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The Diwedd / End Garden: A Garden for the End of Things

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the fragmented nature of the Diwedd Garden—a guerrilla garden the author has cultivated from waste and fly-tipped materials on a forgotten plot overlooking Swansea Bay, South Wales. Situated on a liminal hillside alleyway, this assemblage-based practice explores how geographers might adopt 'broken world thinking' (Jackson 2014: 221) to engage creatively and critically with the production of urban space. By treating discarded fragments as both the residue and the raw material of regeneration, this paper considers how such acts of reclamation can seed new imaginaries of hope. Over a year, the author helped gather and repurpose what Haraway (2016: 57) calls the 'excrement of the Capitolocene,' composting it—quite literally—like a 'mad gardener'. In doing so, this creative contribution reflects on Latour's (2004: 246) proposition that 'the critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles,' suggesting that creative, material engagement offers alternative, embodied ways of knowing and relating within spatial theory.

CRYNODEB

Mae'r papur hwn yn ymchwilio i natur dameidiog Gardd Diwedd—gardd guerrilla y mae'r awdur wedi'i meithrin o wastraff a deunyddiau sydd wedi cael eu tipio'n anghyfreithlon ar ddarn o dir sydd wedi mynd yn angof ac yn edrych dros Fae Abertawe. Ar lwybr ar ochr bryn, mae'r ymchwil hon sy'n seiliedig ar ddull cydosod yn mynd i'r afael â sut y gallai daearyddwyr fabwysiadu 'broken world thinking' (Jackson 2014: 221) i ymwneud yn greadigol ac yn feirniadol â chreu gofod trefol. Drwy drin darnau a luchiwyd yn weddillion ac yn ddeunydd crai adfywio, mae'r papur hwn yn ystyried sut y gall gweithredoedd adfer o'r fath ddychmygu gobaith ar ei newydd wedd. Dros gyfnod o flwyddyn, roedd yr awdur wedi helpu i gasglu ac ailddefnyddio'r hyn y mae Haraway (2016: 57) yn ei alw'n 'excrement of the Capitolocene,' gan ei gompostio—yn llythrennol—fel 'garddwr gwallgof'. Wrth wneud hynny, mae'r cyfraniad creadigol hwn yn myfyrio ar gynnig Latour (2004: 246) 'the critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles,' gan awgrymu bod ymwneud yn greadigol ac yn faterol yn cynnig ffyrdd diriaethol a gwahanol o wybod a pherthnasu ym maes theori ofodol.

CONTRIBUTOR

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(MARCH 2024): THE FRAGMENT OF HOPE

> 'But hope appears only in fragmented form.'
> (Adorno 1983: 240)

I am hopeful, even here. While the splintering of cities is often widely discussed in urban geography (Graham & Marvin 2001), the 'products of fragmentation – the fragments themselves – tend to receive less attention' (McFarlane 2018: 1007). Yet, when reassembled together in unexpected ways and dispositions, these urban fragments can become animated with new life, stories, and rhythms. Looking over the bay on the south Walian coastline, two infernos blaze from opposing sides of the shore—a steel factory and a lighthouse. To the west, the sea glistens in reverence towards the quaint and affluent village of Mumbles, where its picturesque lighthouse and Ferris wheel beckons us to enjoy leisurely time on the coast. Towards the east along the coast, we see the flames from the blast furnace of Tata Steel, billowing pillowy smokestacks over the city of Port Talbot—or as what some locals like to describe it contemptuously as, 'Port Toilet'. I am in neither space, though. I am in what poet Dylan Thomas quips the 'ugly, lovely town' of Swansea, South Wales on the fragmented site of the Diwedd Garden (see figure 1).

What is the Diwedd Garden? I got the idea for it, like most ideas, when the mind is allowed to wander. After reading a chapter of Colin McFarlane's *Fragments of the City* (2021), I decided to take a drift, or *dérive*, walking almost aimlessly, looking for the left-over 'fragments of the urban present' (McFarlane 2021: 230) within my own neighbourhood—or perhaps just to look for some hope. While drifting through the endless back alleys of Swansea, I climbed a stairwell connecting the Uplands to the lowlands, where litter scattered the steep lane. On the ascent, I stumbled upon a path on a back alleyway that piqued my interest, where brambles slouched over the path and bugs buzzed in harmony (see figures 2–4). While *dérives* lack a clear destination, they are not without purpose (Coverley 2010: 96); along the right-of-way, at the crest of the hill, lies a plot on a flat terrace.

Figure 1: The view from the Diwedd Garden towards Port Talbot, overlooking Swansea Bay. Photo: Tatiana Bodnar.

Figures 2-4: Making my way towards the Diwedd Garden through the liminal space. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

The plot was uniquely positioned, its ownership as ambiguous as its purpose. Trash astray, subtle signs of arson, and shards of objects littered the plot overlooking a spectacular vista spanning the horizon. To me, it lay within a liminal space between public and private land. The plot stretched along a common right-of-way, with a public streetlight illuminating the space as if the land itself were subtly claimed for collective use. Likewise, the plot could also be managed by the letting company that flips the old Victorian dwellings into student housing—they were rarely there, the very depiction of absentee landlords. The students who possibly rented it seemed to rarely use the multitude of steep backyard terraces in any discernible manner, let alone the one furthest from their backdoor. This is a partially terraformed fragment of land without obvious signs of ownership, management, or care.

When I first laid eyes on the leftover plot with the panoramic view, it evoked a suggestion of the possible. My mind became a fruit machine (the peculiar word for slot machine in the UK) in imagining the possible social and civic interpretations of the rubbish-scattered place, and I soon became enthralled by the idea of the space transforming into a community garden. Philosopher and cultural critic Ernst Bloch calls this flickering moment the '*vorschein*' within his three-part treatise *The Principle of Hope* (1954 [1986]); it is one of those wonderfully elusive German words that's difficult to translate precisely, but has nevertheless been interpreted as ontological anticipation, pre-illumination, and even anticipatory illumination (Boldyrev 2023).

This flicker, this anticipatory illumination of the future, located within the present, is charged and humming with utopian anticipation. As McFarlane (2021: 107) suggests: 'Sometimes fragments name something beyond, ...—a flicker of alternatives and a suggestion of something else'. The imagined, but oh-so-real '*vorschein*' beckoned to me; the fragmented felt suspended in space and time—a liminal, hidden landscape where the boundaries between public and private land ownership blurred. The plots practical convenience, just a two-minute walk from my flat, made it the testing ground I was searching for: a fragment of hope.

(APRIL 2024): COMPOSTING LIKE A MAD GARDENER

> 'True genesis is not at the beginning but at the end, and it starts to begin only when society and existence become radical, i.e. grasp their roots. But the root of history is the working, creating human being who reshapes and overhauls the given facts.'
> (Bloch 1986: 1376)

Inspired by this fragmentary '*vorschein*', I started collecting the various fly-tipped items that could be re-jigged as gardening paraphernalia, labouring them into an assemblage of my making. At first, I started by looking around the fly-tipped alleyway and the skips for any fragments and waste I could reuse to start building and cultivating the garden (see figures 5 and 6). For months, I made it a routine to look about for the unwanted and unloved things of my fellow citizens, making it my mission to drift around the neighbourhood, looking for the leftovers—the waste—tracing and following the 'salvage rhythms' (Tsing 2015: 131) of my own neighbourhood.

Coincidentally, the semi-terraced housing block that towered over the alleyway was showing signs of a makeover: the lumpy grey pebbledash so common around this town was being replaced with matte black cladding and house numbers of the Neutraface font.[1] Every venture out, it seemed more scaffolding materialised out of thin air, with skips filled to the brim with a marvellous array of materials going to landfill, removed from the now San-Serifed branded homes.[2] Spare tyres, buckets with traces of cement, and splintered cabinets became my frameworks. In her book S*taying With the Trouble*, Donna Haraway (2016: 57) introduces the concept of the

Figures 5 & 6: The plot and the bits and bobs that came together to make the Diwedd Garden. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

Chthulucene, a term she uses to propose a new epoch that emphasises interconnectedness and multispecies flourishing. She argues that 'the unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the exterminism of the Capitalocene, and, chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener, make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures' (Haraway 2016: 57).

And like a mad gardener, I started assembling the fragments—the trash and the excrement—into a bricolage garden in DIY (do-it-yourself) fashion, where car tires, paint buckets, and broken drawers became the compost for a different relationship to space-time. Working with and reclaiming the 'excess material of modernity' (Moore 2009: 427)—the valueless and discarded matter—became my medium. Left to rot in the alleyway or the landfill, the waste symbolised what John Scalan (2005: 5) describes as a 'phase in the life of an object,' defined not so much by its material existence, but rather by its temporal nature. Here, the perceived loss of use or exchange value does not signify the end of life' for the object, but rather the end of the imagination that once gave it purpose (Thieme 2021: 1093). It was in this context that I discovered the sign that I had been searching for: a left and forgotten signpost in the ditch, signifying the End—or 'Diwedd' in Welsh. Here, the Diwedd Garden emerged (see figures 7 and 8).

For me, the garden critiques this 'end of imagination', transforming the narrative of 'waste as the end of possibility' (Thieme 2021:1106) to what Jackson (2014: 221) describes as 'broken world thinking' in his influential essay *Rethinking Repair*. This sort of thinking asks us to consider 'what happens when we take erosion, breakdown, and decay, rather than novelty, growth, and progress, as our starting points' (Jackson 2014: 221) for regeneration. Caitlin DeSilvey (2017) explores a similar idea in her book *Curated Decay*, where she advocates for an ethical approach to collaborating with entropic and natural decay in heritage preservation. She argues that 'decay itself reveals not (only) as erasure but as a process that can be generative of a different kind of knowledge' (DeSilvey 2017: 28).

Figures 7 & 8: The Diwedd Garden with a view. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

I wondered if this more embodied approach to knowledge production would be fruitful for a first year PhD student like myself. I thought, rather than read endless papers about 'action-oriented' research methodologies, I needed to feel it for myself, as in this mode 'the emphasis is more on what practitioners do than on what they say they do' (Avison et al. 1999: 95). This type of research is inherently 'iterative, exploratory, and cyclical' (Burns & McPherson 2017: 105) and often assumes 'knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing' (Barad, 2007: 49) but rather that knowledge production come from a direct material engagement with the world. As Gyanendra Pandey argues, 'The fragment is, in this sense, an appeal to an alternative perspective, or at least the possibility of another perspective' (Pandey 2000: 296). What other perspectives can the Diwedd Garden give us? What can we know here?

(MAY 2024): THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN GARDEN

> 'The wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an outside where they form a rhizome with something else – with the wind, an animal, human beings …'
> (Deleuze & Guattari 2007: 11)

Working with this fragmented plot of space, my partner and I got to work transforming the place into an urban oasis through planting. On Earth Day in late April, we attended a plant swap and seminar at the community garden GRAFT, where we were able to bring home a wide array of flora—from Welsh onion to spinach, tomato plants, strawberry and more—along with a wide array of seeds from the Incredible Seed Library project (see figures 9 and 10). Immediately, my partner and I started to plant what seeds could be sowed outside, while incubating other seedlings indoors.

With the flora reconfigured, I was interested in the fauna that would hopefully come. While dwelling there, I became absorbed in the presence of a multitude of other species that used the space—from the cats that frolicked around, the beetles existing in the dark side pockets of the suitcase garden,

Figures 9 & 10: The first harvest of the Diwedd Garden: spinach and strawberries! Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

and the hungry slugs looking for food anywhere they could. I was starting to open myself up to the idea of this place as a site for more-than-human dramas to unfold, where the 'world-making activities of many agents, human and non-human' (Tsing 2015:152) could entangle together to produce knowledge of a post-human sort (Braidotti 2019).

Which species is this garden for? Traditionally, gardens have been designed for human pleasure, creating an artificial image of nature. However, as discussed in *The New Ecology* by Oswald Schmitz (2017), the focus now should be on bridging the human-nature divide, sustaining ecological functioning, and understanding human-nature interdependencies to upend the epoch of growing human dominance: the Anthropocene. My goal was to try and create a space for the 'oddkin' (Haraway 2016: 4) of all types, from birds, nettles, and beetles, considering our verging towards planetary and ecological limits (see figures 11 and 12).

(JUNE 2024) THE POLITICS OF GARDENING

> 'The Work we are going about is this, To dig up Georges-Hill and the waste Ground thereabouts, and to Sow Corn, and to eat our bread together by the sweat of our brows'
> (Winstanley 1649 para. 29)

I decided to make some signs for the garden to see if they would provoke anyone towards acting. After finding Amazon warehouse boxes by a nearby skip, I created more planting space for potatoes, tomatoes, and lettuce. Using the baseboards of a bedframe and a sort of metal gutter, I took my largest Sharpie pen and started to lay out a welcome sign—written was 'Take What

Figures 11 & 12: Snails, mini cosmetic fridges, and plants at the Diwedd Garden. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

Figures 13 & 14: The waste of Amazon being used as planters with DIY signs. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

You Need' and 'Or Add Your Own'—to make it clear to any passersby that this was a common space (see figures 13 and 14).

Certain gardening practices have long carried radical connotations. In the opening of his book *Radical Gardening,* George McKay (2011) dismantles the garden's suburban leisurely image, with a historical account of the politics of gardening movement—from the aesthetic of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement to the politics of the allotment garden. Historically, the enclosures of common land in the UK, where private landlords with aristocratic power enclosed lands that were customary common for centuries, led to a wide array of protest through acts of gardening. McKay (2011: 155) finds that:

> 'The gardener's generous gesture of free planting has a long history, in which it is often possible to identify a radical critique of private property interwoven with a statement of communal interest, mutual aid, and cooperation. This is less to do with a demarcated territory of the (private, domestic) garden than with the social and communal practice of gardening.'

The more I found out about different gardening movements that embodied a similar spirit, ethos, or effervescence as the Diwedd Garden, the more it seemed we were playing our role in a more enduring and deeply-rooted tradition. One such radical gardening movement was the Diggers, or the True Levellers of 1649. In the wake of the English Civil War and the execution of King Charles I, the Diggers actively reclaimed common hillside wasteland in Surrey where a group of commoners began to till private land. Gerrard Winstanley (1649 para. 42), the leader of the Diggers, had this to say about the 'dig' in their manifesto:

> 'In that we begin to Digge upon George-Hill, to eate our Bread together by righteous labour, and sweat of our browes, It was shewed us by Vision in Dreams, and out of Dreams, That that should be the Place we should begin upon; … And that not only this Common, or Heath should be taken in and Manured by the People, but all the Commons and waste Ground in England, and in the whole World, shall be taken in by the People in righteousness, not owning any Propriety; but taking the Earth to be a Common Treasury, as it was first made for all.'

This same spirit reverberates back in different epochs of time. During the early twentieth century, social practitioners like Patrick Geddes, the famous biologist-turned-planner, recognised the importance of gardens and cultivation amidst the rampant industrialization of cities. His 'Garden Playground' movement involved working with local communities to transform derelict waste sites into community gardens and playgrounds across Scotland and Ireland (Crowe 2018). Gardens, play, and the 'leftover spaces' are assembled quite often together. Similarly, in Scandinavia, the *Skrammellegepladser* (junk playgrounds) movement encouraged children to experiment with discarded materials and tools to construct their own environments (Poulsen 2022). In post-war Britain, a comparable initiative emerged as bombed-out ruins of WW2 were repurposed into 'adventure playgrounds' (Highmore 2013: 323), where children used fragments of the destroyed landscape to 'reconstitute and repair such landscapes' (Highmore 2013: 323) through playful reimagining of places.

In more modern terminology, guerilla gardening can be described as an act where 'volunteers who, without permission operate either individually or collectively to target public and private spaces of neglect and unlawfully transform the environment through the planting of flora without the landowner's consent' (Adams & Hardman 2014: 1103–1104). The term became popularised in the 1970s by the Green Guerillas, a community working in New York's Lower East Side that claimed some of the 25,000 vacant lots in the city and transformed them into gardens and parks for local people in the wake of the financial crisis (McKay 2011). Overall, this DIY movement 'equates urbanism with the physical realm, asserting that small-scale intervention in material form' (Talen 2015: 135) can have a significant impact on the everyday of urban residents.

These DIY initiatives are taken up by residents themselves through low-cost, temporary projects, and commonly gain hold in times of austerity, financial crises, and social unrest. In this way, the Diwedd Garden functions as a DIY guerilla garden. Like the derelict spaces turned into urban gardens by The Diggers, Geddes, or the Green Guerillas, the Diwedd Garden was becoming my own little critique of the privatised, yet discarded space. In modern society, the allotment serves as a key metaphor for the commons (Standing 2019). Somewhere between the liminal space of a public right-of-way and dilapidation, the plot embodied a unique blend of resistance and reclamation. As Negri (2006: 67) argues, 'the common is an activity, not a result; it is an assemblage or an open continuity, not a densification of control'. Commoning is a verb: things and gardens must be commoned through the sweat of our brow.

(JULY 2024): THE GARDEN AS THIRD PLACE

> 'Community gardens grow much more than just food, they grow community'
> — McVey et al. (2018:40)

Over the next few days, the garden evolved into the communal space I had dreamt possible. One day, another red chair appeared, salvaged from the fly-tipped area. Someone else brought a beautiful red flower, effortlessly placed on the tire-turned planter, next to growing potatoes (see figures 15 and 16). Another day, as I came to water the plants, I encountered a group of four teenagers enjoying the garden, listening to music, and smoking vapes, while the planes of the Welsh Air Show zoomed past.

> 'We're sorry if we're bothering you, Miss,' one of the boys said, a bit hesitantly.
> 'No problem at all,' I replied with a smile. 'It's great to see people using the space.'
> 'It's nice that there's something here now,' another boy chimed in. 'This terrace was built just over two years ago, but nothing was ever done with it.'
> 'Ah, I always wondered what the story behind it was,' I said, curious.
> 'Don't you live in that house?' one of them asked.
> 'I don't, actually,' I answered. 'I live nearby, but I decided to turn this into a garden because the view is just too good to waste.'
> The kids burst into laughter, clearly amused.

Figures 15 & 16: A red flower donated to the Diwedd Garden. Potatoes growing. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

> 'That's class,' one of them said, grinning. 'It's nice to see empty lots transformed into something like this.'

Before I left, I asked the kids if they wanted to water the plants while I was gone, that I would be incredibly grateful—they replied they would, if it did not rain. This is Wales after all. As recognised by Karen Schmelzkopf (1995: 22), 'community gardens are one of our most participatory local institutions' that we have in the urban environment. With the long history of enclosure of the commons in the UK, the Diwedd Garden invites anyone to explore the possibilities of reclaiming and transforming the urban fragments in a spatially just manner. As Ed Soja's book *Seeking Spatial Justice* argues, spatial justice concerns 'greater control over how the spaces in which we live are socially produced' (Soja 2010: 7). People were starting to use the garden as a 'third place' (Oldenburg 1999), a social meeting hub outside work and home. I cannot lie; I am chuffed by this.

(AUGUST 2024): THE END OF THE DIWEDD GARDEN?

> 'The law locks up the man or woman
> Who steals the goose from off the common
> But leaves the greater villain loose
> Who steals the common from off the goose'
> — Anonymous, *The Goose and the Common,* eighteenth-century song and poem.

On August 7th, I headed to the Diwedd Garden after three weeks of holiday, excited to see how the garden was getting along in my absence. Will the potatoes be ready? Will the spinach need more water? Will there be any more new additions from others? When I arrived through the alleyway, I was dismayed to see a totally empty lot where the Diwedd Garden had been. The nettles were slashed to toothpick length, the various veggie containers 'AWOL,' the Diwedd sign gone and without a trace. The only thing left was the sign I made a few months ago landmarked to the electrical post stating, '*Swansea: The Land of Land. Come for the Beach, Stay for the Latent Opportunity*'. I always knew this could happen, but guessing from the clues, I could only imagine that the plot was reimagined by landlords, letting agents, or those responsible for managing the nearby student housing at the foot of the hill. With its ephemeral aesthetic, the Diwedd Garden was most likely regarded as the work of one of the former tenants and was eviscerated. And like that, the Diwedd Garden was left with how I found it: a *tabula rasa* (see figure 17). At first, I mourned the loss of this place and all the time, effort, and resources I had put into it—mostly for myself, but also for what I imagined what it could be—and went shyly to the pub to forget about the experiment. Nursing a beer, I sat there thinking of all the time accruing and compiling the fragments of the Anthropocene, the seeds and the hopes, all felt like distant memories to me.

Kim Dovey (2011: 350) argues that design should be conceived as a process of assembling possibilities out of actualities, enabling an exploration of what Dan Hill (2015:37) would call the 'adjacent possible'. In *A Sketchbook for the City to Come: The Pop-Up as R&D,* Hill (2015: 37) writes that, the 'pop-ups provide a means for physically prototyping that adjacent possible environment, what a space could handle, what a street could be'. But how easily the pop-up can become the pop-down, as urbanist Fran Tonkiss (2013) reminds us, I thought to myself. Bloch, discussed by Jack Zipes

Figure 17: The Diwedd Garden back to square one: a *tabula rasa*. Photo: Tatiana Bodnar.

(2019: 17), gives us some words of wisdom though: 'Even a well-founded hope can be disappointed, otherwise it would not be hope. In fact, hope never guarantees anything.' Ouch.

Well, at least I had hope, even if it was disappointing. I returned the next day and overlooked the sweeping bay—industry to the east, and pleasure to the west—and how the idea of the possible engulfed me! The '*vorschein*' returned. The Diwedd Garden revealed that a garden is not just a latent opportunity, but an adjacent reality awaiting realization. What else could the space be reimagined as, using just the fragments we can gather? Over the next few days, I found a headboard for a bed and made a sign out of it, along with placing some fly-tipped furniture there (see figures 18–20). In this *praxis* of gathering, I am reminded of what Bruno Latour (2004: 246) had to say about academic critique:

> 'The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naive believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather ... the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution.'

Like Latour's actor network theory, assemblage methodologies take a post-positivist approach, finding that researchers are not distanced observers of reality with an objective 'view from nowhere' (Latour 2018: 7), but rather

Figures 18 & 19: The process of the Diwedd Garden starts again—new seeds planted through the discarded. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

Figure 20: A sign made from a discarded headboard. Photo: Tatiana Bodnar.

researchers should be viewed as embedded translators with a 'powerful position in the translation of the research environment in question' (Ruming 2009: 455). Thus, this shift in epistemology, where knowledge production moves from pure representation towards a more performative approach, is a key tenet of the assemblagetic, more-than-human approaches to research where often 'reflection is insufficient; intervention is key' (Barad 2007: 50).

Performative approaches to research can take many forms but place an 'emphasis on 'doing' as a primary way of knowing' (Narbed 2021: 180).

There was a time 'when many social scientists saw themselves not just as analysts but also as shapers and designers of possible futures' (Mulgan 2021: 7). As he finds in *The Case for Exploratory Social Sciences,* Sir Geoff Mulgan argues that:

> 'One of the less attractive legacies of several decades of post-structuralism and post-modernism is that many academics believe they have much more of a duty to critique than to propose or create.
>
> This is also a safer space, since the detached critic can't be blamed when things go wrong' (Mulgan 2021: 10).

What is our duty as researchers: to critique or to create?

(MARCH 2025): WHERE THE LIGHT GETS IN

> 'The best fertiliser is a gardener's shadow'
> Gardening Proverb
>
> 'If the city is to survive, process must have the final word. In the end the urban truth is in the flow.'
> (Kostof 1992: 305)

I came back to the Diwedd Garden a few times during the winter, to check that the view was still there; thankfully, this was the case. After a wailing wet Welsh winter, along with moving further down the hill, I was not as close to making my daily trips to the Garden from my backdoor. One day, I decided to trudge up the hillside. When I arrived, it looked like I had entered a crime scene: most of the pallets were beaten to a pulp, fragments of wood left everywhere, the back of wooden chairs had been plucked off their dowels, leaving only the still functional base. As the brush died back to the side, I realised that most of the fragments of the Diwedd Garden had just been chucked to the side, laying there in a pitiful state. Fly-tipped for a second time!

The bathtub that I scavenged in the autumn was still there, along with the sign, *'Stay for the Latent Opportunity'.*

I reflected: a year ago, I found this fragment much in the same manner — but what has changed now? Seeing the garden in its current state made me ponder: when something is abandoned and uncared for, others will often follow suit in an uncaring manner. Latour's (2004: 246) words echo through my mind: 'If something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution'. The assembled Diwedd Garden is indeed fragile; caring for it requires attention and time, and for it me, it became a laborious hobby. In her essay *Maintenance and Care*, Shannon Mattern (2018, para. 22) finds that, 'We care for things not because they produce value, but because they already have value'. I sat there for a while on the broken, yet still functional chair: 'Do I actually try and start this again?' The place looked shabby to me, and I am reminded of the 'labour of assembling and re-assembling' again (Anderson & McFarlane 2012: 125).

I looked down and realised the once-bald patch in the middle of the garden was now thick and luscious with nettles. Since last year, I had become enthralled with foraging of all kinds—how could I miss this? With my trusty gardening gloves, I picked some fresh nettles, hoping to make some nettle tea, which I now sip as I edit my first revisions and write this epilogue. I did not know that a year ago. The garden has become my place to learn and to muse. A few days later, I returned—and to my surprise, the Diwedd Garden was brimming with wild garlic (see figure 21). And 'if there is one species that stirs the heart of all foragers', John Wright (2020: 96) quips in *The Forager's Calendar*, 'it must be Wild Garlic'. I guess this is what Anna Tsing (2015: 37) calls the 'arts of noticing': a commitment to fieldwork and observation that aims to uncover the diverse perspectives and layered histories of human and non-human entanglements in a place. To Tsing (2015), these human-disturbed landscapes are ideal sites for exploring the entanglement of things and histories.

I just laughed. Here I was, feeling so hopeless about this garden, when all along, a bounty of a different sort was right in front of me. The irony. The '*vorschein*'—that flicker of anticipation—flushed through my body, as if the garden and I were catching a glimpse of what might still be possible. In some mysterious way, the fragment transformed me, and in that very moment, the fragment itself was transformed. I think again, through Donna Haraway (2016: 12):

Figure 21: Wild garlic growing in the Diwedd Garden. Photo: Tatiana Bodnar.

> 'It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.'

And with the daffodils out and sure sign of spring, I begin the process, thinking and feeling my way through the matter again, like a mad gardener. Picking up the woodchip fragments, I began to mulch using the splintered woodchips, placing them in the bathtub: this is active hope, I thought. 'Active Hope is a practice. Like tai chi or gardening, it is something we do rather than have,' as Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (2022: 4) declare. So, I made a new sign from the trampled pallet I painted yellow last summer; it works magically. A suitcase appears; I use this as the vessel for a gifted rosemary plant (see figures 22 & 23). This matter is making new stories.

And so, I persist in tracing the nearly forgotten narrative of hope, commoning the land with the trash that is accumulating on this planet—to see what possible futures and social infrastructures could unfold. In *Design and the Social Imagination,* design theorist-activist Matthew DelSesto argues that 'to design as a form of reflective social action, then, is to stand on the edge of the real and the possible' (DelSesto 2022: 26). I see the Diwedd Garden as just the beginning of the story of a common space between the real and the possible, a tiny, but still very real place where the social imaginary can ferment. This affective landscape exists at the pressure point between 'hope, inspiration and the scope of the possible, and the sometimes debilitating recognition of that which has not been attained' (McFarlane, 2021: 222). Only time will tell what the fruits—or perhaps the vegetables, or fungi—of my labour and that of others will become, or where they might emerge in some unclaimed fragment of the world along the mycelial network. As Erik Swyngedouw (2007: 75) reminds us:

> 'These fissures, cracks, and "free" spaces form "quilting" points, nodes for experimentation with new urban possibilities. It is indeed precisely in these in-between spaces—the fragments left

Figures 22 & 23: Filling the bathtub, rosemary planted, and a new sign made. Photos: Tatiana Bodnar.

> unoccupied […]—that all manner of new urban social and cultural practices emerge; where new forms of urbanity come to life".

So yes, I am hopeful—

It appears only in fragmented form.

(JULY 2025): THE LEFTOVER FRAGMENTS

I arrive at the Diwedd Garden the day before I turn in my final edit of this paper. With the bathtub and suitcase concealed under the herbage, the tangle of plants, insects and unseen microorganisms have reclaimed the place, with little of my own human meddling. The 'latent potential' sign has disappeared, and in its place: a thousand fragments, attempting their best to mock me (see figure 24). I take it as a sign and pick the early ripened blackberries sloping over the alleyway.

Ethics and consent

Not applicable.

Figure 24: Leftover fragments on the Diwedd Garden. Photo: Tatiana Bodnar.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

NOTES

[1] Frida Garza (2023: para. 3), writing in The Guardian, described how the 'sleek font' of Neutraface font has become an 'omen for neighbourhoods': when you see this font go up, the process of gentrification is taking hold, and you better hope you own your home.

[2] I should acknowledge my perspective: skip diving never bothered me. Growing up in suburban America, my dad and I would dumpster dive at the fast-food chain Wendy's for their 'Frosty' cups. He discovered that collecting sixty cups earned a free roundtrip flight through a promotion with a budget airline. That summer, we salvaged enough for nine free flights.

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