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site plan



COASTAL DYNAMICS: COASTAL MULTIPLICITIES

Ramzi Mezher

The Rhine Delta appears to be highly appreciated by its inhabitants and visitors alike for what the qualities it has to offer. As the site has been isolated from water 'threats' through the building of the coastal dyke, the need for a design intervention at all was fundamentally questioned. However looking at the site as a whole, it became evident that sedimentation had to be dealt with locally, and the task was to do that while preserving and even strengthening key conditions that exist on the site.

In response, the existing path of the canalized Rhine was first diverted towards the longer and deeper end of the lake. This would send heavy sediments to the bottom, leaving the lighter sediments to float and be brought back onto the site by prevailing northwesterly winds.

Two zones were thus created along the coast with two different physical dynamics: a zone of sediment deposition and one of land erosion.

The two main components of the design concept were to accept these dynamics not as threats but rather as tools with a potential for positively transforming the site and to give more space for water.

Within the erosion zone the intervention consisted in breaking the dyke and making the land subject to the lake's fluctuation dynamics again, while having existing roads function as lateral substitute dykes in order to limit water to non-urbanized land.

Additionally, paths were inserted in the landscape which ran parallel to the existing dyke in order to highlight the lake water's varying height: the higher the water level, the deeper the water moves into the land and the more elevation paths it covers. As a result, the movement and behavior of users of the site become subject to the natural dynamics within the area.

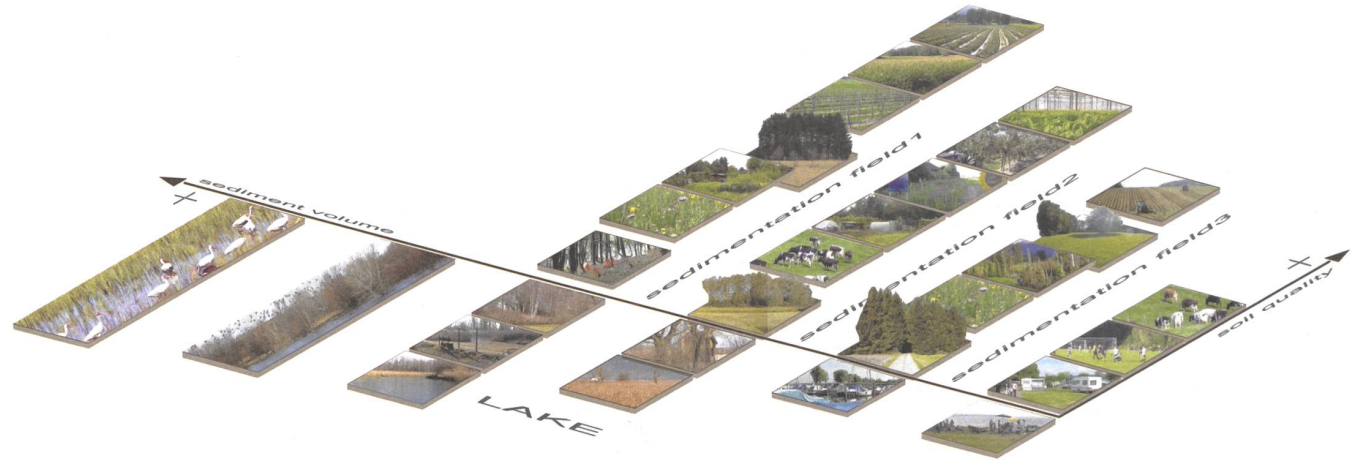
Within the zone of sediment deposition, the intervention consists of gradually digging up channels into the land, thus bringing the lake water deeper and deeper into the site and allowing the sediment to deposit for further extraction and land build-up. The build-up on land, and not in the lake, slows down the process of the lake's disappearance, and at the same time it has the potential to break the flatness of the site.

The farther away from the source of the sediment (the tip of the canal) the coast is, the less sediment it accumulates. Also a gradual improvement of the quality of the soil takes place, where sediment mixes with the vegetation that comes to occupy it in the channels.

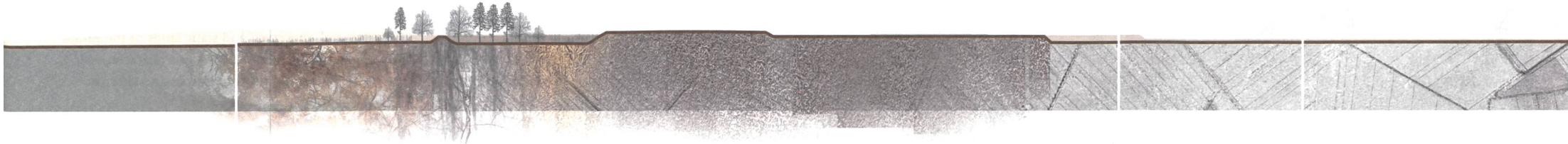
These two processes create a gradient of programmatic and ecological diversity within the sediment deposition zone, from totally uncontrolled vegetation to intensely cultivated agricultural land, which replaces productive lands lost to water dynamics within the erosion zone.

On the whole the intervention preserves the idea of a linear coast with a guiding dyke running along its length, but the resulting coastal experience becomes more complex and varied through new dimensions gained by the site's new topography and diversity. It becomes host to an even richer ecosystem than what exists today.

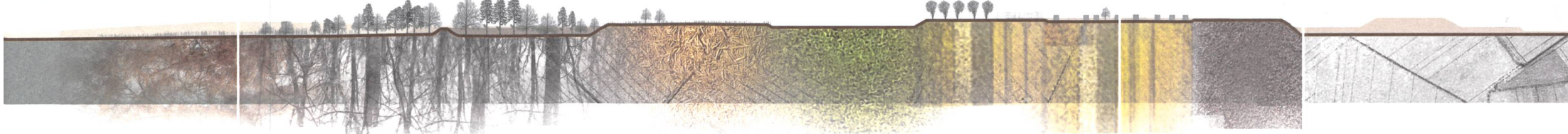
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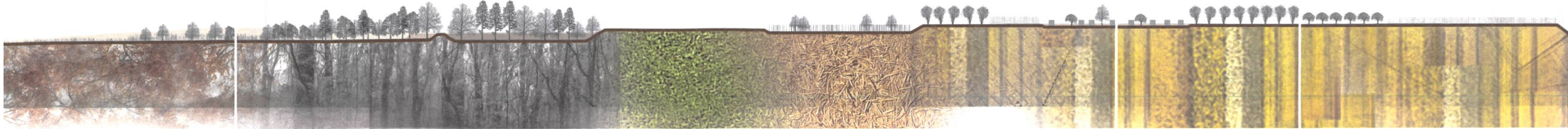
longitudinal section . year 9 . 1/1000



longitudinal section . year 60



longitudinal section . year 165



landscape sections