II. The Lutheran and Orthodox churches, a couple of partly preserved storehouses in the harbour area, the lighthouse and a few glacial erratics complete the list of protected landmarks that have not (yet) any meaning attached to them other than that they were intended to depict. The Pakri lighthouse has become the main tourist destination on the peninsula and thus has the potential of becoming its unifying landmark around which the plural histories may be woven.[33] Ironically, the edge between the sea and land literally dictates the outcome, since the old lighthouse (from the 1760s) is in the process of tumbling down the cliffside.[34]

A discussion is needed about land use and ownership for a clearer understanding of what memorials bring to their communities. Their visibility and significance is dependent on our ability and willingness to find, interpret, understand and forget, that is, to see plurality and find vitality in the landscape through its poetics. Glissant argued that the past is irrelevant in the Caribbean yet very much present. On the Pakri peninsula, the past is relevant, but the landscapes are fragmented to a degree that the past with its landmarks is ignored. Current inhabitants are not overly concerned about the historic layers in the landscape and several parallel versions of the past exist. Hence reference to the palimpsest is highly relevant with the landscape offering various sites, some of which already have anchored memories, while others have been officially ac-

33 Peil forthcoming.

34 For the views, see the lighthouse webpage at www.pakrituletorn.ee (accessed 14 November 2023).

knowledged as heritage; there are also other traces that may be picked up and connected in the future. Different pasts are highlighted at different times. The geographical setting has forced people to think about the Pakri peninsula and its landmarks in certain ways, which might have limited the future options for people settling here. History can, however, make them aware of possibilities and unexpected connections in time and space. Monuments and memorials are significant and may embody or anchor memories in the landscape, often regulated both by law and custom. Glissant encourages us to look past established customs and rights, which provides for plurality but also for fabulation and anchoring fairly common traits (in heritage) to landmarks at hand.

CONCLUSIONS

Paldiski has failed in everything it had been planned to be. Nevertheless, Paldiski is a home, a curiosity, a mythical harbour, a composite. It has persistence in image creation. In Glissant's vocabulary, Paldiski is an imaginary that refers to a broader human faculty allowing us to conceive of our world. The imaginative force of words is undeniably great and may extend to actually shaping landscapes. Care with words needs to course through disciplinary practices. This double aspect of describing and creating with words—the poetics of place—has informed my discussion. The landscape may be seen as a metaphor for cultural history, but it does have a physical presence and is regulated by law and custom. The land reborn creates new possibilities but erases others. Memorials are erected and removed, a process both specific and universal.

When change is experienced as a series of shocks, it seems necessary for survival to put together the fragmented pieces and find the persisting themes. Landownership may be one legitimate way of being able to define one's future and strengthen connections with the land. It is counteracted by the openness of the sea, the archipelagic outreach across diverse (fluid) identities. The place poetics in Paldiski today is built on Estonian and Swedish connections but cannot deny the assimilation of German and Russian ones. Arguments like "already the Swedes" provide permanence within frequent disruption and failure. The creative imagination has a special role to play in covering a real discontinuity beneath the apparent continuity of history. History may be reborn through the everchanging landscape and its people, but may also persist through the stories in the mix of different cultures. Personal experience and interpretation in connection to the environment is highlighted when Glissant states "my landscape changes in me; it is probable that it changes with me."[35] The sea and the land, the landscape

35 Glissant 1997, p. 145.

of the edge, is ever-changing, therefore so are the individuals living among it—people and the environment are changed by each other both metaphorically and literally.

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