



ZONE

Early in the 21st century, Visitor commissioned Writer to undertake the preparation of a Report on Bidston Moss (hereafter, 'The Zone'), which is centred on NGR SJ 297907.

The Work was carried out on 12 April 2014. It consisted of field-based evaluation and was conducted in accordance with the NPPF Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements.

Aims

- To investigate cuts through The Zone, shifting coordinates, percolating desires, and unexplained data dumps.
- To determine The Zone's operational capacities as recording device.
- To intercept transmissions.
- To develop a sustainable management strategy for multiple stakeholding agencies.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT

Greys, greens, yellows. Light wind, high cloud, warm to the touch. THE ZONE looms ahead, beyond the fencing, along the tarmac path. WRITER, BARTENDER, SECURITY, COACH, INSECTORY TECHNICIAN, DOCTOR and VISITOR put on their safety tabards and assemble their equipment.

CUT TO: EXTREME CLOSE UP

VISITOR issues instructions. 'Run!'

CUT TO: WIDE SHOT

The people start moving, slowly at first. As VISITOR enters the vanishing point, the people understand that they must respond. They begin to run.

Landscape Characterisation

Here is an Archaeological Priority Zone. A raised area of bog and marsh containing peat deposits was created when the sea inundated The Zone some 4700 years ago. The proven potential of the mosslands for preserving organic evidence relating to the changing environment and to human activity associated with their exploitation over thousands of years is recognized. Palynography undertaken in 1979 CE (a commemorative marking of 0001, Thatcher Era) suggests clearance in 7360 BCE and 5840 BCE, indicating a transition from gathering and hunting to farming. Previous Work has revealed Mesolithic (8000-4000 BCE) flint scatters, 3 Neolithic (4000-2500 BCE) polished stone handaxes, a prehistoric canoe of undetermined date and Roman pottery.

In Spring, non-human life forms include warbler, swallow, martin, swift, sedge warbler, reed bunting, whitethroat, little grebe, coot, moorhen, mallard. Bee orchids, ox-eye daisies, cowslips, hardheads, wild carrot, vetches. Dogs of assorted breed.

WRITER'S POV

The people follow the line of the River Birket, canalized in the mid-19th century.

PAN LEFT

VISITOR. 'Stop! BARTENDER, go ahead, towards the tunnel.'

The people stand in the long grass and turn to watch as BARTENDER inches ahead, above the thick, swift water. A sudden, unseen avian signal emerges from the tunnel that transports the river. The people realise that it is an amplifier, a means of materialising data and of alerting them to the agency of THE ZONE. It broadcasts.

CUT TO: WIDE SHOT

VISITOR leads the way again and they scale a 1:5 gradient slope and continue NE to a concrete barrier. They carefully traverse the edge and emerge onto a small ledge.

CUT TO: CU VISITOR

VISITOR. 'Watch the monitor'.

EXIT OFF CAMERA

Hiss. Drip. Click-chiff-chaff.

ZOOM IN

An image of VISITOR emerges from the static. Geographies of THE ZONE shift as the

present of a somewhere else is transmitted here. The people are unsettled by Visitor's absent body, by the lack of management.

SECURITY. 'What should we do? This can't be right.'

They sense that information in THE ZONE is compromised, chaotic and intercepted by unseen others.

Lord Kingston commissioned the first survey of The Zone in 1665. At that time, farmers would wring out arable from the salt marsh. The 1847 sea wall stopped The Zone's tidal flow while rail construction in 1863 introduced industrial production and circulation. Major surface development dates to the 1930s, when The Zone was dominated by the Three Cranes. In 1936, against a background of mass unemployment and the collapse of production, The Zone was dedicated to residential, commercial and industrial data storage. This early experiment in NoSQL sacrificed consistency and atomicity in favour of availability and partition tolerance.

The Zone became a Site of Biological Interest in 1980. During the Miners Strike, and in anticipation of the resulting increase in Leisure Time, The Zone was improved by the construction of ponds, paths and boardwalks together with tree and wildflower planting. It was in this period that Archivists were documented in The Zone. Often accompanied by grazing animals, these information scientists identified and selected artefactual remains to be extracted from the database for off-site preservation and display.

In the new century, The Zone has responded to the transfer of assets from The State to The Gang by taking control of its own information systems. Adopting an innovative data incoherence strategy, The Zone now focuses on unstructured gaseous peer-to-peer data torrents. In the next decade, The Zone will emit 1,293.645 tonnes of dirty data.

Fieldwork

All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety regulations (1992) and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice.

FOLLOWING SHOT

VISITOR warns them to stay on the margins, to occupy the edges and boundaries that mark out solid and fluid. It is here that THE ZONE transmits data via the meditational gasses. The past irrupts into the present. Horsetails aggressively break through the tarmac. Ageless plastic bottles bob up to the surface of small, dense pools. The smell of growth and rot overwhelm the senses. The ground sucks at boots and shoes. A Ghost Town haunted by Heseltine and Howe, Thatcher and Taafe, Shankley and the Dockers.

'Did we do the right thing'?

A mix of marsh and landfill outflow dominate the lower reaches of The Zone. The contaminated and highly unstable data is the richest source of archival information. Rubble, weeds and tarmac cover much of the ground surface of the higher-level evaluation area, while aerial layers are connected by transport infrastructure. The remains of recording and transmission devices form a significant surface assemblage. Artefacts include:

Printed Circuit Boards, comprising FR4 glass epoxy and copper, as regulated by Safety Standard UL 796
Food cans, rusted and burnt
A wooden spice rack
Transistors
A jar, containing yellow liquid
Cable insulation
Metal flashing
Industrial reinforced concrete
Railway and dockyard steel and iron miscellanea

VISITOR receives and transmits the people's desires through THE ZONE. She mediates stratigraphies of water, earth and air and enables the people to read-write THE ZONE as recording technology. THE ZONE is data, though it is only partially accessible and intermittently intelligible. Voice fragments, material traces and dead technologies circulate and move between realms.

THE LAKE

VISITOR grabs a rope, pulls and is dragged in. A phone rings. It's for DOCTOR.

'He says, follow the path and look for THE CRAB.'

Their paranoia is confirmed: they are being watched.

CUT TO: STEADICAM SHOT

THE CRAB

VISITOR instructs WRITER, BARTENDER, SECURITY, COACH, INSECTARY TECHNICIAN and DOCTOR to assemble themselves on the surface, in a tangle of wiring and components. They close the circuit, connecting past and future via the present and activate THE ZONE. THE ZONE neither waits to be excavated nor does it unblinkingly data dump. Making the correct connections is key to this Random Access Memory Machine. Only by continuing to intervene can the people escape the surveillance and the deadening management.

This is a ritual landscape, marked by the transitional space of The Lake. A processional avenue of monumental concrete architecture – of Obelisks, Views and Wayfinders – leads up to The Zone's highest elevations, which offer commanding views across the estuary. Monuments mark sites of intensity, of desires, areas of previous insertions and extractions. Survey and soil sampling coupled with materials analysis will generate further data for inclusion in The Zone.

Outcomes

Based on the material evidence, comprising archives, surface assemblages and settlement patterns, Writer proposes a Watching Brief. According to the IFA, the Watching Brief is: A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

Following the stated Aims of The Report, the following Outcomes are recommended:

- Random sampling or percolates from within test sites of desires, to be analysed under laboratory conditions.
- People who have visited The Zone and have learned to receive, transmit and produce data will become certified Visitors. They are responsible for generating future material interventions through random access and peer-to-peer communication.
- Intercepted transmissions will be transcoded to form new datasets for storage in The Zone.
- Development of an Un-Management Strategy founded on NoSQL principles. All attempts to manage and organise will be resisted.

The Zone remains a site of special significance, a record of change over time through millennia. Its continued presence in a shifting 21st-century regeneration landscape presents a unique opportunity to preserve the quickly disappearing histories of 20th-century experiments in living. Beyond a preservation impulse, however, it is suggested that The Zone operates as a living archive and that The People continue to intervene in its unstructured data by generating, analysing and inserting new information. Halting disorganised growth and change would threaten the Zone's sustainability.

EXT. TRACKING SHOT

THE VIEW on to the top of THE ZONE and out to THE HUT. Railway lines come and go. The machines still find their way to THE ZONE, where they are reconfigured by unseen Archivists. The latest industrial park has fallen into ruin and different birds sing here now. But as what lies beneath the surface continues to bubble up, THE ZONE transmits its signal. VISITOR remains, awaiting the arrival of new desires.

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Angela Piccini is an academic, filmmaker and writer. She is interested in the ways in which moving images and material traces entangle to produce experiences of place, space and time. This is most likely due to poor eyesight and being an only child: her formative years were spent looking closely at the ground and weaving objects together with knotted string. She is an anti-archaeologist of sorts, as old things can only ever tell you stories about right now.