



Going forward

Pan-European approach to World War 2
heritage as cultural common ground

Fig. 1 (Front cover) A dialogue with
our ancestors (by Viola Ebermannová)

Colophon

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Abstract

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The Second World War had global effects, leading to unique national experiences and traumas. Its impacts on collective identities and narratives are still visible today. WW2 acted as a catalyser for European integration, prompting the birth of institutions that would later evolve into the European Union.

European integration should not lead to unifying national perspectives and narratives, but rather embrace the diversity and foster mutual understanding and empathy. This project focuses on the site of the former Valkenburg Military Airport near Leiden in the Western Netherlands. We view the WW2 heritage of the airport as a part of the common heritage of the Atlantic Wall, and the whole European traumascape of WW2. We propose a pan-European narrative connecting the unique local perspectives into a train-ride across Europe with several chapters in different places. The story of WW2 is told through the eyes of an innocent child, an unknown German soldier, and various local protagonists. It creates a framework to which local stories can be added, and which helps contextualise and relate subjective national experiences. One of the chapters is at Valkenburg airport, with a Dutch citizen forced to work on the airport construction as the local protagonist. We envision different ways to deal with WW2 heritage at the site and connect the locations into a route.

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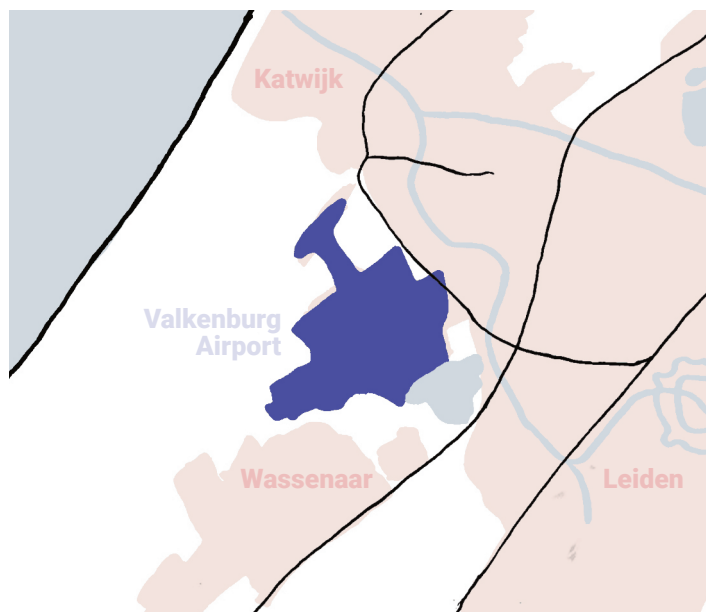


A European story

Our common heritage

We look at Valkenburg airport (western Netherlands) through the perspective of European collective heritage of the traumascape of the Second World War.

From Valkenburg Airport - to Atlantikwall



Valkenburg Airport

The site of the project is Valkenburg Airport, a former military airport next to Leiden. During Second World War, it was used by Germans.



2 km

■ Design area – Valkenburg airport

■ Built up area

■ Water

— Main roads

Map 1 Valkenburg airport (by Viola Ebermannová)



Defenses along the Dutch coast

It was one piece in a structure of defenses along the western border of area under the German control – the Atlantic Wall.



50 km

■ Design area

■ Atlantic wall

■ The Netherlands

Map 2 Position of Valkenburg airport within Dutch segment of the Atlantic wall (by Viola Ebermannová)



Atlantic Wall as European structure

The Atlantic wall spun along the majority of the western coasts of Europe, across multiple nations. Although individual pieces of heritage that remain from it in the different countries are valuable as standalones, we believe that the most important value of the heritage of the Atlantic wall lies in its multinational/collective nature.



500 km

■ Atlantic wall

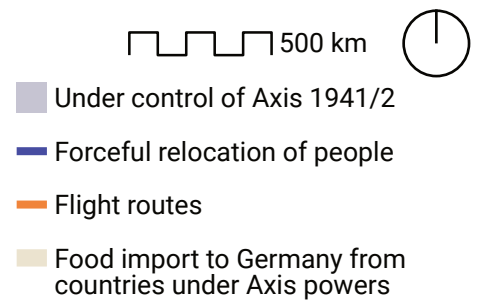
■ The Netherlands

Map 3 Atlantic wall in Europe (by Viola Ebermannová)

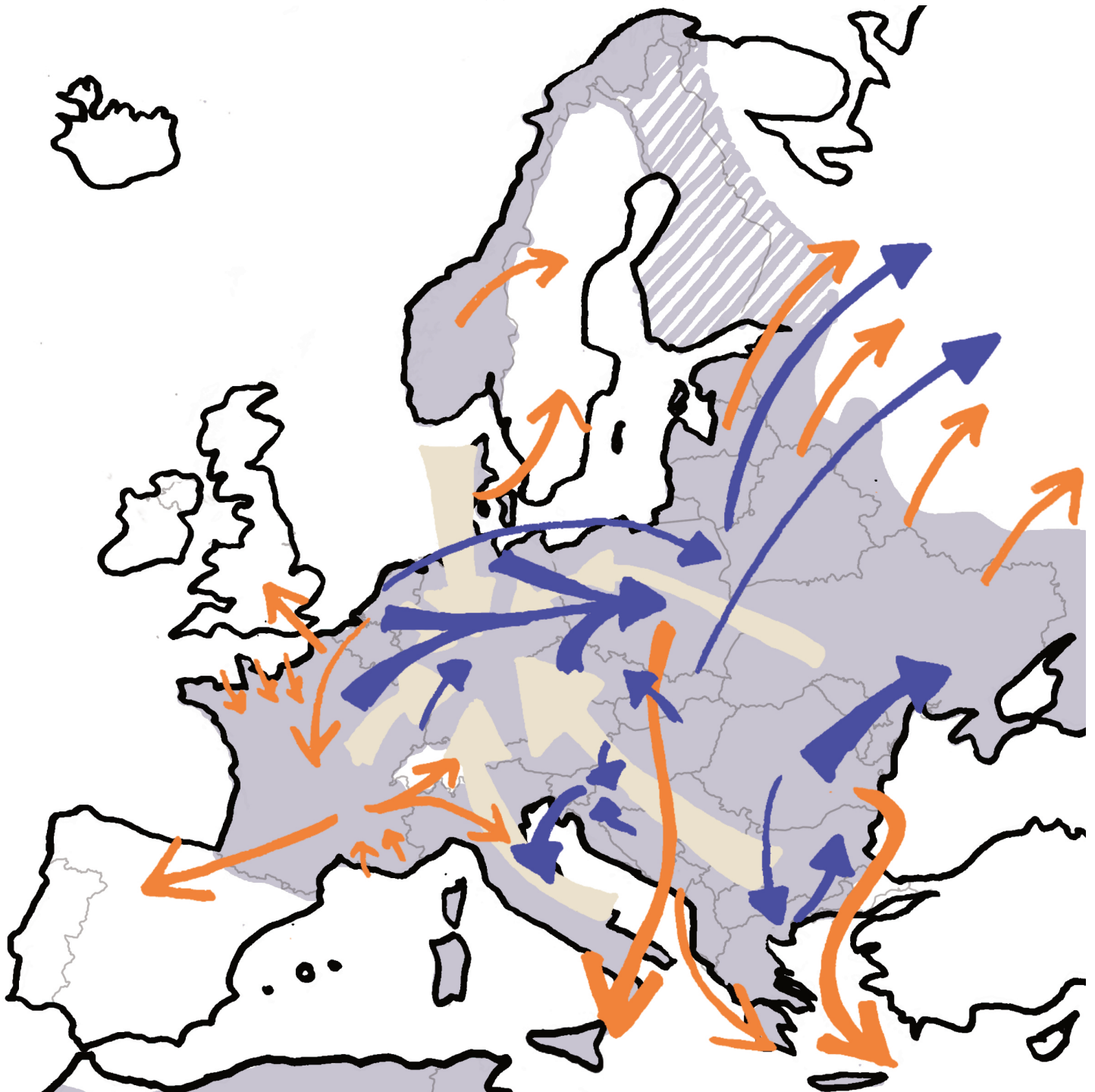
- to the complex World War 2

If we are looking at the individual pieces of heritage along the Atlantic wall in international context of the whole structure as a symbol of the German area of control, it is only right that by the same logic, we look at the Atlantic wall through the lens of the whole area under German power. The Second World War was a complex conflict that affected every country in Europe. Mass destruction was accompanied by movement of large volumes of materials, machines, and people across the continent.

For us, the starting point was the Atlantic Wall, which we understand as a symbol of European collective memory of the war, therefore we stop zooming out on the European scale. However, it would definitely be valuable to look at the World War at the actual scale of the conflict – the Global scale.



Map 4 European main movement flows in WW2 (based on Complex flows (Milward 1977) (National Planning Association 1944) (US Holocaust Memorial Museum n.d.) (Wikipedia 2025k)) (by Viola Ebermannová)



Allied victory and European aftermath

WW2 lasted officially from 1 September 1939 to 2 September 1945. On the side of Allies fought, among others, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and United States. Axis powers were composed of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Japan, and others.

Focusing on the European theatre of the war, an important date is 8 May 1945 (9 May Moscow time), when Germany surrendered. This was after the Allies liberated the territory previously under Axis power from East and West. United States, UK, and others fighting on the Western front met with USSR and others fighting on the Eastern front on the "Line of contact". The last battle in Europe was the Battle of Odžak (today's Bosnia and Herzegovina, until 25 May 1945).

(Wikipedia 2025k) (Wikipedia 2025l) (Wikipedia 2025m)

WW2 as a catalyzer of European integration and the birth of EU

The war experience put forward the urgency for European integration, which was already advocated for by some in the interwar period. The aftermath of WW2 saw the birth of institutions that later evolved into the European Union.

Focusing on democracy and human rights: on 5 May 1949 (a month and a day after the birth of NATO), The Council of Europe was established, which put the European Convention on Human Rights into force on 3 September 1953.

Focusing on economy: on 18 April 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was created to run coal and steel industries (of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg) under common management, to make sure no single country can make weapons to turn against others. In 1957, the 6 countries of ECSC expanded their collaboration also to European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

The first meeting of the European Parliamentary Assembly happened on 19 March 1958, and on 30 March 1962, the institution changed its name to the European Parliament.

The European Union was officially created by the Maastricht treaty, signed in 1992.

(Wikipedia 2025n) (European Union n.d.a) (European Union n.d.b)

Map 5 From the height of German expansion to Allied victory (based on: (Wikipedia 2025k)) (by Viola Ebermannová)



300 km



Diverse European narratives of WW2

World War II is an event significant in worldwide collective memory. While it affected every country in Europe, regional, national, and local experiences and memories connected to it differ largely. The general narrative in western Europe has shifted from national and democratic values to focus on human rights. But in different nations, the narratives are more complex and sometimes conflicting.

How should we deal with this non-uniformity across nations within our shared European (and European Union) identity? "The Europeanization of memory cannot and should not result in the denationalization of the respective political memory cultures." (Echternkamp & Martens 2010) Simplifying the story of WW2 to create a uniform European narrative (i.e. of suffering 'under the war') would be directly in conflict with the European Union motto "United in Diversity." (European Union n.d.) "A 'European identity' is supposed to increase the acceptance and legitimacy of the Union and to contribute to overcoming nationalism and racism in Europe." (Echternkamp & Martens 2010)

In our project, we aim to strengthen historical consciousness (as argued by Echternkamp & Martens 2010) by promoting empathy and mutual understanding between nations, and undermining the nationalistic perspective in understanding nation's position in the event and the world that followed. This should lead to a complex collective memory, which allows for contextualisation of personal and collective heritage and experiences, improving European integration while embracing the diversity.

(Echternkamp & Martens 2010) (European Union n.d.c)
(Kesteloot 2010) (Piccoli 2024)

Even within the **Netherlands**, the understanding of the meaning of the Second World War to national identity is complicated:

"Dutch society looks at the Second World War as a decisive factor in terms of national identity. At the end of the war, the Dutch were proud – proud to have been resistance fighters and proud especially to have contributed to the rescue of Jews. But in the course of the decades, this heroic image became tainted. The Dutch were not the heroic resistance fighters they considered themselves to have been. They saved their Jewish neighbors less often than people in other countries."

"This process of realization would actually turn into a 'trauma,' fed by feelings of shame and guilt. The ideas of tolerance and respect toward minorities are, after all, integral parts of Dutch national identity."

"When the past ceases to be a source of pride, it becomes a source of shame and the Dutch began to perceive themselves as the victims of their own lack of heroism."

(Kesteloot 2010)

"In Poland, the feeling of one's own victimhood complicates the recognition of the Jewish victims and prevents the thematization of Catholic anti-Semitism." (Echternkamp & Martens 2010)

"In Hungary, self-perception is primarily shaped by the feeling of having been a victim of communist, National Socialist, and Habsburg oppression." (Echternkamp & Martens 2010)



— Line of contact Map 6 European perspective on WW2

— Iron Curtain

Holidays commemorating end of WW2 (Wikipedia 2025j)

29/11 25/4 5/5 8/5 8+9/5 9/5

Not a holiday

Fig. 2 In 2007, the relocation of the main Soviet war memorial away from the center of Tallinn lead to violent riots and international political issues (BBC 2007)



Narratives of the Second World War in the Russo-Ukrainian War

„drawing links between the current war and World War Two ... is a tactic that both states are using as a means to highlight the unprecedented nature of the war, formulate a distinct national understanding of the war, and link their current rivals with those of the past.” (Piccoli 2024)

In **Russia**, WW2 is referred to as the Great Patriotic War (22 June 1941 - 9 May 1945). „... The ‘sacred’ narrative, which had existed for years, helped the state to frame the Ukrainian armed forces as twenty-first century ‘Nazis’, present NATO as the funders of said twenty-first century ‘Nazis’, and illustrate the current war as a continuation of the struggle against Russia’s historic enemies.”

Memory of WW2 is now not questioned, with a unified, highly politicised, and mythologised narrative that has been driven by continuous interaction with neighbours. Media put into light the current conflict as a part of the longstanding struggle against western enemies (also not calling it a ‘war’, but rather a ‘special military operation’.)

(Piccoli 2024)

In **Ukraine**, WW2 is remembered in non-uniform, not mythologised way. The heritage of nationalists, collaborationists, partisans, and soviet Red Army makes it „difficult to use WW2 to foster a national identity”. Still, Ukrainian national news agency (Ukrinform) uses the WW2 narrative for both Ukrainian and international audiences, much more often than Russian media. The narratives are used in a broad way, as not to delve into the complex varied legacy, but demonstrate the gravity of the current conflict by linking it with the past.

Narratives in Ukraine are showing it leaning towards Western Europe. However, „Ignoring’ some crimes committed by nationalist groups could present issues with future integration with Europe” – but in the time of war, it is even more unlikely these conflicting narratives will be resolved.

(Piccoli 2024)

2023: „Ukrainian Rada adopted a bill constituting May 8 the Day of Remembrance and victory over Nazism in the Second World War in Ukraine”, ending the May 8 - May 9 discussion, and leaning towards the Western European narrative.

(interfax-Ukraine 2023)

Česko protíná „fantomová“ hranice. Hitlerova linie dodnes ovlivňuje i volby

26. 7. 2024 8:20

Hranice Sudet od války neexistuje, přesto se i po 80 letech propisuje do zájmů lidí o politiku, do výše nezaměstnanosti nebo počtu exekucí. Seznam Zprávy přináší reportáž ze dvou obcí na pomezí historické linie.

Czech news article: „Czechia is crossed by a ‘phantom’ border. Hitler’s line influences elections even today.”

„The borders of Sudetenland have not existed since the war, despite that even 80 years later, they manifest in citizen’s interest in politics, unemployment rates, or number of debt enforcements...” (Svoboda 2024)

Fig. 3 Screenshot of article (Svoboda 2024)

Narrating the story

We propose a cross-European train ride with stations as a way to tell a pan-European story of WW2 comprised of chapters with diverse local experiences.

European narrative concept

A train ride across the WW2 terrorscape, showing the machine of the war and diverse experiences of nations and people. A chance to immerse into memories and stories told through the eyes of people of the time. Can we be empathetic towards them? How can we judge them? And what shall we learn from them?

Main narrative

The journey is tied together by a main narrative line of more and less connected experiences of war protagonists (Fig. 4). The characters present in every chapter are an innocent child, and an unknown German soldier (Fig. 5.) Through the innocent child, we can see the horrors of war clearly, untainted by guilt. On the other hand, through experiencing the story through the lens of the unknown German soldier, we can explore our position on blame, guilt, compliance or victimhood. What would we do in his situation? What would have been the right way to act?

Network of local stories

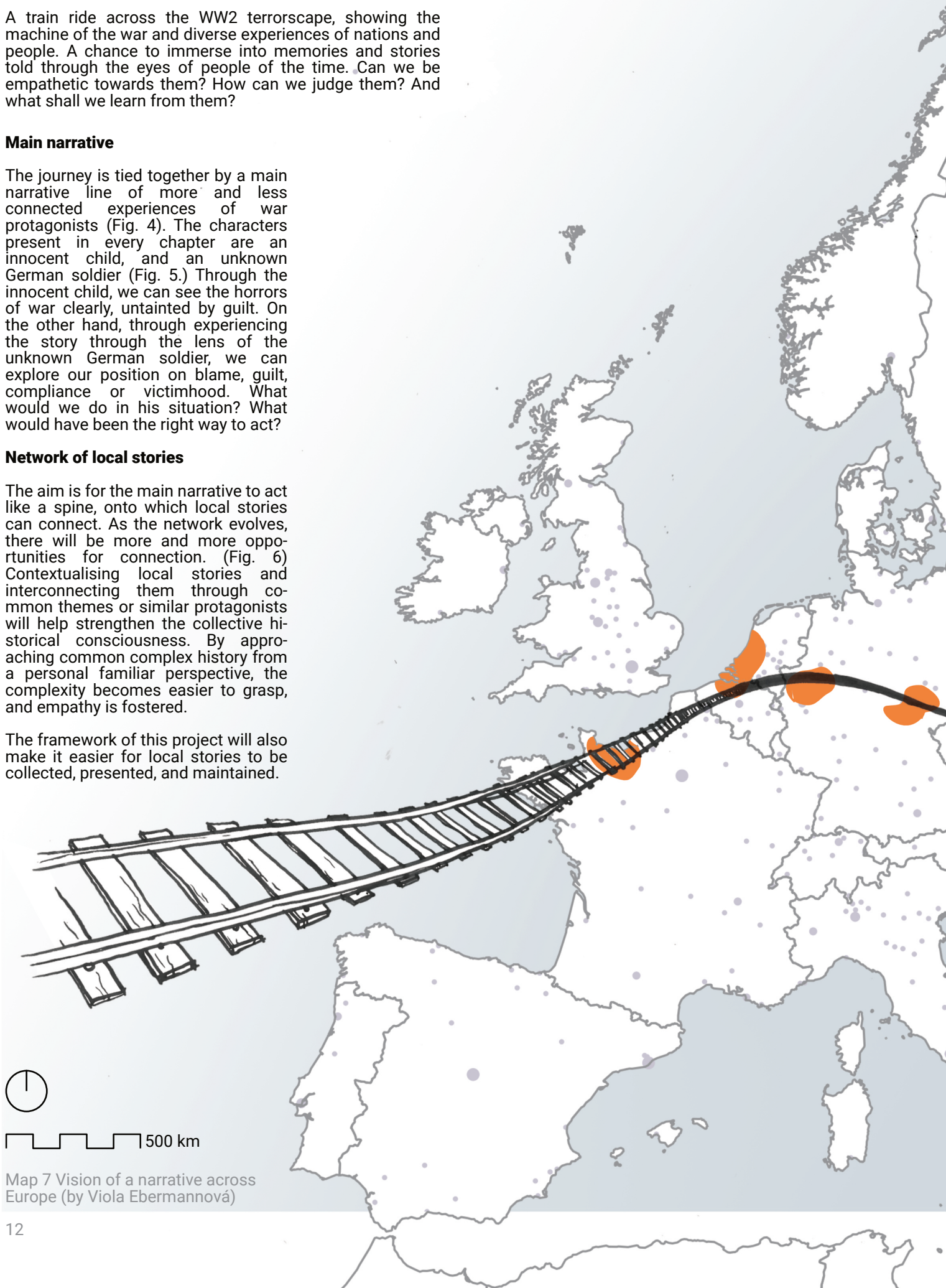
The aim is for the main narrative to act like a spine, onto which local stories can connect. As the network evolves, there will be more and more opportunities for connection. (Fig. 6) Contextualising local stories and interconnecting them through common themes or similar protagonists will help strengthen the collective historical consciousness. By approaching common complex history from a personal familiar perspective, the complexity becomes easier to grasp, and empathy is fostered.

The framework of this project will also make it easier for local stories to be collected, presented, and maintained.



500 km

Map 7 Vision of a narrative across Europe (by Viola Ebermannová)



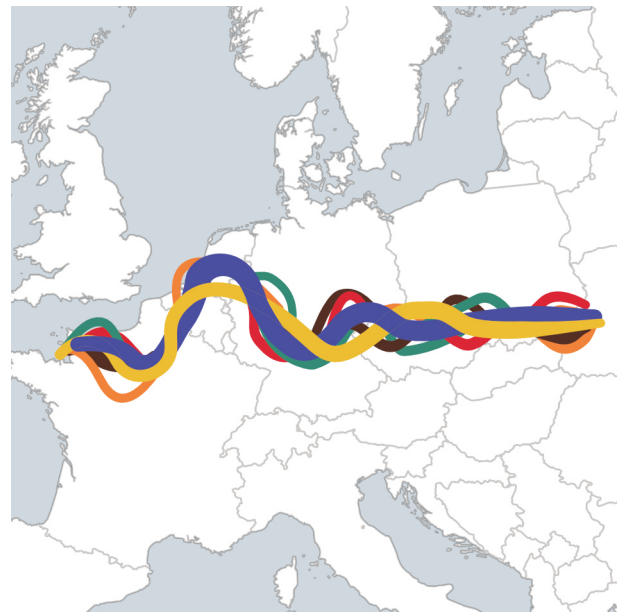


Fig. 4 Tangled narratives (by Viola Ebermannová)



Fig. 5 Protagonists, in foreground: innocent child, unknown German soldier (by Viola Ebermannová)

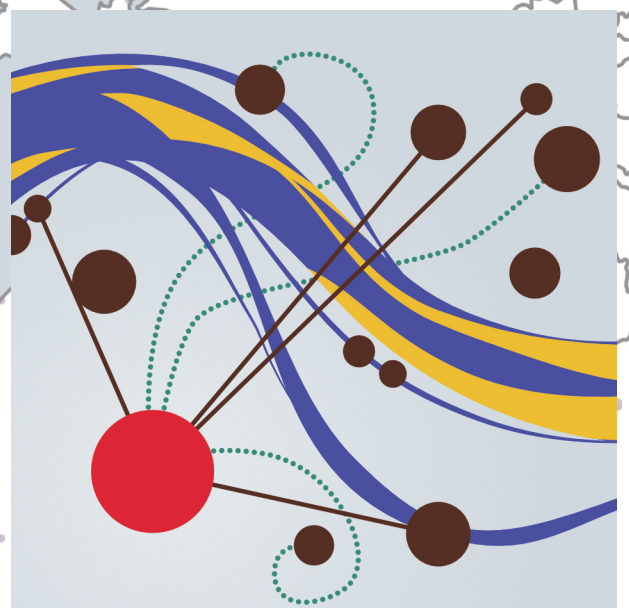


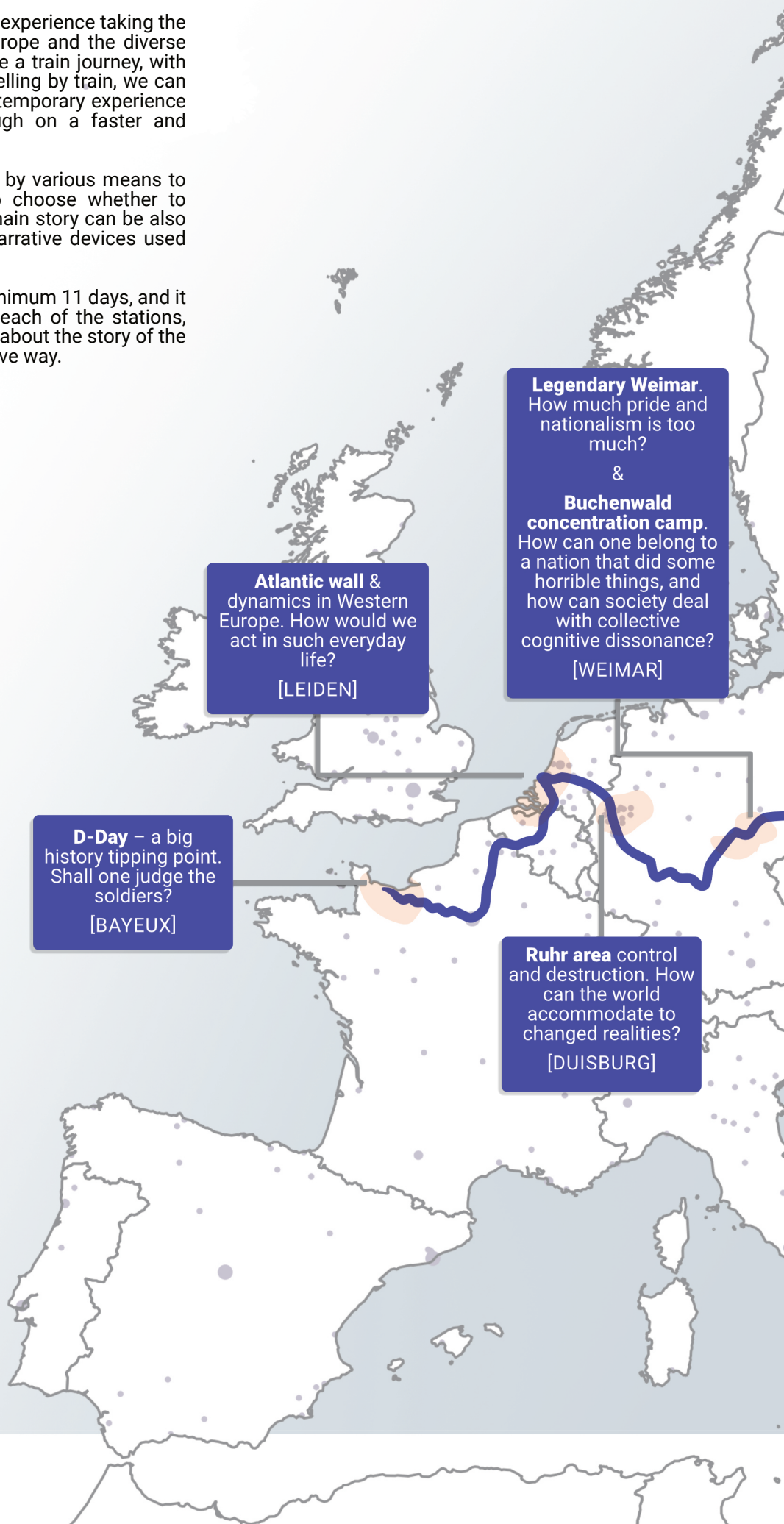
Fig. 6 Connected narratives (by Viola Ebermannová)

Main story concept

The main story is an immersive travel experience taking the participants on a journey through Europe and the diverse narratives on WW2. It is planned to be a train journey, with stations in significant places. By travelling by train, we can come slightly closer to the WW2 contemporary experience of travelling through Europe, although on a faster and developed rail network.

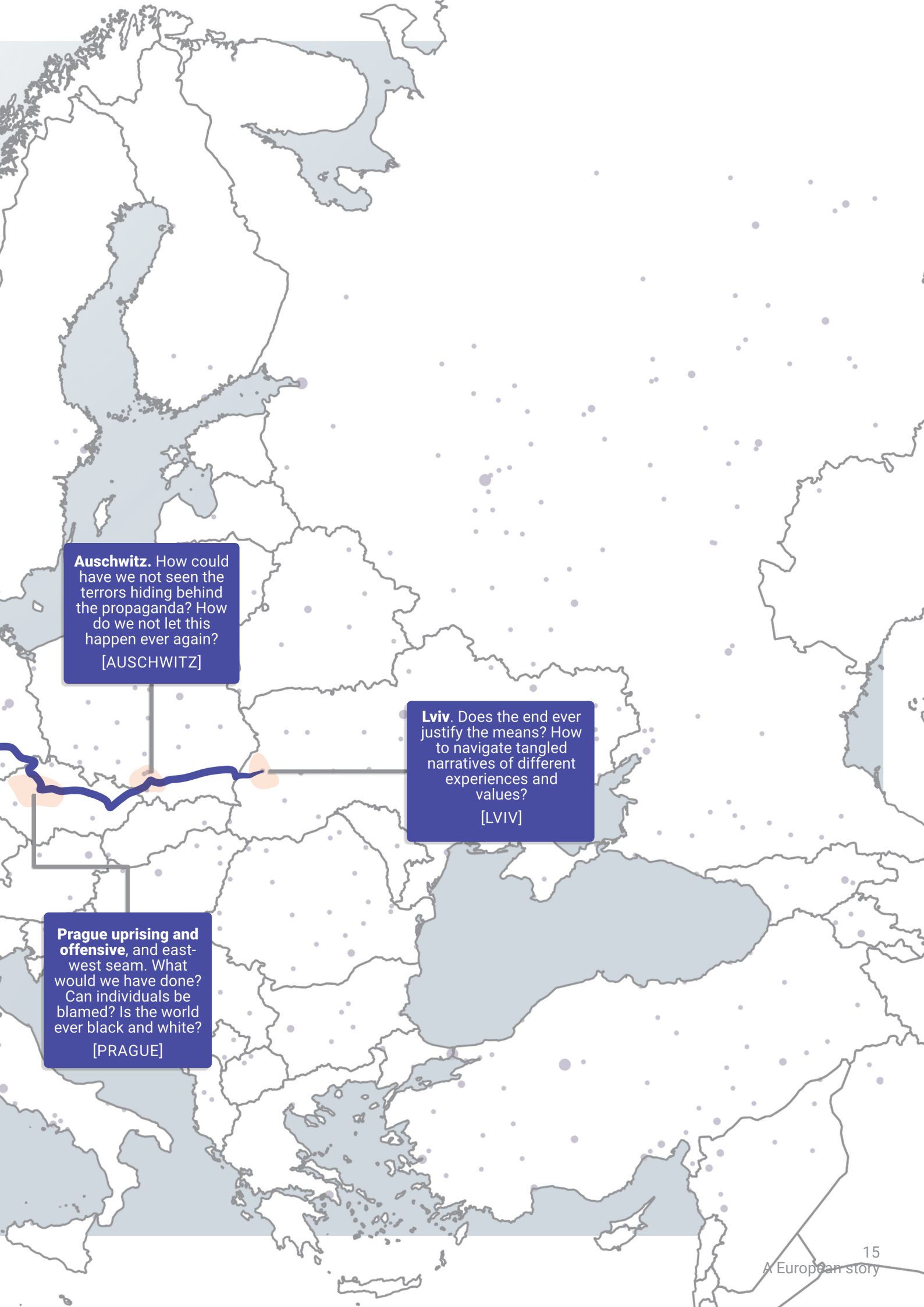
The physical experience is expanded by various means to offer different means for people to choose whether to explore more of their interests. The main story can be also experienced virtually. The different narrative devices used are explained on the next spread.

The length of the physical trip is at minimum 11 days, and it is possible to do it only partially. In each of the stations, there will be a route prepared to learn about the story of the protagonists in an active and immersive way.



500 km

Map 8 Route of main narrative on European railway network with chapters of main narrative (by Viola Ebermannová)

A map of Europe with a light gray background and dark gray outlines of countries. Numerous small purple dots are scattered across the landmasses. Three callout boxes with dark blue backgrounds and white text are connected by thin gray lines to specific locations. The first box is in Poland, the second in Ukraine, and the third in the Czech Republic. A thick blue line runs horizontally across the middle of the map, passing through the locations of the first two boxes. Three orange circles are placed along this line: one in the Atlantic, one in the North Sea, and one in the Baltic Sea.

Auschwitz. How could we not see the terrors hiding behind the propaganda? How do we not let this happen ever again?
[AUSCHWITZ]

Lviv. Does the end ever justify the means? How to navigate tangled narratives of different experiences and values?
[LVIV]

Prague uprising and offensive, and east-west seam. What would we have done? Can individuals be blamed? Is the world ever black and white?
[PRAGUE]

Narrative devices

The main narrative can be experienced virtually. This can be an addition to the physical train journey, or a standalone experience. The website gives an overview of all the stories and the routes that the journey takes. Each place can be explored separately, where you can find the different stories of the local personas. The website contains one brochure per site. The brochure shows and explains the route on the local level and explains the stories of the local personas. The brochure can be downloaded or printed out before people take the journey, or picked up at a tourist information center.

There is also a “passport” – a physical notebook that can be brought with you on the journey. At every site you can get a unique stamp with the date to mark off the sites of the journey. At every site you can buy postcards as a souvenir, and you can buy fictional books that tell stories about World War II.

The experience is also accompanied by an app, that can be downloaded on a phone. The app provides information on the routes, additional background information, additional videos, podcasts, short stories and thematic articles, and games.

The website and app have a section for stories, that are not part of the main narrative. It is a place where stories from all over Europe, and perhaps also further in the world, can be seen and related.

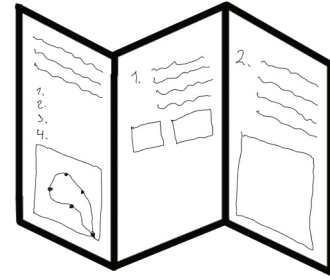


Fig. 7 A brochure for each site/chapter (by Milou Overdevest)

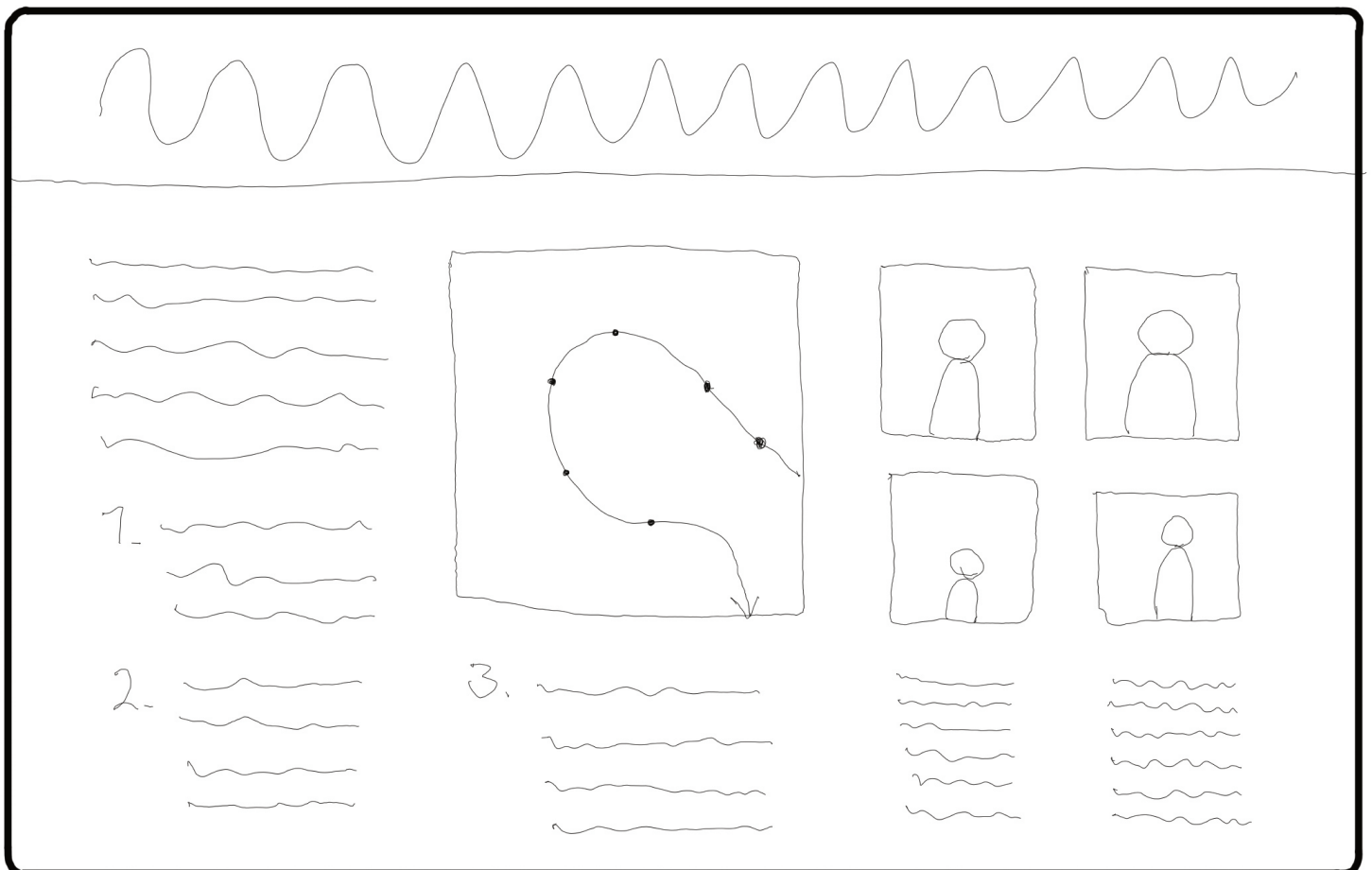


Fig. 8 A website tying the network of stories together (by Milou Overdevest)

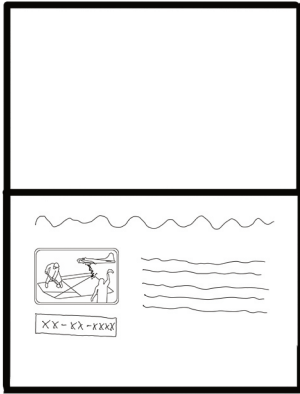


Fig. 9 Passport to collect stamps for each story visited
(by Milou Overdevest)



Fig. 10 Collectible postcards
(by Milou Overdevest)



Fig. 11 Fiction short stories and novels
(by Milou Overdevest)

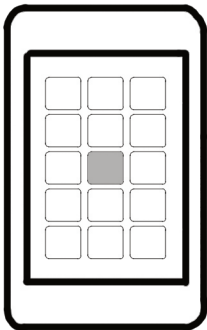


Fig. 12 An accompanying phone app...
(by Milou Overdevest)

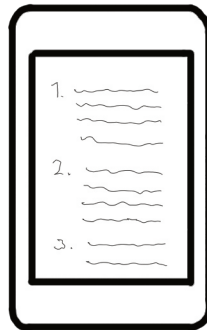


Fig. 13 ...with background information, stories,...
(by Milou Overdevest)

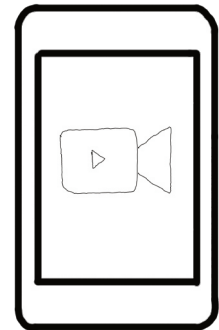


Fig. 14 ...additional videos,...
(by Milou Overdevest)

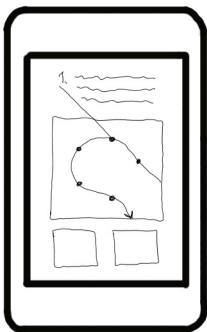


Fig. 15 ...virtual brochures and route descriptions,...
(by Milou Overdevest)

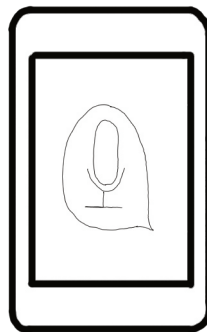


Fig. 16 ...podcasts and interviews,...
(by Milou Overdevest)

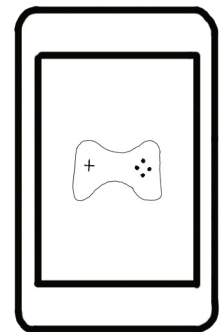


Fig. 17 ...and with thematic games
(by Milou Overdevest)

Main story – outline

This is not an exhaustive retelling of events of the war, and the endless array of personal experiences, but rather an invitation to look at the events through the eyes of different protagonists. With that, complexity is hinted and invited to explore and think about.

An overarching theme of the story is to show different beliefs people had of the "truth", and how narratives that were enforced in the war still persist in current culture and collective worldviews and identities.

On the train rides, there is an option to read, listen, watch, or play about different stories related to the war and the origins of Europe in the surrounding areas.

Although we believe in the foreseeable future it will always be important to remember our common past and the Second World War, that doesn't mean our perception of it will not change. This story does not need to stay the same forever, new stories and points can be added to it, evolving it together with the world. However, it should always stay critical and aim at provoking people's thoughts about the relations between the past, the present, the future, and the role they can play in shaping them.



Fig. 18 Overview of travel agenda (By Viola Ebermannová)



A German Unknown soldier

The German Unknown soldier overarching story offers people a look at history from an uncomfortable point of view, bringing thoughts about guilt, blame, and ways one's humanity can warp to accommodate for difficult realities and heaviness of one's actions. This is also a story of navigating propaganda, lived experience, and other sources of beliefs and knowledge.

By viewing the terrible events of the war through the eyes of a regular soldier on the "bad" side, what can we learn about ourselves?



A child

Accommodation to difficult reality is also a large part of the stories of the children, who were innocent victims of war. Through their eyes, we can see and feel the horrors of war (contextualised within the stories of adult protagonists.)

By empathising with the truly innocent victims of the war, do our feelings towards other actors change?



Various locals

By bringing up stories of locals, an array of different European experiences and narratives is showcased, promoting empathy amongst different nationalities. This also seeks to open conversations about our shared and different values, and how we did or did not act on them and why.

What can we learn from each other, both from our qualities and successes, but also from our faults and the mistakes we, our ancestors, and our societies made?

D-Day – a big history tipping point (Bayeux)

- Big history tipping point
- Everything eventually comes to an end
- European soldiers on both sides, with different stories, life situations, beliefs, and knowledge – how shall one judge them?

Through Paris and The Hague, stories of international relations and WW2 aftermath
~6.5-7 h

German unknown soldier who fought in battle. We can only imagine what they felt, thought, believed.

A child who got etched into their memory...
- the frightening rumble of battle behind the walls of their home
- welcoming of the allied soldiers
- aunt and uncle who died in Caen bombings, and search of the ruins

Luftwaffe fighter who is a firm believer in Nazi narrative and in unifying Europe under German hand

French soldier with a love for his country who is directly fighting for the freedom of his homeland.

Norwegian soldier who joined Allied forces in Britain to fight for the right thing, even if not directly in his own country.

Over the ocean soldier (US/ Canadian) - what does he believe in? Is motivation different than others, so far from home?

(Cartwright 2024)
(DDay.org 2024)

Atlantic wall & dynamics in Western Europe

- The large structure of "unbreakable" Atlantic wall
- Dynamics between Germans and Dutch – cocktail of hatred and tolerance, living side by side
- Local labourer dynamics
- Hunger of the later stages of the war

Across Netherlands-Germany border, stories about dynamics before the war
~3 h

German unknown soldier who came to establish an unbreakable defense line, maybe he is grateful to be here and not on the front, perhaps parties with dutch girls. What could a soldier feel?

A child who got etched into their memory...
- panicked flight from the Germans to Valkenburg
- very hungry war years
- exciting food drops

Dutch guy who doesn't like Germans, but lives next to them has to work for them. Feeling like a victim, as well as guilty for working for them and not getting out of it.

(Kesteloot 2010) (Rijpsma et al. 2024)(Wikipedia 2025h)(Wikipedia 2025i)

Ruhr area control and destruction

- The Allied bombings of industry and civilians (12. 3. 1945 Dortmund), how much of identity was erased? How did it change the city and society?
- Economic control of the industrial area after the war (also as a stepping stone towards EU)
- How did Germans feel about the control imposed on them?

Across Germany, stories of propaganda and everyday life and people
~3 h

German unknown soldier who helps the city recover after bombings.

A child who got etched into their memory...
- the days their father and later their brothers (still children) left for war
- the sirens and air raids on March 12 1945, the injured, the broken city, the American soldiers who then came to free the city

Young factory worker woman who remembers the city as it was and ponders on how it can raise from the ashes. Works at the factories to produce war material for the men of her family at the front. How did the large German surrender after the encirclement of the Ruhr pocket feel?

(Wikipedia 2025c)
(Kaeckenbeeck et al. 1951)

Legendary Weimar

- The "national legend" of German culture, pride, and culture that was considered "degenerate"
- The ease of consuming and believing propaganda
- Impact of air raids on culture – how did Weimar deal with losses?

German unknown soldier who is stationed in Weimar, has space for recreation, having fun and partying. What did he "know" and believe from propaganda and media and conversations with others?

A rich man living in Weimar, who enjoys German culture and is too old to fight. What did he "know" of the war? What did he "know" about Buchenwald?

A boy who got etched into his memory...
 - the friends and amazing leaders in Jungvolk (Hitler Youth for boys 10-14)
 - the gradual introduction of the world "war" into their life, honoring the war dead in Jungvolk
 - the air raid, clearing ruins, the American soldiers and the Soviets that replaced them

A girl who got etched into her memory...
 - the friends and amazing leaders in Jungmädelbund (for girls 10-14)
 - the gradual introduction of the world "war" into her life, activities of Jungmädelbund
 - the air raid, helping the injured, the American soldiers and the Soviets that replaced them

(Wikipedia 2025c)
 (Wikipedia 2025d)
 (Kaeckenbeeck et al. 1951)

Buchenwald concentration camp

- The contrast of reality with the national legend. How can one fit their knowledge with their (disconnected) beliefs?
- Can you be proud of culture so connected to something so rotten?
- Different ways to find hope in concentration camp

German unknown soldier who came to check the camp (and international prisoners of war) after Weimar bomb raid. How did what he saw fit into what he believed? How does knowing and experiencing fit with propaganda and personal integrity?

A rich man living in Weimar, who is made to walk through the camp after German capitulation on 12. 4. 1945.

A child who got etched into their memory...
 - memories of parents at the previous camp in eastern Europe
 - their arrival at the camp and introduction to other children at the children block
 - nice adults who helped them survive

A group of international prisoners of war who bonds together in captivity, makes plans for after war, and shares personal stories. Later transferred to Stalag Luft III. How did they perceive the war and learn about the progress in the camp? How and in what did they hope?

A tactical prisoner who lives his life smart and calculated, and complies with the system, so that he has the best chance to live. Worked himself up to prisoner functionary.

A woman in the camp brothel, who was taken from camp Ravensbrück, and now is forced to be a pawn in the Buchenwald "award system for enhancing inmate productivity". What did she find hope in?

(Buchenwald Memorial n.d.)



Across Germany-Czechia border, stories about Sudetenland and the beginnings of the war
~5.5 h

Prague uprising and offensive, and east-west seam

- End of war close to the line of contact, preference of captivity in the west
- How does a war end? – the difference between the end time of the war on paper at a specific hour, actual end in the field, and the remains of the strong narratives established during the war on events even in 21st century
- Complexity of national identity
- Ambiguity of "good" and "bad"
- What would we do when faced with the decisions people had to make?



Across Czechia and Poland, stories of ordinary people from an intercultural land
~5 h

Auschwitz

- What was hiding beyond the propaganda – how could we have not seen it for so long?
- The endless web of people and their stories affected, mutilated, and killed by the war



German unknown soldier who fought in the uprising, against civilians and teenagers on the barricades, and later the red army soldiers, saw his friends being unlawfully executed, and people accused of being German prosecuted, trying to flee to the west to American captivity.

A child who got etched into their memory...
- being on streets and hiding in the cellar during the fights
- greeting the red army
- running around and taping over German signs

A Russian soldier in the Russian Liberation Army (RLA, fighting against Soviets as part of Axis). RLA turned sides and fought against the Germans. Fighting together with Czech people, trying to flee to the west to American captivity before the Soviets capture and execute them, or send them to gulag.

A Czech person passionately fighting in the uprising with an "end justifies the means" mindset.

A Czech person who saw their Jewish neighbours being deported and replaced by Nazi officials - and said nothing, sees the fights of the uprising - but doesn't think they could be helpful, sees the people tormenting captured Germans (who might not actually done anything "Nazi") - and says nothing. The relief of the Red Army coming. Would we act differently?

(Fiala 2019)
(Kroupa 2020)

German unknown soldier who is on inspection in the camp, meets and sees a lot of people. What would we be thinking in his place?

A child who got etched into their memory many losses...
- the people who died on the cattle train
- their siblings who were not picked to live at the arrival, because they were too young to work
- having to say goodbye to the remainder of their family after being moved to a different part of the camp
- friends who got sick and died and were killed
- older friends who were sent on death march

...but looking forward...
- slightly older, much weaker, cold, being liberated, thinking of what might come now

Various prisoners whose stories are presented in different detail levels. Through the eyes of the unknown German soldier, the vast terrors of the camp are seen. With each person he briefly sees, we can choose to learn their story – building a mosaic of personal stories showing the scope of this. Some stories have already been forgotten – we should care to not forget any more.

(Auschwitz-Birkenau S. M. 2025)
(Wikipedia 2025f)

Across Poland and Polish-Ukrainian border, stories of partisans and logistics of eastern front.

~7 h

Lviv

- Dynamics between Germany and Eastern Europe/Soviets, the Hunger Plan
- Local partisans fighting for their goals, local participation on the Lviv 1941 pogrom – nationalism where the end justifies the means
- Navigating the different narratives and how they are still not clear

(note: because of the current use of narratives about WW2 in the narratives about the War in Ukraine, because of the timeframe of the studio not allowing to do proper research on the history, this is kept, perhaps cowardly, quite vague.)

German unknown soldier who overlooks the order in Lviv.

A child who got etched into their memory...
- friends (not only Jewish) being taken away
- pogrom behind windows
- hunger
- Red Army

A Ukrainian partisan who participates on the 1941 pogrom.

A Ukrainian citizen who is trying to navigate the complex narratives in media and public opinion.

(Wikipedia 2025g)
(Piccoli 2024)

A vision of the train journeys

The experience should not be devastating or overwhelming. By offering a wide variety of possibilities to interact with and learn about the stories, we hope to create an immersive learning experience that fosters empathy and understanding – for each other as well as for oneself.

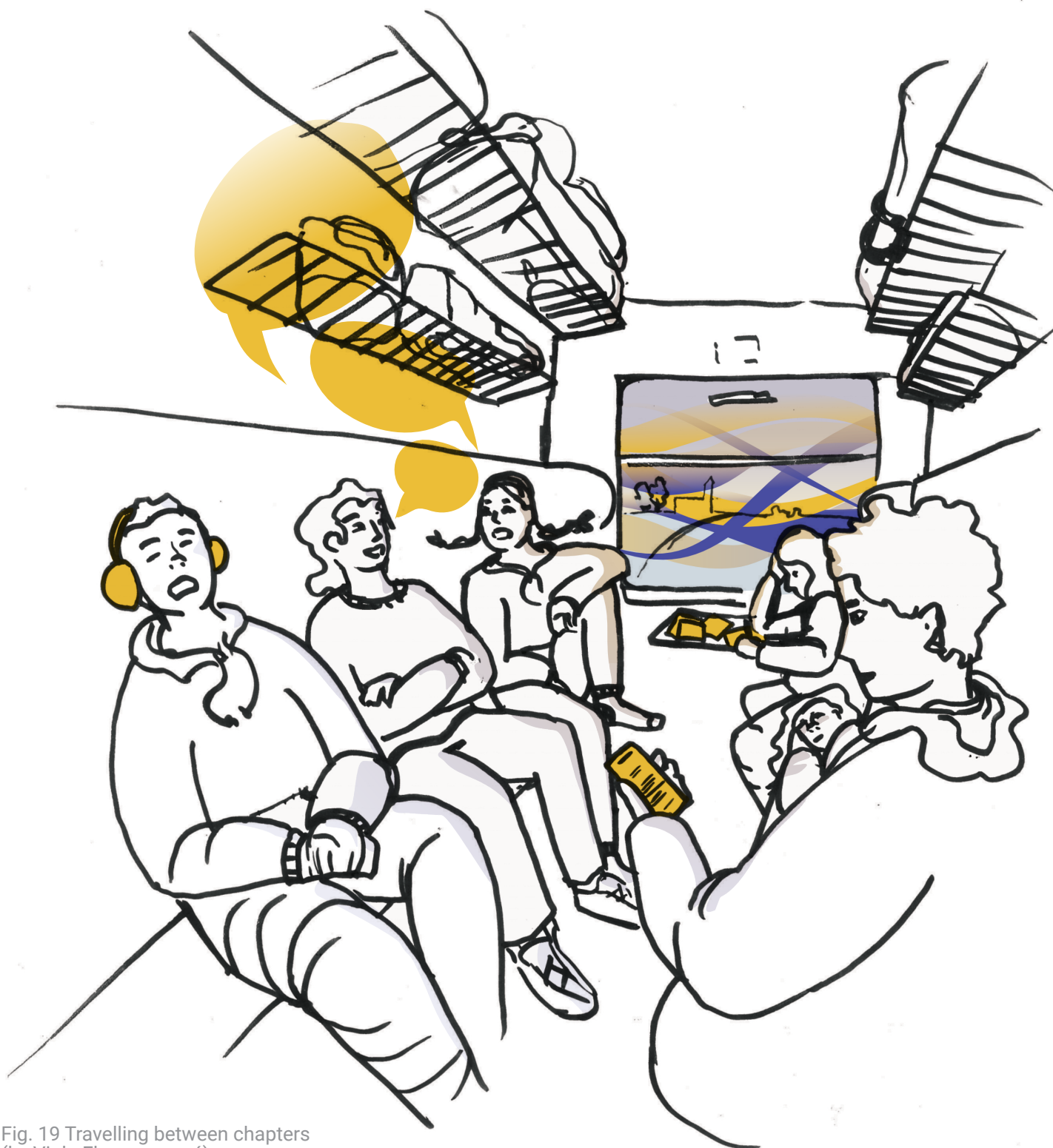


Fig. 19 Travelling between chapters
(by Viola Ebermannová)



The story of Atlantikwall in Leiden (NL)

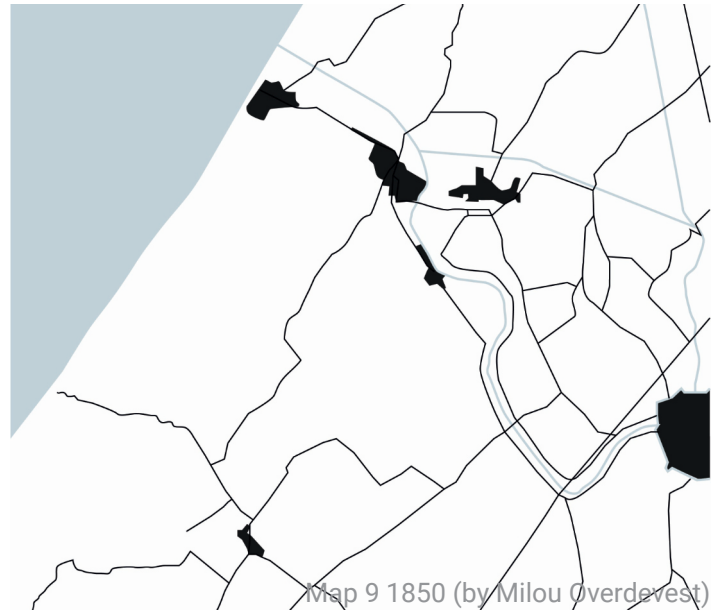
Analysis

We give an overview of the site of Valkenburg airport, its history and the future plans from the municipality.

Spatial history of Valkenburg-Katwijk-Leiden

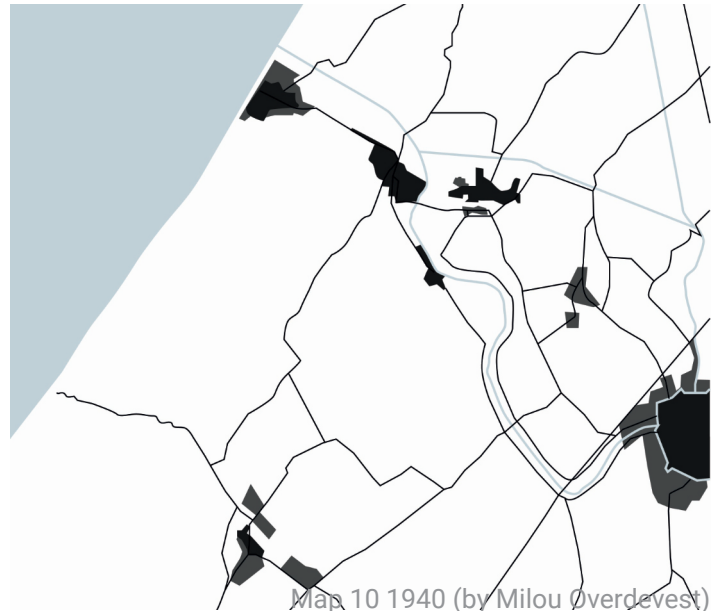
1850

Katwijk, Leiden, and Valkenburg are all separated villages. They are connected through infrastructure.



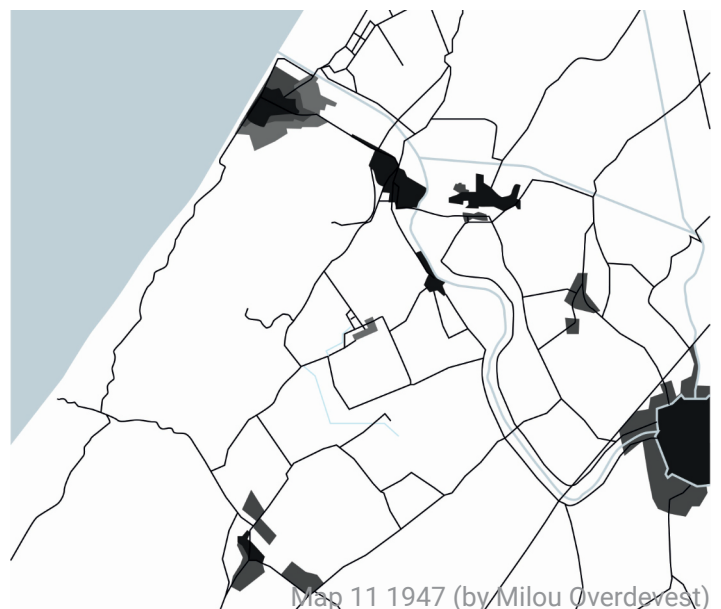
1940

The Germans invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. The construction of the airport had begun in 1939, so it had not been finished yet when the Germans took over. The Germans finished the airport and built the Barakkenbos, the tank ditch and the Bunkerbos between 1940-1943. After 1943 the Germans left the airport. Katwijk, Leiden and Valkenburg had little growth. The World War II ended in 1945.



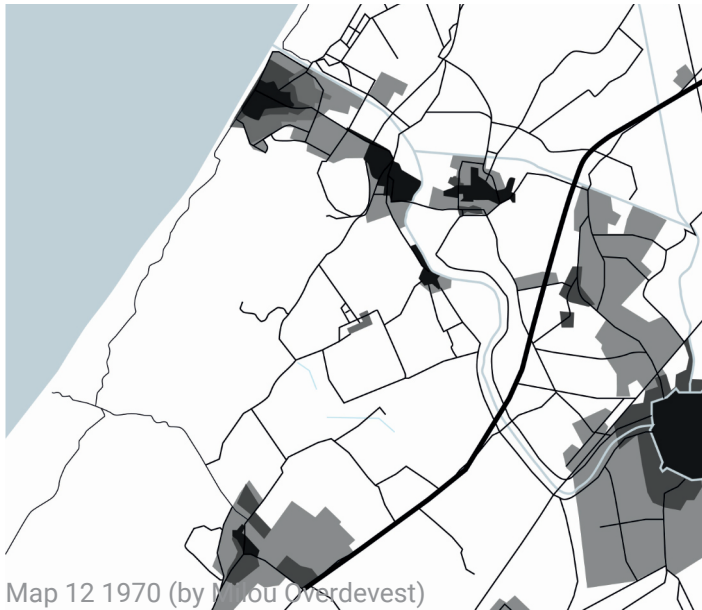
1947

The airport was given a Dutch military purpose in 1947. During the war a lot of new infrastructure to the airport and near the coast was built. The Barakkenbos was given a new function: the staff from the Valkenburg Airport started living here. In 1961 the Highway was constructed.



2 km

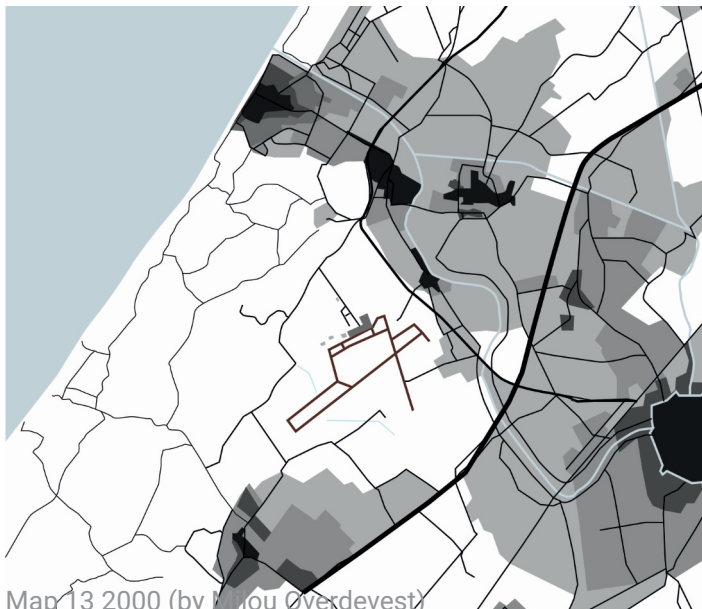
Maps on spread based on Topotijdreis



Map 12 1970 (by Milou Overdeest)

1970

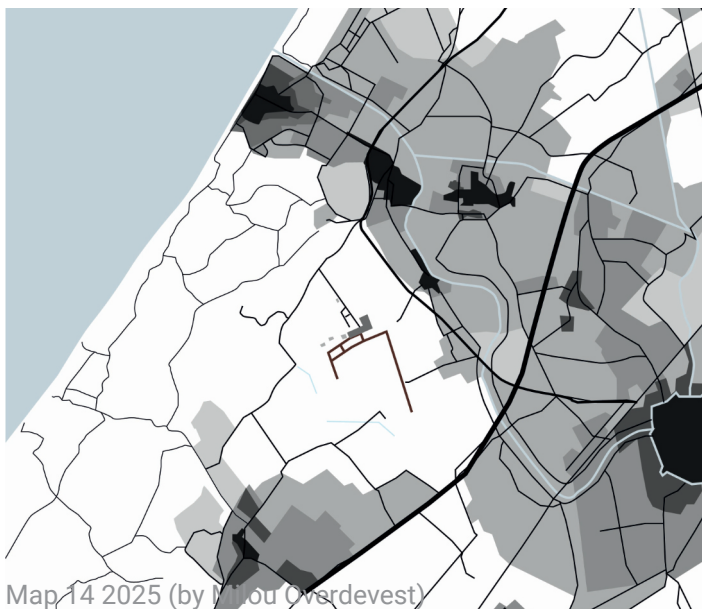
The tank ditch was partly filled in because the airport wanted to expand their runway into this area. The cities grew a lot in the meantime.



Map 13 2000 (by Milou Overdeest)

2000

The cities grew a lot and were connected with each other. In 2006 the airport was not in use anymore due to budget cuts from the government. In 2013 a part of the runway has been removed, because the municipality wanted to build houses on this area.



Map 14 2025 (by Milou Overdeest)

2025

The cities grew more and densified a lot.

► If it wasn't for the Valkenburg airport area, this space would have likely been also developed from the direction of Leiden/Valkenburg.

Growing airport —

Built up area since 1850 —

Built up area since 1850 —

Built up area since 1850 —

Built up area since 1850 —

Built up area since 1850 —

Growing road network —

Water —

Valkenburg Airport history

Valkenburg airport is located near Valkenburg, Leiden and Wassenaar. It has a rich history that began when it was being constructed just before the Second World War. The airport had had multiple functions: it was occupied by the Germans during WW2, used for food drops during the Dutch Hunger winter, and used by the Dutch military. The airport officially closed down in 2006.

- Now, the future of the airport is uncertain. There are a lot of debates on what to do with the area. It has a lot of potential space to place new developments – but what are we doing with the heritage and the stories that this place holds? How do we prioritise the different history layers, from the prewar defense structure, through the complex WW2, to afterwar developments?

The focus of our project is on WW2 heritage.

17 April 1939: Construction started of the military airport Valkenburg.

10 May 1940: Germans are fighting for the Airport of Valkenburg, even though the airport has not been fully constructed yet. They conquered the airport on this day. In the evening the Dutch conquered the airport back. On 15 May 1940 the Netherlands surrendered, and the Germans got the airport back.

1940-1943: After the victory of the airport, the first transportation airplane landed on the airport. The soil was very soft, so the airplane was slowed down. Before they realised this, the next airplane already started to land on the runway, so they collided with each other. This happened with a lot of planes.

The occupiers finished the construction of the airport and called it "Fliegerhorst Katwijk". They used the airport for the defence of the coast region and to guide the boats in the sea. The Germans constructed a tank ditch around the airport as a defence.

1943: The occupiers made the airport unusable.

30 April - 7 May 1945: The English Airforce and the American Airforce used the airport of Valkenburg for food drops.

5 May 1945: Netherlands was liberated from the war. The Canadian Airforce came to the airport of Valkenburg to repair it. Within a week the airport was operational again.

15 October 1946: Valkenburg becomes a military airport: Marine Vliegkamp Valkenburg (MVKV).

February 1953: The "Watersnoodramp" in the Netherlands happened: a lot of the dikes broke, and a lot of areas were flooded around Zeeland. The airport served as a centre for the search and rescue service.

1950 - 1960: The airport served as a maintenance facility for the airplanes and helicopters from the military.

1959: Tank ditch was split into two parts because of the construction plans of a new runway for the airport.

1980-1982: The military bought new planes and therefore the airport needed to be modernised and expanded.

1990: Airport got designated as a government airport to receive foreign heads of state and other VIPs.

1 January 2006: Airport had to close down due to budget cuts on the Dutch military.

30 October 2010: One of the former Hangars of the airport has a new function: a theatre hangar. Up until now the popular musical "Soldaat of Oranje" has been played here.

2012: Municipality wants to build houses on the airport area. A part of the runway has been removed.

2016: Part of the airport is being used by a project: Unmanned Valley. This a project from the municipality of Katwijk and the TU Delft to research drone technology.

2020: Part of a Roman fort are found on the airport site.

2025: Dutch military says that in the current safety situation with ongoing wars, they might reopen and use the airport in the future.



Fig. 20 1940: German soldiers working on finishing the airport (Zwischen Ems und Schelde n.d.)



Fig. 21 1943: View of Valkenburg (NIMH 1943)



Fig. 22 1945: Food dropping above Valkenburg (Walhaus n.d.)



Fig. 23 1951: Vliegkamp Valkenburg during Cold war (Pot 1951)



Fig. 24 1980: Modernization of Valkenburg Airport (8b Van Vliegkamp... n.d.)

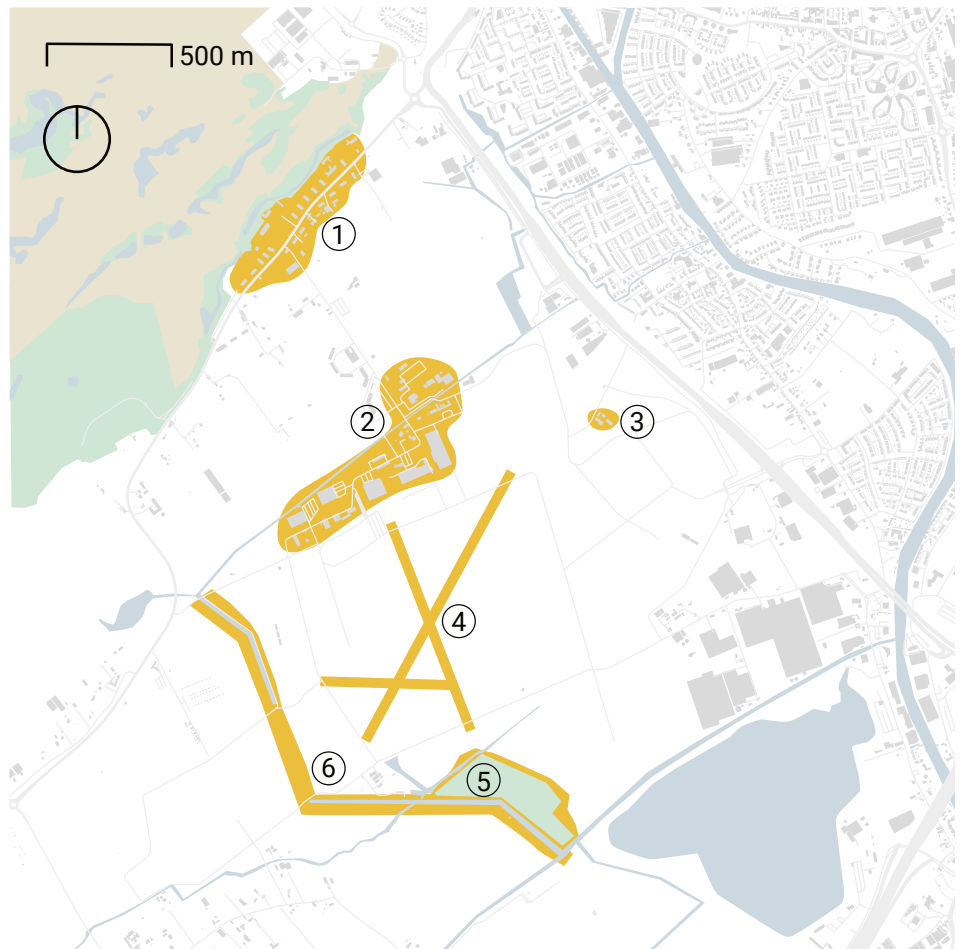


Fig. 25 2006: Last military airplane on Valkenburg Airport (NIMH 2006)

World War II heritage at Valkenburg Airport

Valkenburg has a few places that could be considered as World War II heritage sites: The Barakkendorp, the Valkenburg Airport buildings, the old farm building, the old runways, the Bunkerbos and the tank ditch. A building or a place/area is considered heritage when it has a certain value. These values can be personal and differ per person. The values could be social, economic, political, historic, aesthetical, scientific, age or ecological. A more detailed description of the values is listed on the next page. The World War II heritage sites of Valkenburg each have different values that we will discuss below.

- In our design we are only focused on the World War II heritage. But in this site, there is also heritage from other time periods. We chose for the World War II because our starting point for the design was the Atlantic Wall. Since the Atlantic Wall is constructed during the World War II, we chose to continue with this time period for the site of Valkenburg.



Map 15 Overview of WW2 values at site (by Milou Overdevest)

1. Barakkendorp



The barakkendorp is constructed during the World War II by the German soldiers. They built the houses so that the soldiers had a house to live in that was properly protected from attacks. The houses look normal from the outside, but it is a bunker from the inside with thick walls. Next to the barakkendorp are the dunes. The barakkendorp has a historic value, a social value because of the people who lived there, ecological value because of the dunes and an aesthetic value because of the extraordinary architecture.

(Barakkendorp n.d.)

2. Valkenburg airport buildings



The construction of the airport has started in 1939 by the Dutch. In 1940 the Germans took over the airport and they finished the construction of the airport. After the war the airport was used again by the Dutch. After it closed down in 2006, the buildings were given new functions. One of the buildings is used for a popular theatre show. The Valkenburg Airport buildings have a historic value, a social value because of the people who worked there and an economic value because of the theatre show.

(Wikipedia 2025a)

3. Old farm building



The old farm is known as "Boederij Van Egmond". The farm is located on the place where the front line used to be during the fight in May 1940. The family that lived in the farm during the war hid and later flee to the village of Valkenburg. The old farm building has a historic value, a social value because of the people who lived in it and an aesthetical value because the farmhouse looks aesthetic.

(Kleef&Kooperen 2023)

We use the heritage values as described in by Pereira Roders, 2007; Speckens, 2010; Tarrafa Silva and Pereira Roders, 2011. We take these heritage values to help us understand the different sites. They formed a good starting point to analyse what the sites qualities are and from there we could think about what values we wanted to preserve or focus on.

Soc. **Social**
Spiritual - Emotional (ind. and coll.) - Allegorical

Beliefs, stories, testimonials, memory, experiences, cultural identity, pride, place attachment, social hierarchy,...

Ecn. **Economic**
Use - Non-use - Entertainment - Allegorical

Function, utility, role for market and tourism,...

Pol. **Political**
Educational - Management - Entertainment - Symbolic

Political targets, national myths, part of strategies and policies, power and prosperous perceptions,...

His. **Historic**
Educational - Hist.-artistic - Hist.-conceptual - Symbolic - Archeaological

Knowledge about historic artistic movements, conceptual signs; connection with event or civilisation,...

Aes. **Aesthetical**
Artistic - Notable - Conceptual - Evidential

Originality, creativity, imagination, materialisation of creator's conceptual intentions, authentic exemplar,...

Sci. **Scientific**
Workmanship - Technological - Conceptual

Originality, human labour and craftsmanship, skillful techniques, quality of work, conceptual intentions,...

Age **Age**
Workmanship - Existential - Maturity

Piece of memory, reflection on passage of time, patina,...

Ecl. **Ecological**
Spiritual - Essential - Existential

Harmony with environment, ecological ideologies, reusable/reprocessable/recyclable materials,...

4. Old runways

His.

The runways of Valkenburg Airport were constructed by the Germans when they took over the airport in 1940. Currently the runways are not in the same place anymore, so the World War II heritage is not visible anymore. Nevertheless, the runways have a historical value.

(Wikipedia 2025a)

5. Bunkerbos

His. **Ecl.**

The bunkerbos is constructed during the World War II by the Germans as a defence. In the forest there are multiple bunkers that are partly underground. Currently in the forest there are living bats, so nobody is allowed in the forest. The bunkerbos has a historical and an ecological value because of the forest and the animals living there.

(Haartsen et al. 2019)

6. Tank ditch

His.

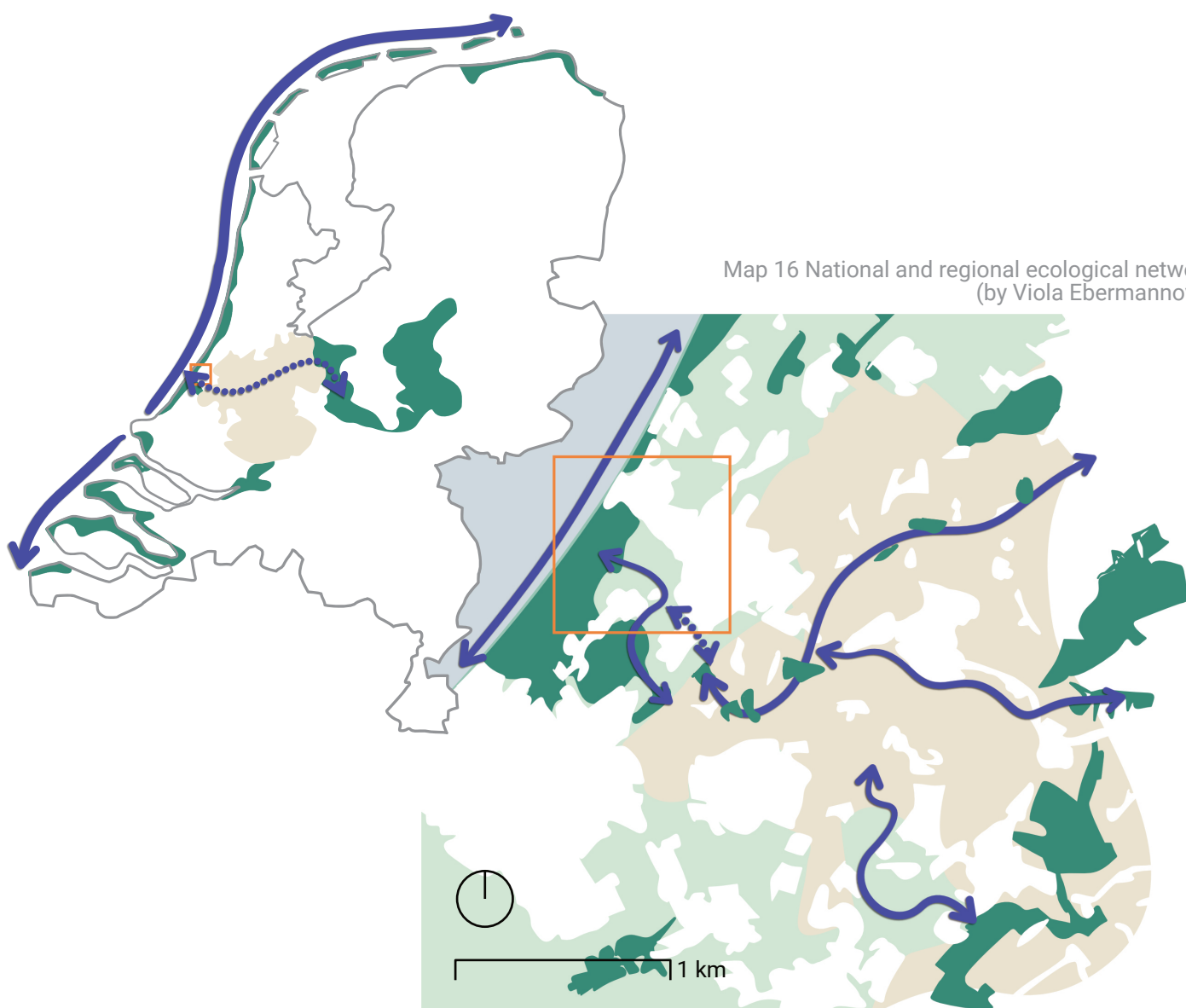
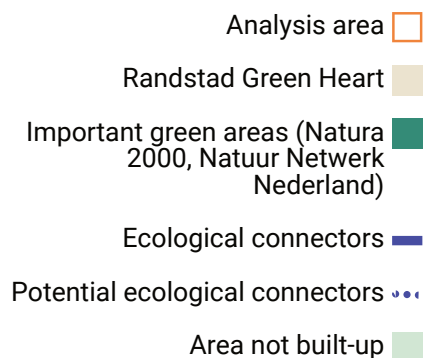
The tank ditch is constructed during World War II by the Germans as a defence for tanks. The tank ditch used to be one ditch, but currently the tank ditch is broken up in two parts. The tank ditch currently has only a historical value but is has potential to also have an ecological value.

(Haartsen et al. 2019)

Place in regional ecological network

On the national level Valkenburg is located next to an important Natura 2000 green area in the Netherlands: the dunes. Next to the dunes is the green heart from the Randstad. East from the dune area is the Nationaal Park de Veluwe. The Valkenburg area is a crucial ecological connection between these areas.


- By embracing the ecological value in the area, it can fulfill its role as a piece in one of the ecological corridors between the Dutch natural coast dune area, and the natural areas inland.




Ecological network

On the local scale this ecological connection zone is very narrow. The green is all connected, but there is room for improvement to make the connection better and more valuable.


- The tank ditch forms the path for an ecological connector, which gives more priority for ecological value in the areas in its vicinity.


Design areas 

Urban fabric 

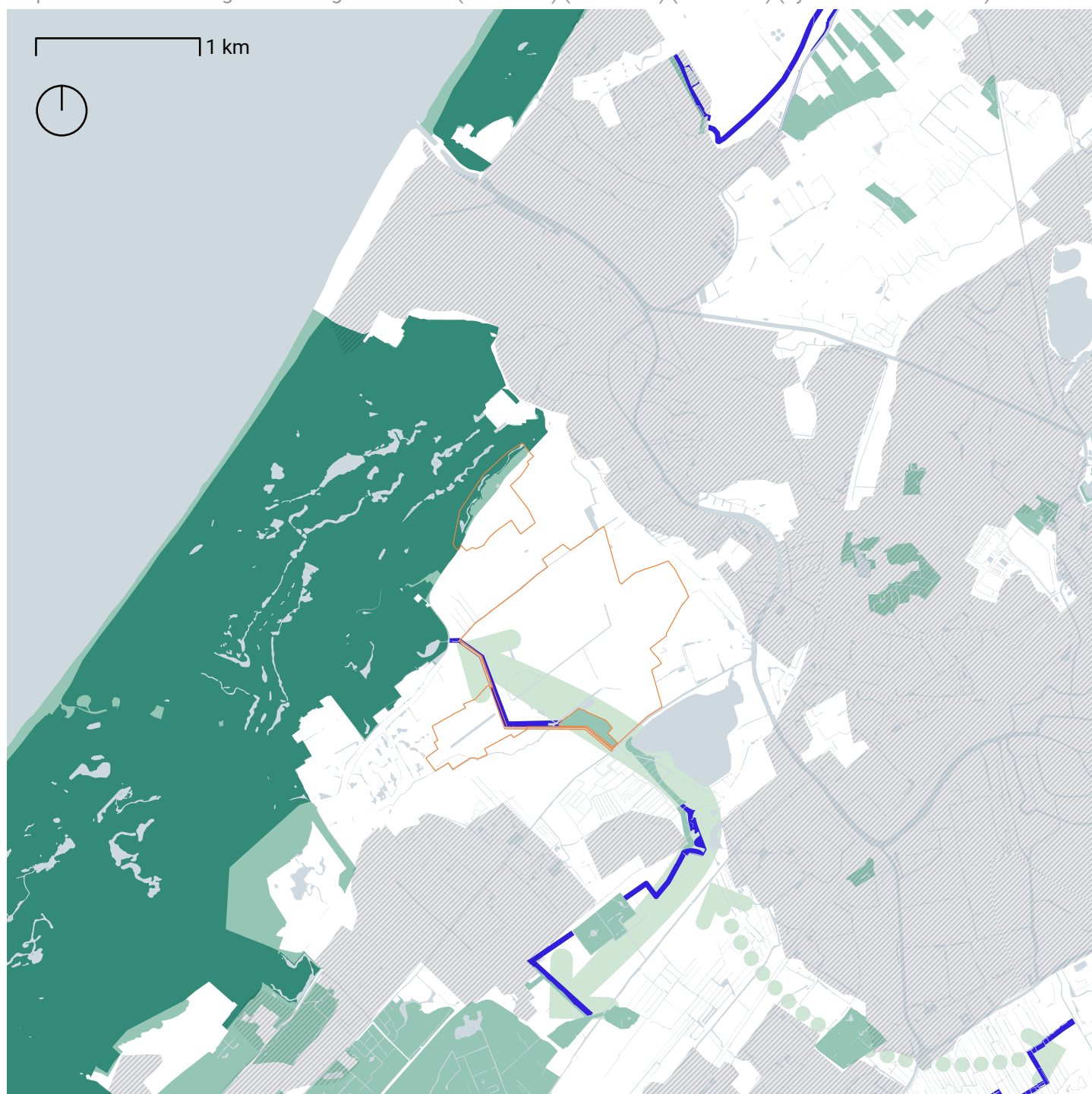
Natura 2000 

Natuur Netwerk Nederland 

Ecological connectors 

Highlighted ecological connectors in the design area (potential - dotted) 

Map 17 National and regional ecological network (ZH 2025a) (ZH 2025b) (ZH 2025c) (by Viola Ebermannová)



Water management areas

In this map the secondary water embankment is shown. The water embankment protects the area from flooding and within each area the water level can be separately managed.

- The whole area of Valkenburg Airport is currently located within one quite area – perhaps in the design, it can be split into different sections with specific water management schemes.

Boundaries of drainage basins:

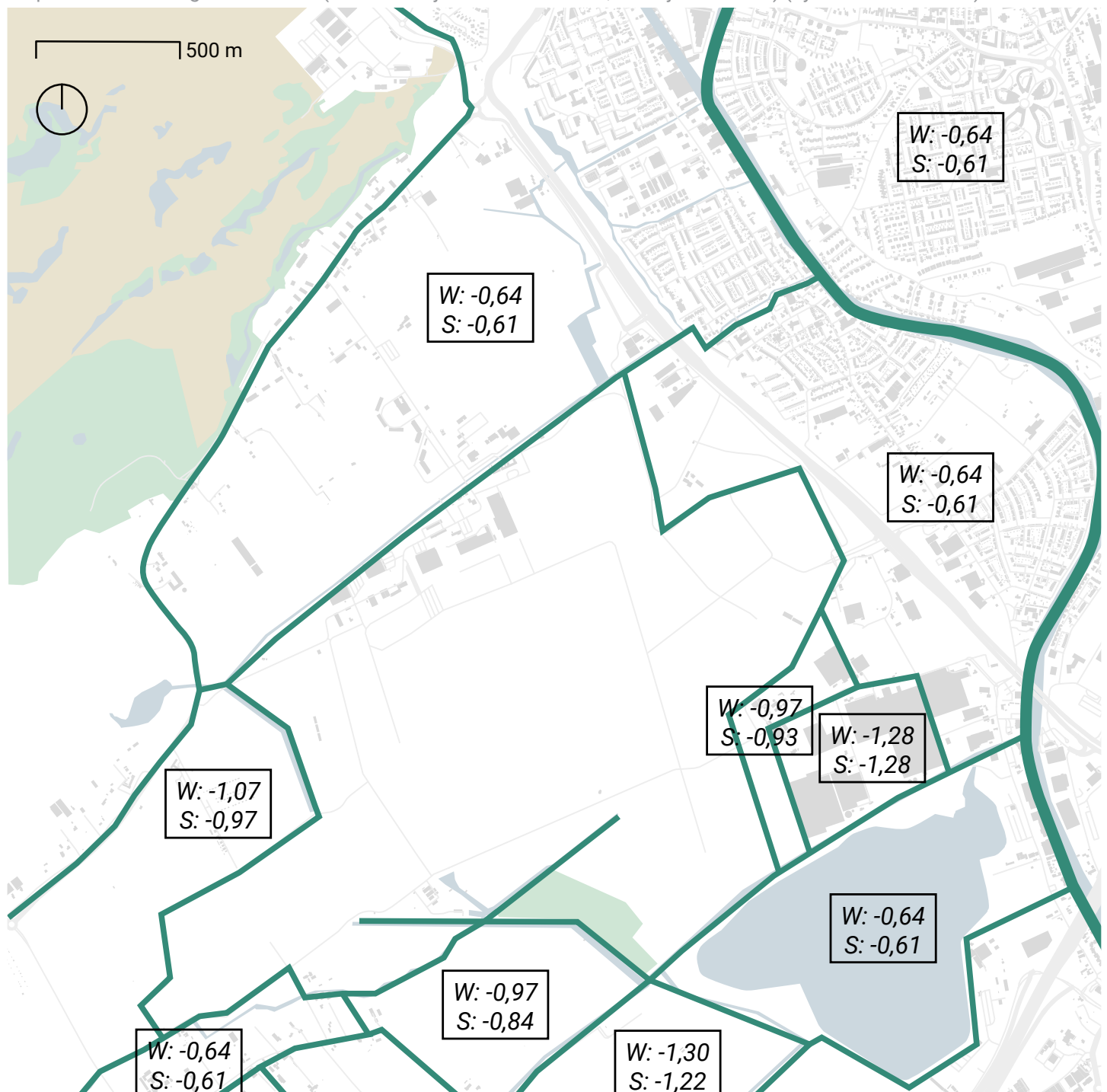
– secondary embankment ■

– waterway ■

Winter water level W
[m under surface]

Summer water level S
[m under surface]

Map 18 Water management zones (based on Rijkswaterstaat 1985, HH Rijnland 2025) (by Milou Overdevest)



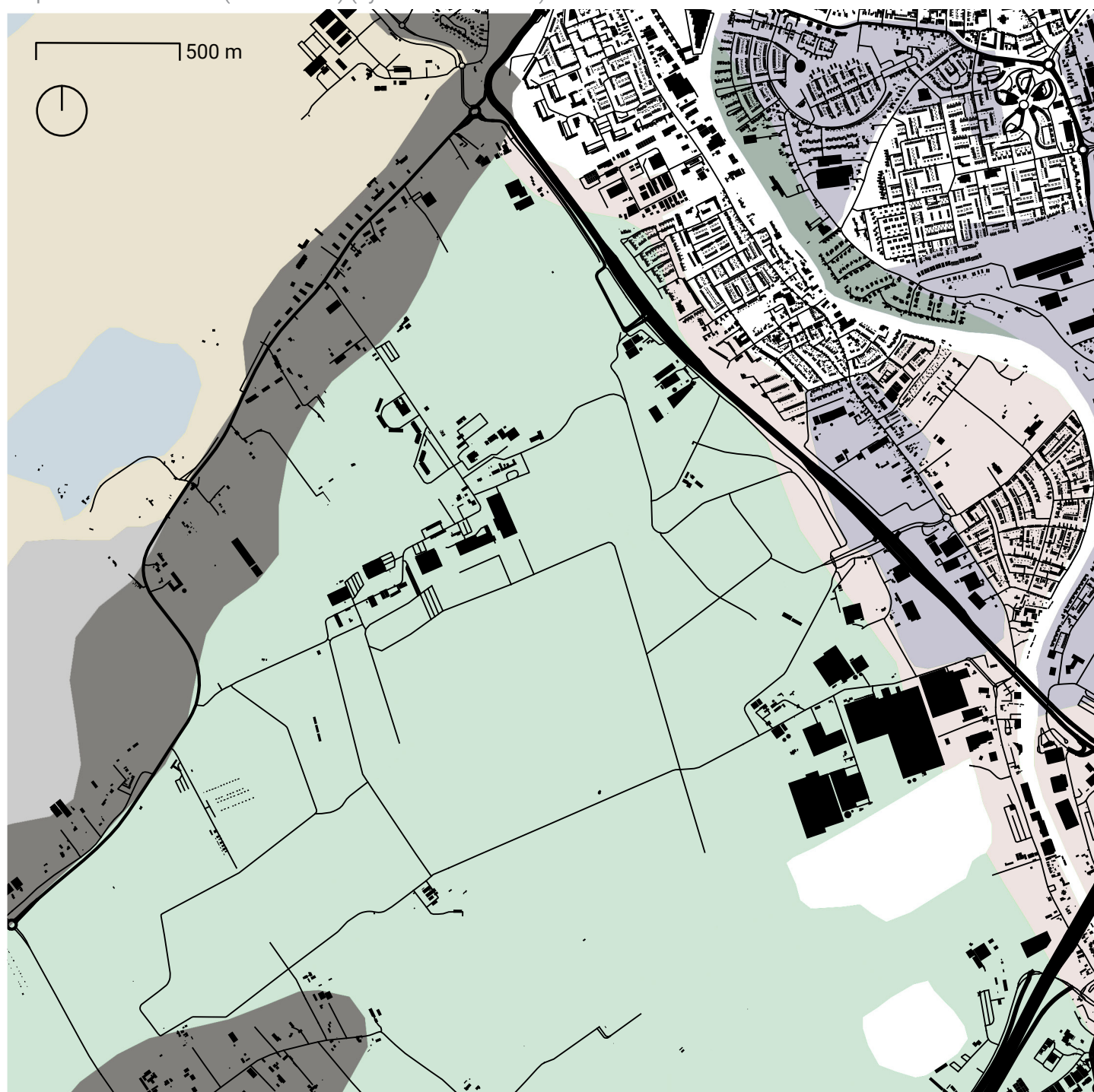
Soil conditions

In the area of Valkenburg there are eight different types of soil. The airport is surrounded by lime-poor leek/forest soil and loam. This type of soil is a sea clay soil and are very fertile. This means that the area is suitable for agriculture. The loam in the soil means that there is a higher percentage of sand in the soil. This makes the soil suitable for arable farming for tuber and bulb crops, such as sugar beets, onions and seed potatoes. On the North-west side of the airport the soil changes to low loamy/fine sand and from there the dunes are starting with fine sand soil. On the north-east side of the airport close to the river the soil changes to polder heavy loam soil and light loam/clay soil. (Wikipedia 2025b)

- The high fertility of the soil makes the land valuable for agriculture, and gives it high potential for rich nature areas. It also means that, when planning building up the area, the benefits have to be carefully considered against the high soil value.

- Lime-poor leek/forest s., loam
- Calcareous dune s., fine sand
- Calcareous flat s., moderately fine sand
- Low loamy s., poor loam and weak loamy fine sand
- Calcareous moorland s. and moderately fine sand
- Garden s., light loam
- Lime-poor draught s., loam and light clay
- Calcareous polder s., heavy loam

Map 19 Soil conditions (MVRO 2025) (by Milou Overdevest)



Municipality plans: large development

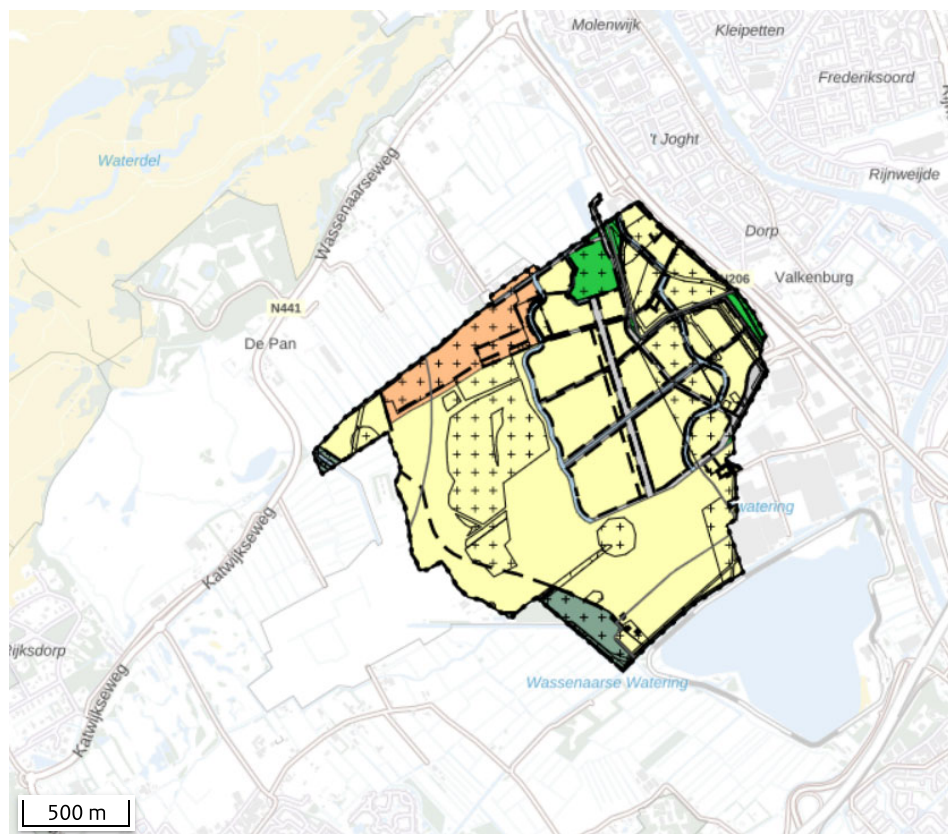


Fig. 26 Municipality plans for the new development (Gemeente Katwijk 2024)

The municipality of Katwijk is planning on building a new neighbourhood with 5000 homes on the former Valkenburg Airport area. This plan contains a large area with houses, an area with mixed used buildings and some green areas. The borders of the neighbourhood are determined by the green areas around the new neighbourhood; the Valkenburgse meer, Ommedijkse polder and the Mient Kooltuin.

► We take these plans as a basis for our urban design, adjusting them to the heritage, but not discarding them fully. In general, we aim to leave a larger area open for recreational and ecological functions, in line with the analysis on ecology and the place being on an ecological corridor.

- Built up area
- Residential area
- Green
- Nature



Fig. 27 – Surroundings for the new development (KCAP 2020, p. 30)

The plan is intended be constructed in four phases starting closes to east and existing village of Valkenburg. The area that is marked purple in the phasing map is left out of the phasing because it will be realized by a third party. The purple neighbourhood is already planned and mapped out by the Architecture firm KCAP and is called Valkenhorst. There is not a detailed plan yet for the phases 1 - 4.

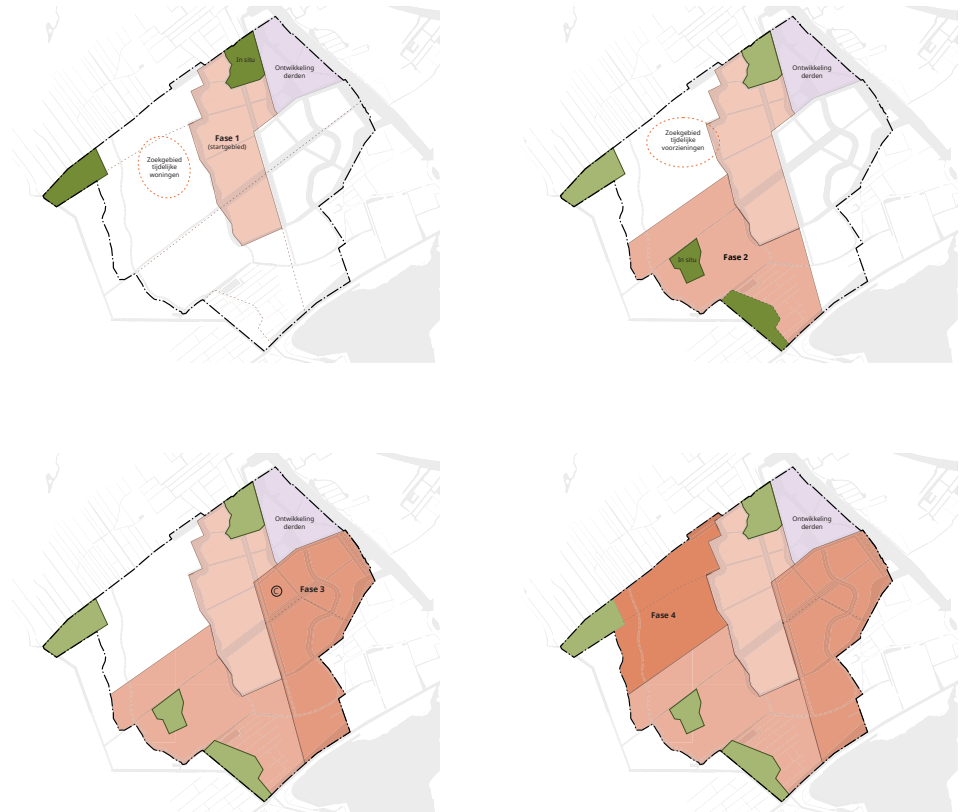


Fig. 28 Intended phasing of new development (KCAP 2020, p. 100)



Fig. 29 – A vision of the new development (KCAP 2021, p. 2)

Stories at Valkenburg airport

At the former Valkenburg airport, we tell the story through the eyes of an Unknown German soldier, an innocent child, and a Dutch citizen.

Storyline at the Leiden - Valkenburg station

This chapter of the large train ride of World War II tells the story of the Valkenburg Airport/village during World War II. This story will be told through the eyes of three personas: innocent child, an unknown German soldier and an unknown Dutch citizen. The route starts at Leiden Central Station, from where you can explore the heritage on foot with the help of public transport, or on bike.

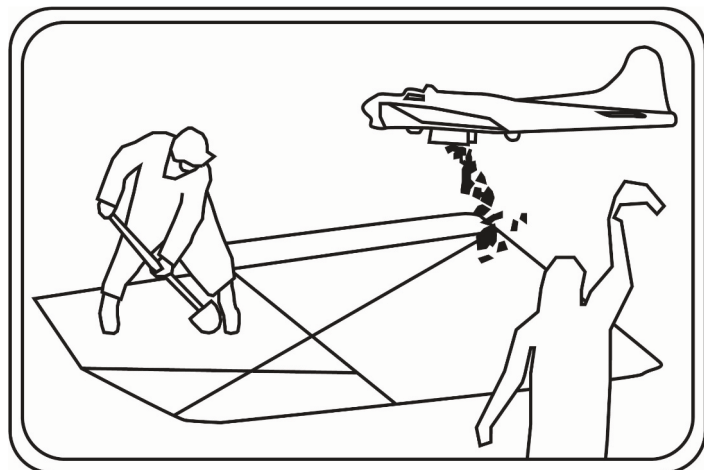


Fig. 30 Stamp of the Leiden chapter – to collect in the „passport“ (by Milou Overdevest)

Place in large storyline

Within the larger storyline, in Leiden the story of the “unbreakable” Atlantic wall protecting the western borders of the area under German power is told. Moreover, it shows the dynamics between the German occupiers and the locals in the context of Western Europe (that on the other end of the train route can be compared with the dynamics in Eastern Europe), the dynamics between the local forced labour. It shows the hatred towards the German occupiers, but also the quite tolerant living along them. It also shows how the life during war evolved as the war progressed and tells the story of the hunger towards the end of the war.

Fig. 31 Leiden chapter in the bigger story (by Viola Ebermannová)



The route

The route brings you along the places where the personas worked and lived. The first stop is in the centre of Valkenburg where the child lived. The second stop is the former home from the German soldier during the war. The third stop are the Valkenburg Airport buildings where the German soldier used to work. The fourth stop are the runways of the airport where the allied dropped foods during the hunger winter of 1944/45. The Dutch citizen helped distribute the food and the children were very happy that they could eat something. The last stop is the bunkerbos (bunker forest) where the German soldier worked and the Dutch citizen was forced to help build the bunkers.

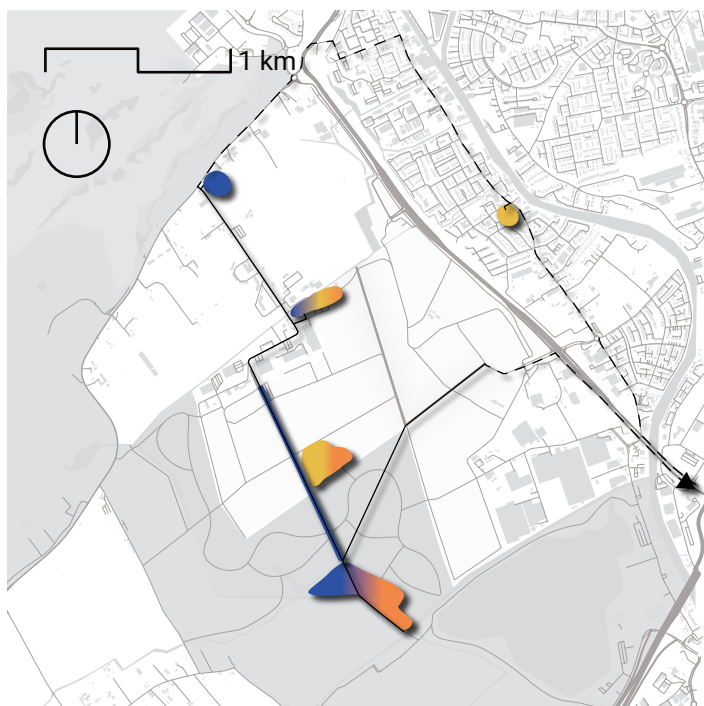
Feature connected to:

Child ■

Unknown German Soldier ■

Dutch citizen ■

Map 20 Leiden route (by Milou Overdevest)



Story of the child



Location: Valkenburg Airport, Valkenburg village

Time period: 1940-1945

Occupation: A local child

The child was living in Valkenburg in 1940 when the Germans invaded the airport. Suddenly the area around the villages was not safe anymore and the child had to stay inside. A few days later the Germans invaded Valkenburg. The invasion had a big impact on the child's life. At first the child could go to school, a few years later the schools closed down, so he was mainly sitting at home.

In the last winter before the war was over, there was not a lot of food and there was not any electricity or heating. The child stayed closed to their family and tried to stay warm. They searched for food in the area that was still available. They even started eating the flowers that were edible. In April 1945 the Allies dropped food on the airport. The child was excited that they could eat something. When the war was over, the child was very happy and could play again with his friends outside.

Historical context

10 May 1940

On the day of the Germans capturing the airport, locals fled to Valkenburg and further.

(Wikipedia 2025a)

1944-1945

The winter was extremely cold, there was no electricity, and only little food.

(Wikipedia 2025h)

30 April - 7 May 1945

The English Airforce and the American Airforce used the airport of Valkenburg for food drops. The food was collected by Dutch citizens with horse and carts and brought to a distribution center.

(Wikipedia 2025h) (Wikipedia 2025i) (Hoek 2025)

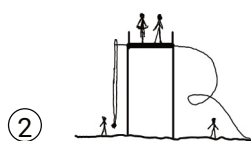
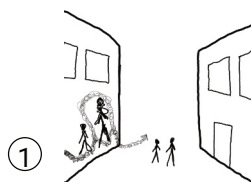


Fig. 32 Diagrams of route locations (by Milou Overdevest)

Route locations

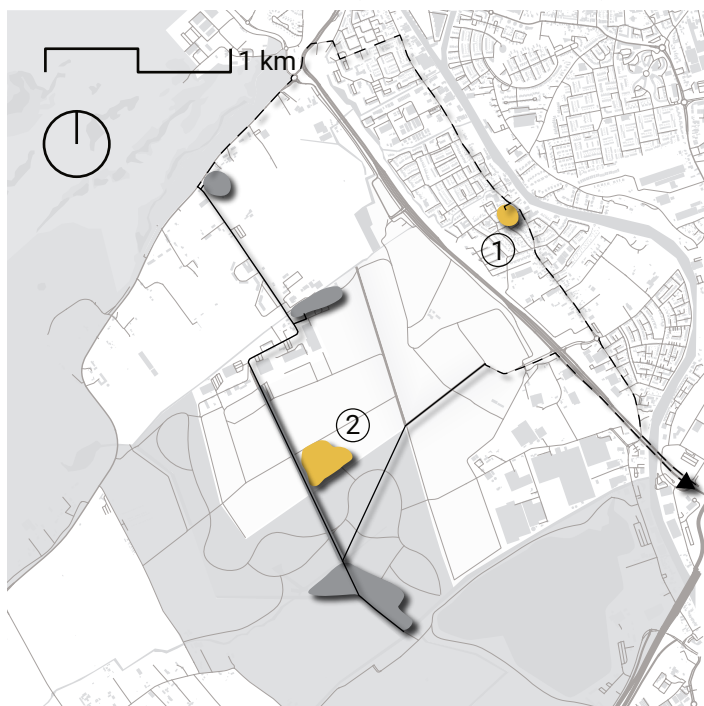
1. Artwork about flight from German invasion (more on p. 63)

On this site is an artwork that tells the story and feelings of a child that needs to flee from the German invasion World War II. It is a mural painting, with elements continuing on the ground.

2. Food drop and end of war playground (more on p. 64-65)

On this site is a playground that represents the happiness that the child felt when the food drops came towards the end of WW2. The child had not eaten proper food for a long time, so they were very happy when the food landed. The food was dropped on the places where the playground is constructed now. It also symbolises end of the war.

Map 21 Child story locations (by Milou Overdevest)



Artwork about fleeing the German invasion ①

Food drop and end of war playground ②

Story of the unknown German soldier



Location: Valkenburg Airport

Time period: 1940-1943 (after invasion)

Occupation: Valkenburg military airport staff

The German soldier arrived by train at Leiden Central station during summer 1940. From there, he travelled with an army car to the Valkenburg Airport. This would be his workplace for the coming years. In the Barakkendorp (Barrack village) he could sleep and relax when his working day was over. During his job he was either working at the airport or on the field around it. In the field, they built the bunkerbos (bunker forest, then the area had no trees covering it) with help from Dutch workers and they built the tank ditch protecting the airport from attack by heavy machinery.

Historical context

10 May 1940

Germans are fighting for the Airport of Valkenburg. The airport has not been fully constructed yet, and the field not being fully drained yet left the soil very soft. This slowed the German airplanes down on landing. Before they realised this, the next airplane already started to land on the runway, so they collided with each other. This happened with a lot of planes. The Germans conquered the airport on this day.

(Wikipedia 2025a)

1940-1943

The occupiers finished the construction of the airport and called it "Fliegerhorst Katwijk". They used the airport for the defence of the coast region and to guide the boats in the sea.

During this time, they built the 'Barakkendorp' (Barrack village) where the soldiers could live and relax. The buildings appear from the outside as normal farmhouses, because they used brick on the outside for camouflage – but in fact, the houses are proper bunkers. The village consisted of 26 buildings, with various functions: offices, canteen, chapel, storages, kitchen, hospital, bathing room, communication/telephone. They also constructed a tank ditch around the airport as a defence.

(Verborgengeschiedenis.nl 2013-2025) (Wikipedia 2025a) (Hoek 2021)

1943

The Germans made the airport unusable by placing poles and digging ditches. This made it impossible for airplanes to land. The Germans left the airport.

(Wikipedia 2025a) (Hoek 2021)

Route locations

1. Home of unknown German soldier (more on p. 62)

The unknown German soldier used to live in this barrack during WW2. The building is kept intact, but added onto in an interpretative artistic way to convey the contradictory feelings of the soldiers.

2. Valkenburg airport museum

In the museum there is both the general history of the site of Valkenburg Airport (including other time periods) and the story of the airport told through the eyes of the protagonists. This includes the unknown German soldier, who worked at the airport.

3. Runway bridge

At this site is a new pedestrian and cycling bridge constructed that follows the path of a former runway and elongates it to the bunkerbos, showing the airport area (almost) from the point of view of an airplane. The unknown German soldier used this runway to land and depart with his plane to search for enemy machinery.

3. Bunkerbos (more on p. 66-67)

Part of the bunkerbos ("bunker forest") at the end of the runway bridge is reconstructed to original form (without trees) to show the realia of WW2, this is where the unknown German soldier also worked. This is contrasted with a forest where the bunkers are left for succession, to show the passage of time since the war ended.



Fig. 33 German soldiers working on finishing the airport (Zwischen Ems und Schelde n.d.)

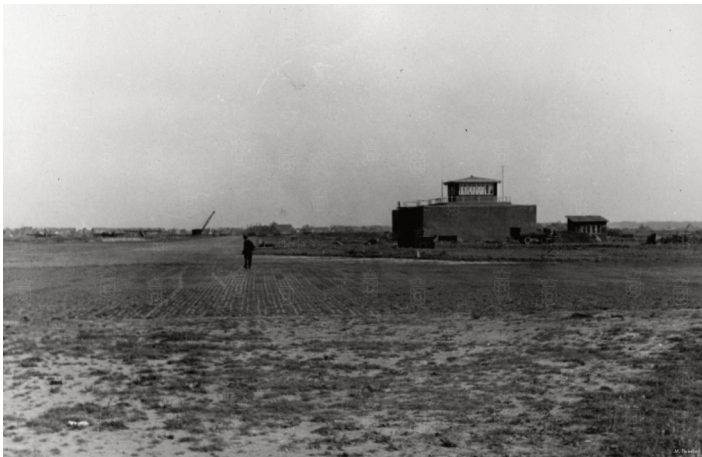
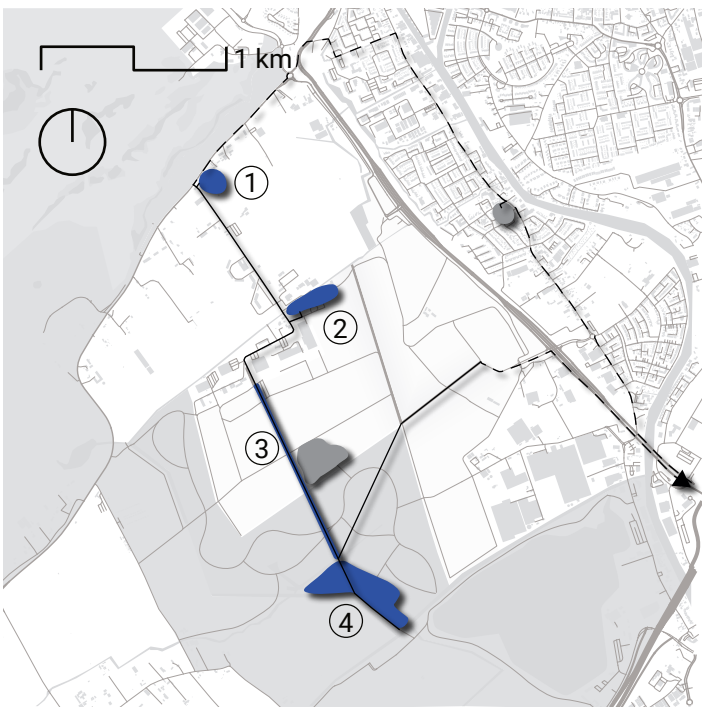


Fig. 34 Flight control bunker, from here the Germans could see the entire airport (not existing anymore) (Tieleman n.d.)

Map 22 Unknown German soldier story locations (by Milou Overdevest)



- ① Home of unknown German soldier
- ② Valkenburg airport museum
- ③ Runway bridge
- ④ Bunkerbos

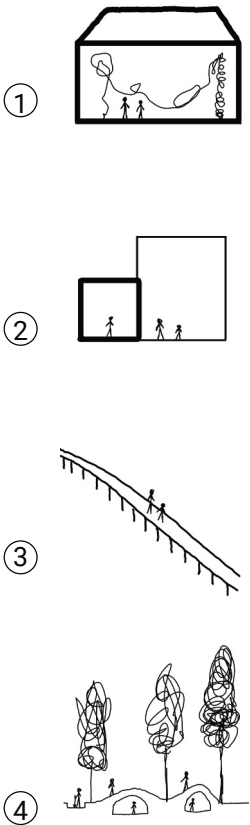


Fig. 35 Diagrams of route locations (by Milou Overdevest)

Story of a Dutch citizen



Location: Valkenburg Airport

Time period: 1940-1945

Occupation: Mandatory labour at the airport, distributing food from Allied food drops

The Dutch citizen had a normal job at a store at the village of Valkenburg. He received a letter from the Germans which stated that he had to work for them. The Dutch citizen felt like he didn't have a choice, but he was judged by some for his compliance. He worked at the site of the bunkerbos and helped with construction the tank ditch and the bunkers. After the Germans left, he could return to his old job. In the winter of 1944-1945 the Dutch citizen did not have a lot of food. He was very relieved when the Americans and the English dropped food at the Valkenburg airport. He helped with distributing the food between all the citizens.

Historical context

10 May 1940

On the day of the Germans capturing the airport, the Dutch people were driven away.

(Wikipedia 2025a)

1940-1943

The Germans forced Dutch citizens from age 18 to 35 to work for them. The Dutch were required to show up and work. Some Dutch citizens did not want to "help" the Germans, so they went into hiding or arranged documents proving that they were incapable to work. At Valkenburg Airport they used the Dutch citizens to construct the bunkerbos and the tank ditch.

(Wikipedia 2025a) (Anne Frank Stichting n.d.)

1943

The occupiers made the airport unusable and left.

(Wikipedia, 2025a)

1944-1945

The winter was extremely cold, and households did not have electricity or gas. People had to endure the cold and could not cook. There was only little food available due to multiple reasons. Food import across Dutch borders was obstructed by the Germans by stopping trains. The food that was in the Netherlands could not be obstructed equally due to roads being blocked by the occupiers, with the worse impact on Ranstad area in western Netherlands. Many Dutch citizens have died from the food shortages.

(Wikipedia 2025h)

30 April - 7 May 1945

The English Airforce and the American Airforce used the airport of Valkenburg for food drops. The contents of the food parcels included: bags of flour, canned biscuits, army rations, tea, powdered eggs, beans, Spam, cigarettes, chocolate, and margarine. The food was collected by Dutch citizens with horse and carts and brought to a distribution center.

(Wikipedia 2025h) (Wikipedia 2025i) (Hoek 2025)

Route locations

1. Food drop and end of war playground (more on p. 64-65)

On this site is a playground that represents the happiness that the child felt when the food drops came towards the end of war. The Dutch citizen helped with distributing the food when it was dropped. It was a happy day and that happy feeling is represented in the playground.

2. Bunkerbos and tank ditch (more on p. 66-67)

At the bunkerbos (bunker forest), the Dutch citizen was forced to work on the construction of the bunkers. In the reconstructed part, there is a bunker under construction shown. This also to show the robustness of the bunkers, as well as tell the story of the forced labour. Adjacent to bunkerbos is the tank ditch, which the dutch citizen also helped build.



Fig. 36 Loading an RAF airplane with food packages (Godchild A (F/O) 1945)



Fig. 37 Fooddrops in Ypenburg (Beeldbank Rijswijk 1945)

BEVEL.

Op bevel van de Duitse Weermacht worden volgens de Verordening van den Rijks-commissaris voor het bezette Nederlandsche gebied, No. 42/1941, betreffende de verplichting tot het verrichten van diensten en betreffende de beperking ten aanzien van het veranderen van betrekking en in overeenstemming met de Verordening No. 48/1942 alle mannen in den leeftijd van 17 tot 40 jaar (jaargangen 1905—1928) voor den arbeidsinzet opgeroepen.

Hiervoor moeten **ALLE** mannen van dezen leeftijd onmiddellijk na ontvangst van dit bevel met de voorgeschreven uitrusting op straat gaan staan.

Alle andere bewoners, ook vrouwen en kinderen, moeten in de huizen blijven totdat de actie ten einde is. De huisdeuren moeten geopend blijven. De mannen van de genoemde jaargangen, die bij een huiszoeking nog in huis worden aangetroffen, worden gestraft, waarbij hun particulier eigendom zal worden aangesproken.

Bewijzen van vrijstelling van burgerlijke of militaire instanties moeten ter controle worden meegebracht. Ook zij, die in het bezit zijn van zulke bewijzen, zijn verplicht zich op straat te begeven.

Er moeten worden medegebracht: warme kleding, stevige schoenen, dekens, bescherming tegen regen, eetgerei, mes, vork, lepel, drinkbeker en boterhammen voor één dag.

De dagelijkse vergoeding bestaat uit goeden kost, rookartikelen en loon volgens het geldende tarief.

Voor de achterblijvende familieleden zal worden gezorgd.

Het is aan alle bewoners der gemeente verboden hun woonplaats te verlaten.

Op hen, die pogen te ontvluchten of weerstand te bieden, zal worden geschoten.

Fig. 38 Flyer announcing mandatory labour for all men aged 17-40 (Anne Frank Stichting 1943)

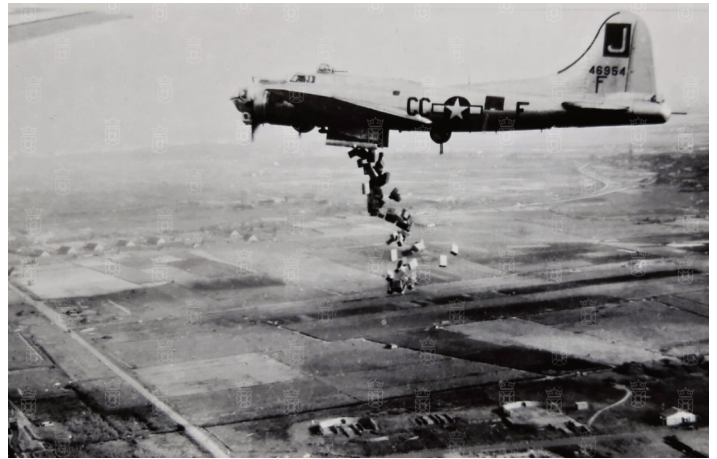
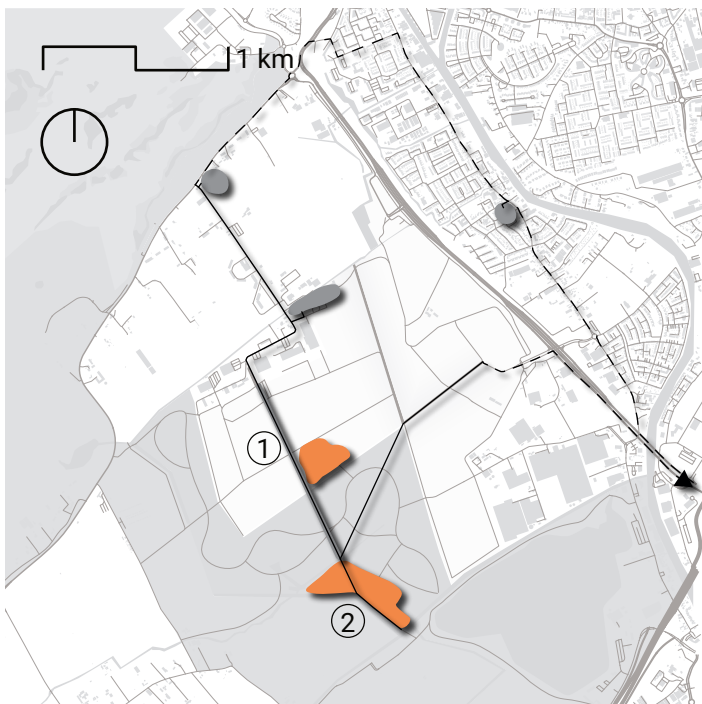


Fig. 39 Fooddrops above Valkenburg (Waltheus n.d.)

Map 23 Dutch citizen story locations (by Milou Overdevest)



① Food drop and end of war playground

② Bunkerbos and tank ditch

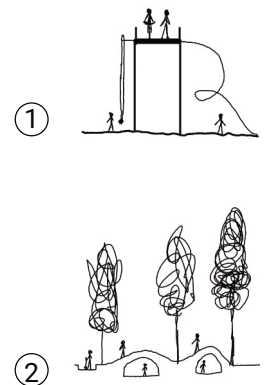


Fig. 40 Diagrams of route locations (by Milou Overdevest)


Spatial vision


The new development of the airport area will include the WW2 heritage route with heritage locations treated by different approaches.

Different ways of treating the heritage


There are different ways on how to deal with heritage. In our site we use 5 different approaches on how to deal with heritage. On the next page are descriptions of the specific sites together with the hierarchy of heritage values.


1. Conservation/reconstruction: Keeping the heritage as it is or reconstructing original state.
2. Adaptive reuse: Keep the heritage building and give it another function that is not related to the heritage, potentially modifying the structure and look.
3. Interpretative use: Show the heritage/stories of the heritage in an interpretative way, not literally bringing back all of the heritage, possibly intervening into the structure and look.
4. Reintroducing traces: Bring back the heritage that used to be there through contemporary interventions.
5. Ecology: Give the heritage an ecological function, letting it slowly disappear.

Unknown German soldier story 


Child story 

Dutch citizen story 

Conservation/reconstruction 

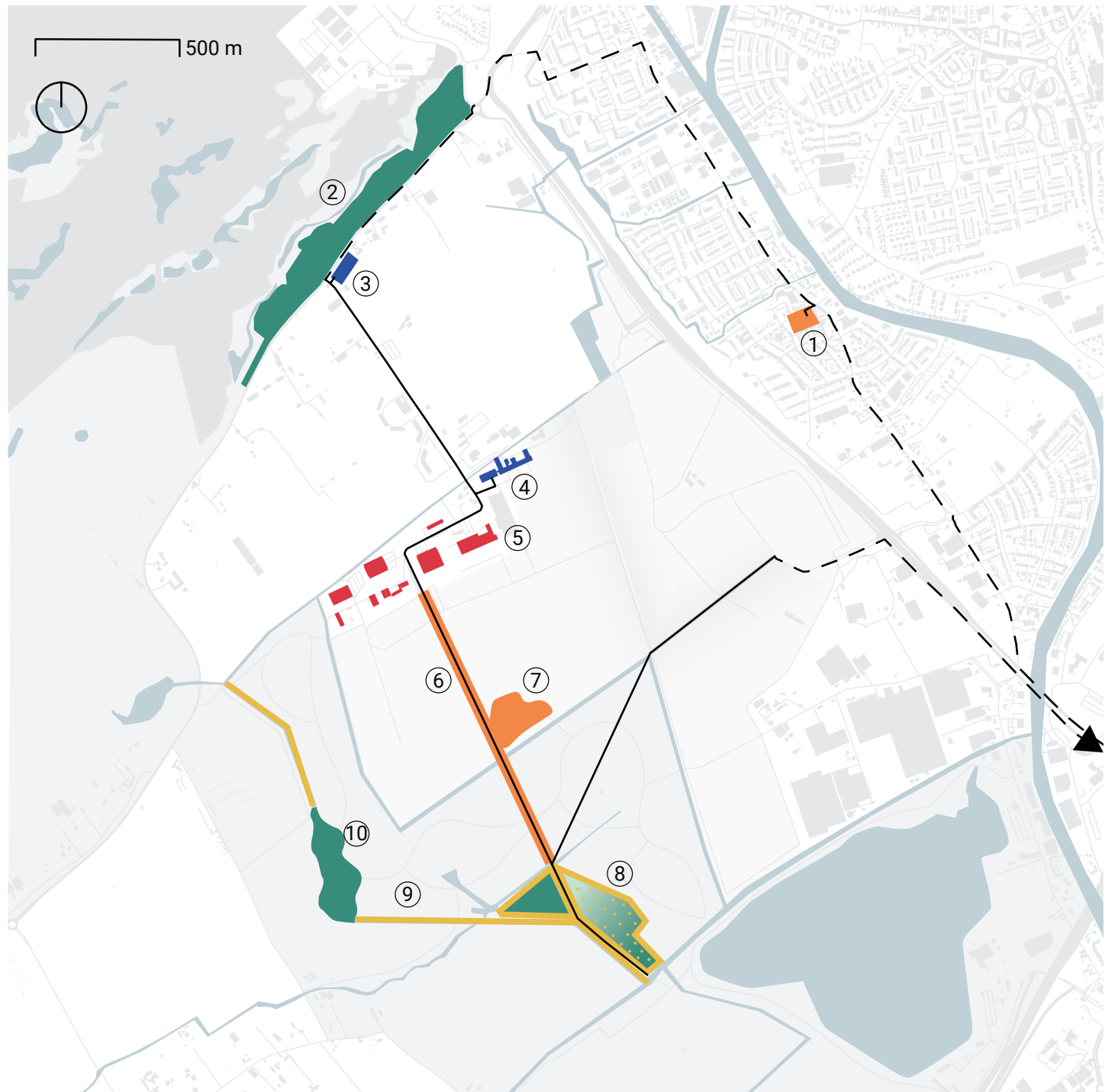
Adaptive reuse 

Interpretative use 

Reintroducing traces 

Ecology 

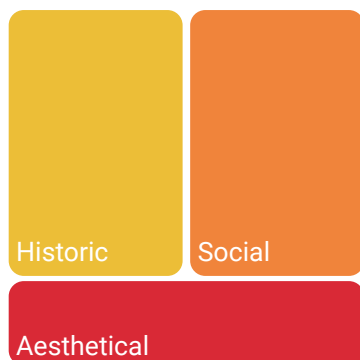
Map 24 Treatment of heritage in the area (by Milou Overdevest)



Persona(s) | Treatment of heritage

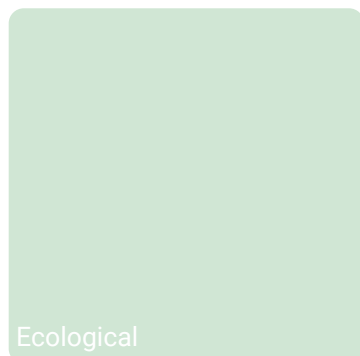
1 Fleeing the invasion artwork

On this site we will reintroduce traces of history by making an artwork telling the feelings of a child. The artwork is focused on historical and social values and a small part aesthetic value.



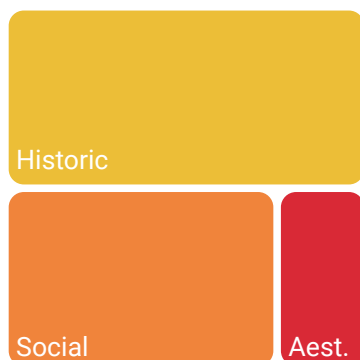
2 Barrakenbos - north

This part of the barakkendorp will be used for natural water dune filtration (given to Dunea.) It will focus on the ecological value, and also pragmatic function.



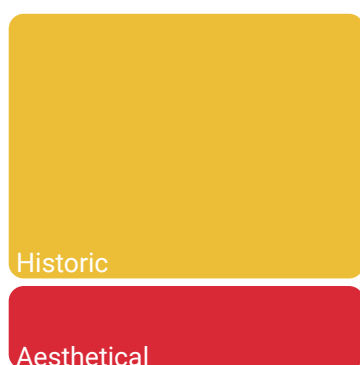
3 Home of German soldier

This barrack will be transformed in an artistic interpretative way to show the contradictory feelings of the German soldier. The main values are historical, social and a partly aesthetic.



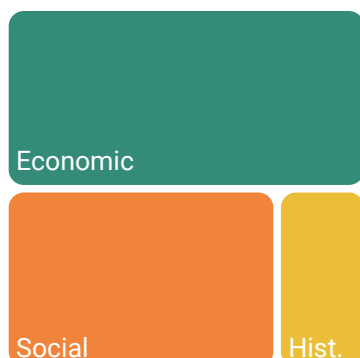
4 Airport museum

The existing museum will be expanded in an interpretative way. The new building will tell the story of Valkenburg airport. The values the museum focuses on are mainly historical and partly aesthetic.



5 Airport buildings

These buildings of the former Valkenburg airport will be adaptively reused and given a new function. The values that these buildings focus on are economical, partly social and a small part historic.



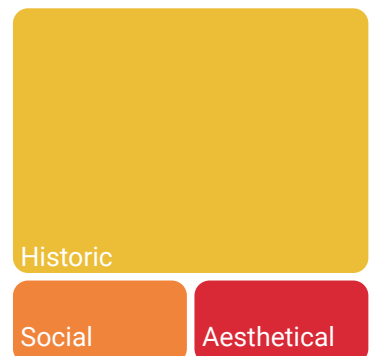
6 Slow traffic bridge path

On this path will grow a new bridge that reintroduces traces of history – the path of a WW2 runway. The bridge will be focused on mainly historical values and a partly aesthetic values.



7 Fooddrop playground

The playground reintroduces traces of history – the food drops in 1945. It brings back the feeling of happiness. The values that this playground focuses on are mainly historical and a partly social/aesthetic.



8 Bunkerbos

It follows two approaches in a gradient. Trees will be partly removed and some bunkers will be made public. Other part will be left for succession. The main values are historical and ecological.



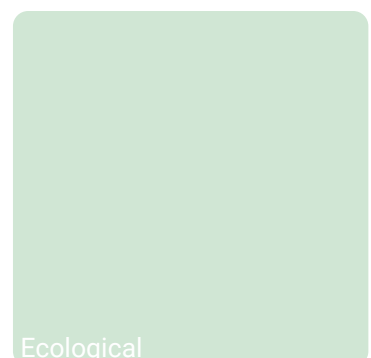
9 Tank ditch

The tank ditch follows the approach of the reconstruction/conservation. It will stay the same as it is now. The tank ditch focuses mainly on the historical values and partly on the ecological values.



10 Natural tank ditch segment

On this spot the tank ditch will be brought back in an ecological way. The tank ditch focuses on ecological values.



Heritage value hierarchy:

Urban plan: schematic divison of typologies

This map shows the overall plan of the area of Valkenburg. In the map there are three main layers: the heritage, the greenery and the new neighbourhood/urban fabric. The heritage layer is shown in red and shows the route that people can take to visit the heritage places. Along the route people can find 6 heritage sites that tell the story of the World War II from three different perspectives (see p. 42).

Apart from the heritage layer, the design strengthens the ecological connection by adding greenery, resulting in 7 different green typologies. In the area there is a new neighbourhood that provides lot of new homes. Along the main axis of the new neighbourhood the urban fabric has a high density. On the secondary axis of the new neighbourhood the urban fabric is medium density. In the remaining part of the area there is a low-density urban fabric.

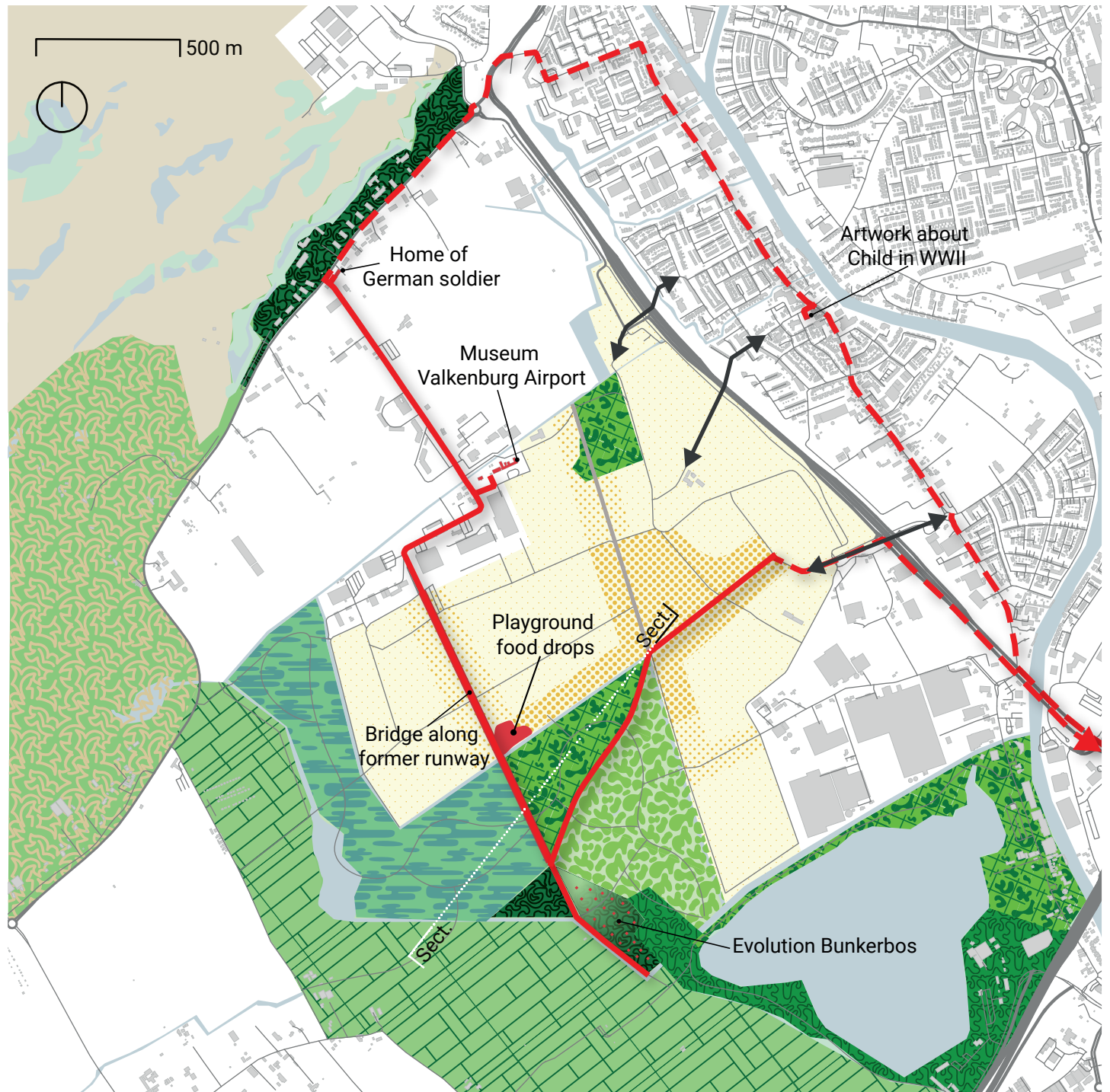
Heritage route —

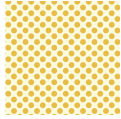
Urban connections ➔

Sect. – section (next spread)

Legend continues on next page

Map 25 Overview of typologies – „Vlekkenplan“ (by Milou Overdeest)





Dense urban fabric

This fabric contains building blocks that are 5-6 levels high. The fabric is placed near the main axis of the new neighbourhood and will form a new centrality.



Fig. 41 Reference (Google earth 2022a)

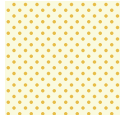


Natural dune greenery landscape

This landscape is found between dunes and green areas. The landscape is an area with green plants and grasses but also has some sandy hills. It is a gradient between the dunes and other green areas.



Fig. 46 Reference (NL Netherlands n.d.)



Medium density urban fabric

This fabric contains buildings blocks that are 3-4 levels high. The fabric is placed on the secondary main axis of the new neighbourhood.



Fig. 42 Reference (Google earth 2022b)



Marsh land

In the marsh landscape the water level is higher than usual polder. The landscape consists of water and wet green areas. The biodiversity is high in this area, and it has a high ecological value.



Fig. 47 Reference (Hillebrand n.d.)

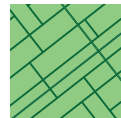


Lower density urban fabric

This fabric contains buildings that are 2-3 levels high. The houses are typical Dutch row houses that are found in sub-urban neighbourhoods.



Fig. 43 Reference (Google earth 2022c)



Agricultural fields

Agriculture fields are meadows with animals or crop fields that are used by farmers to produce food. The fields, most of the times, do not have a high ecological value.



Fig. 48 Reference (Prokosch 2014)



Urban park

The urban park is a public green space where people can meet each other, sit on the grass, play sports or picnic. The park is mainly focused on human interactions instead of an ecological purpose.



Fig. 44 Reference (Cordoval n.d.)



Meadow

Meadows are green areas with a lot of grass species or low plants. The meadows can have a high ecological value, when the area is with high native biodiversity.



Fig. 49 Reference (Plantlife n.d.)

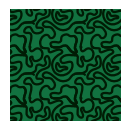


Park-like forest

The park-like forest is a combination between an urban park and a forest. The park-like forest has a higher tree density than an urban park, but a lower tree and understory density than a forest.



Fig. 45 Reference (Next door n.d.)



Forest

The forest is a green area with a high density of trees. Not all areas in the forest are accessible to humans due to the density of the trees and understory plants.



Fig. 50 Reference (Kay 2022)

Section through different landscapes

This section crosses different landscape typologies. The route starts at the meadow that is an open landscape with cows in it. When you cross the tank ditch you enter a new landscape typology, the marsh land. This land is accessible by raised paths, since the land is wet and full of plants. The high pedestrian and biking bridge along the former runway separates the marsh land from the urban park. The urban park is another landscape that has a lot of grass where you could picknick and relax. Next to the urban park is the dense urban fabric that consist of high buildings with apartments in them.

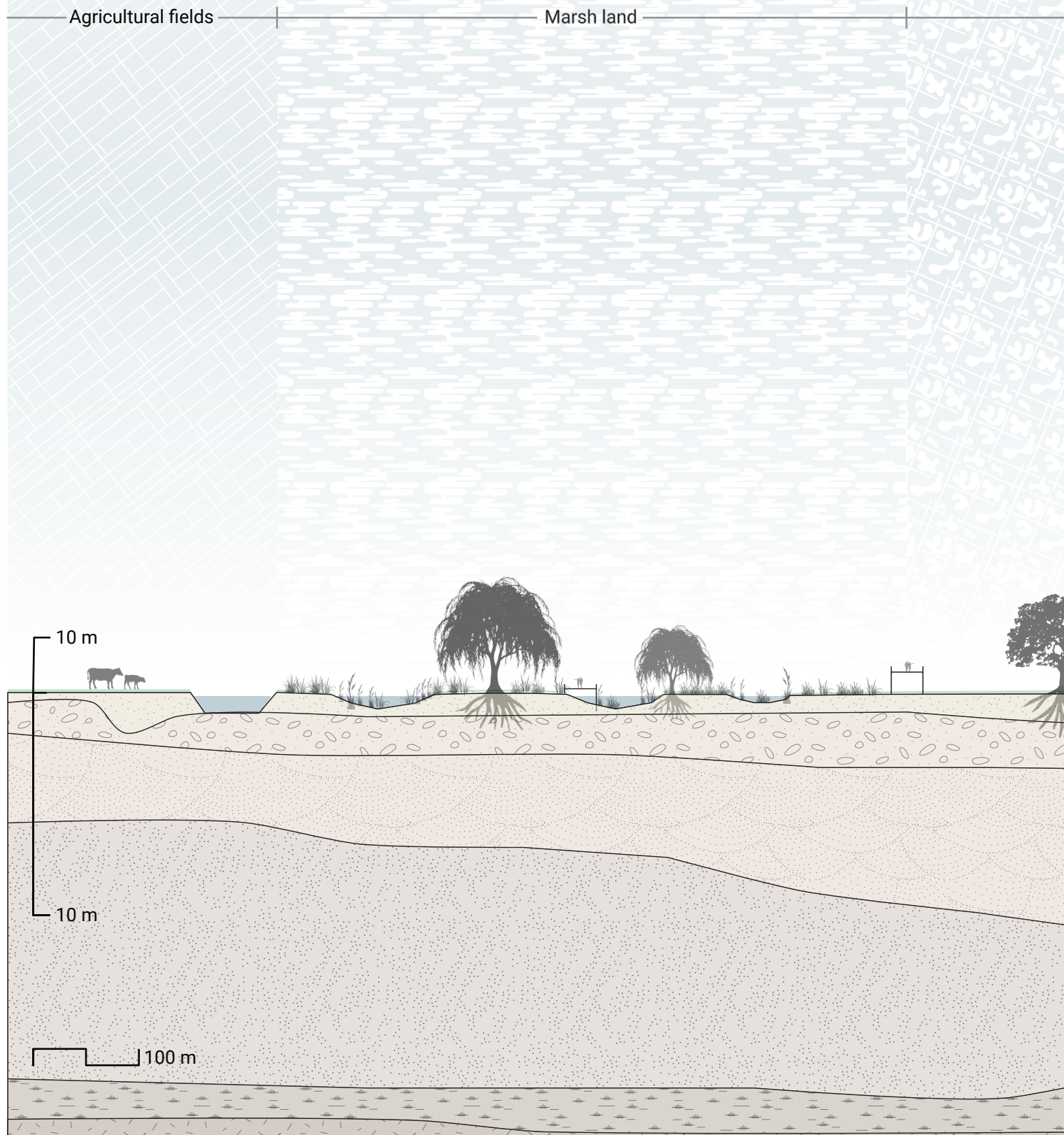
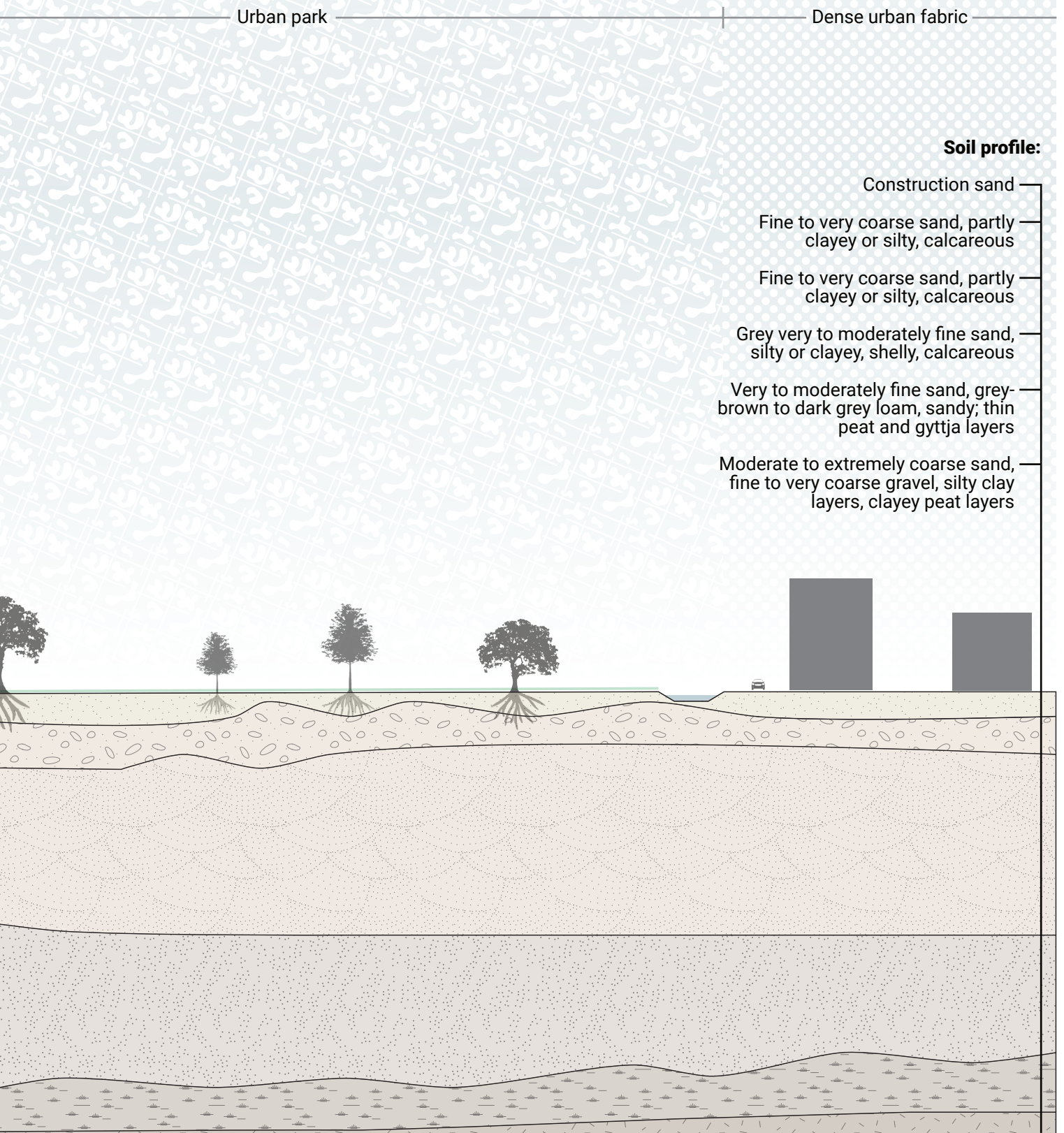
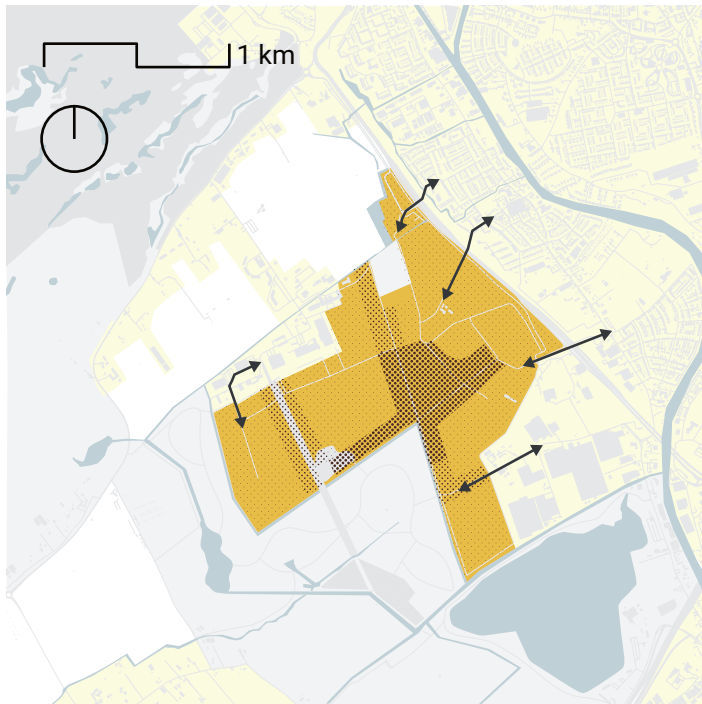


Fig. 51 Section through different typologies (By Milou Overdevest)



Urban design layers

Built up area



In the area of Valkenburg airport, there will be a lot of new development. This area contains of three different densities. On the main axis is the fabric high density, on the secondary axis the density is medium density and on the remaining built up area the fabric is low density. There are a few important urban connectors to existing urban structures.

- High density
- Medium density
- Lower density
- Urban connectors

Map 26 Built up area (by Milou Overdevest)

Connectivity and centralities

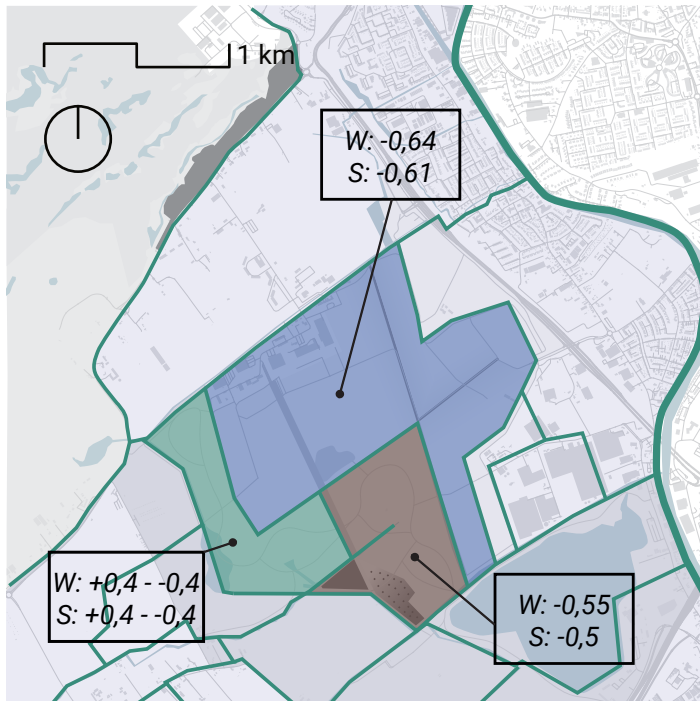


In the area new public transportation routes will be established that connect the new development to Valkenburg. The area will be connected to Valkenburg also by new or strengthened urban, slow and fast traffic, connections. The main axis of the new neighbourhood will form a central point of the neighbourhood. On the edges of the neighbourhood, there are several main paths that are going through the landscape.

- Urban connection
- Main axis
- Main paths through landscape
- Public transport (bus) connection

Map 27 Connectivity and centralities (by Milou Overdevest)

Water system



There are three new drainage basins added to the existing water management system. The area on the north side (blue) will become a neighbourhood. The water level should be low in this area to make sure that the houses and cellars will not flood. The area on the west side (green) will become a marsh area. The water level should be high and can differ between $-0,4$ and $+0,4$ m. In the area on the east side (brown) will be an urban park. The water level can be higher than in the neighbourhood but should be lower than in the marsh area.

— Drainage basin borders

Existing drainage basins

New drainage basins:

Neighbourhood

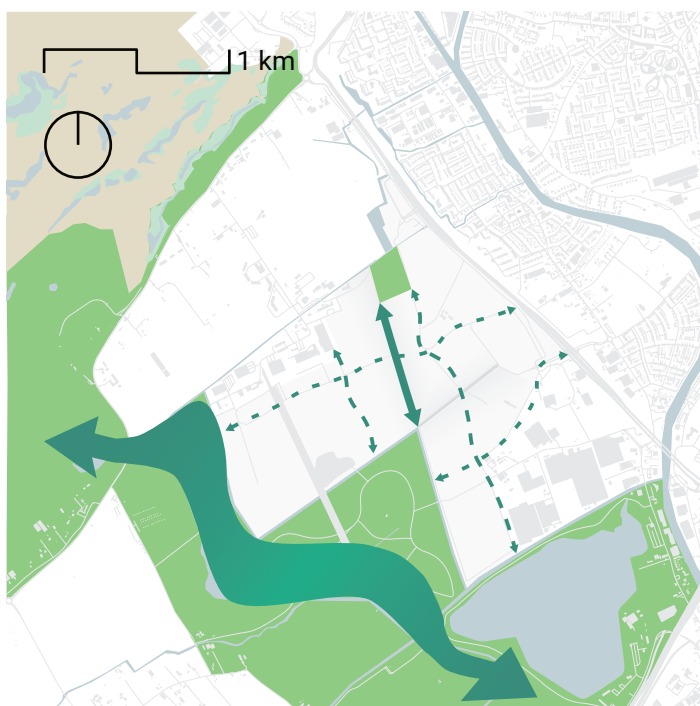
Urban park

Marsh land

w/s Winter/Summer water level [m under surface]

Map 28 Water management (by Milou Overdevest)

Ecological network



The ecological connection between the dunes and the green heart and inland nature areas is strengthened by new green areas. In the new neighbourhood is a green corridor that connects the green areas on the south to the northern urban park. Throughout the neighbourhood will be more green permeable corridors that strengthen the ecological value and stability of the neighbourhood.

Ecological connector

Green corridor

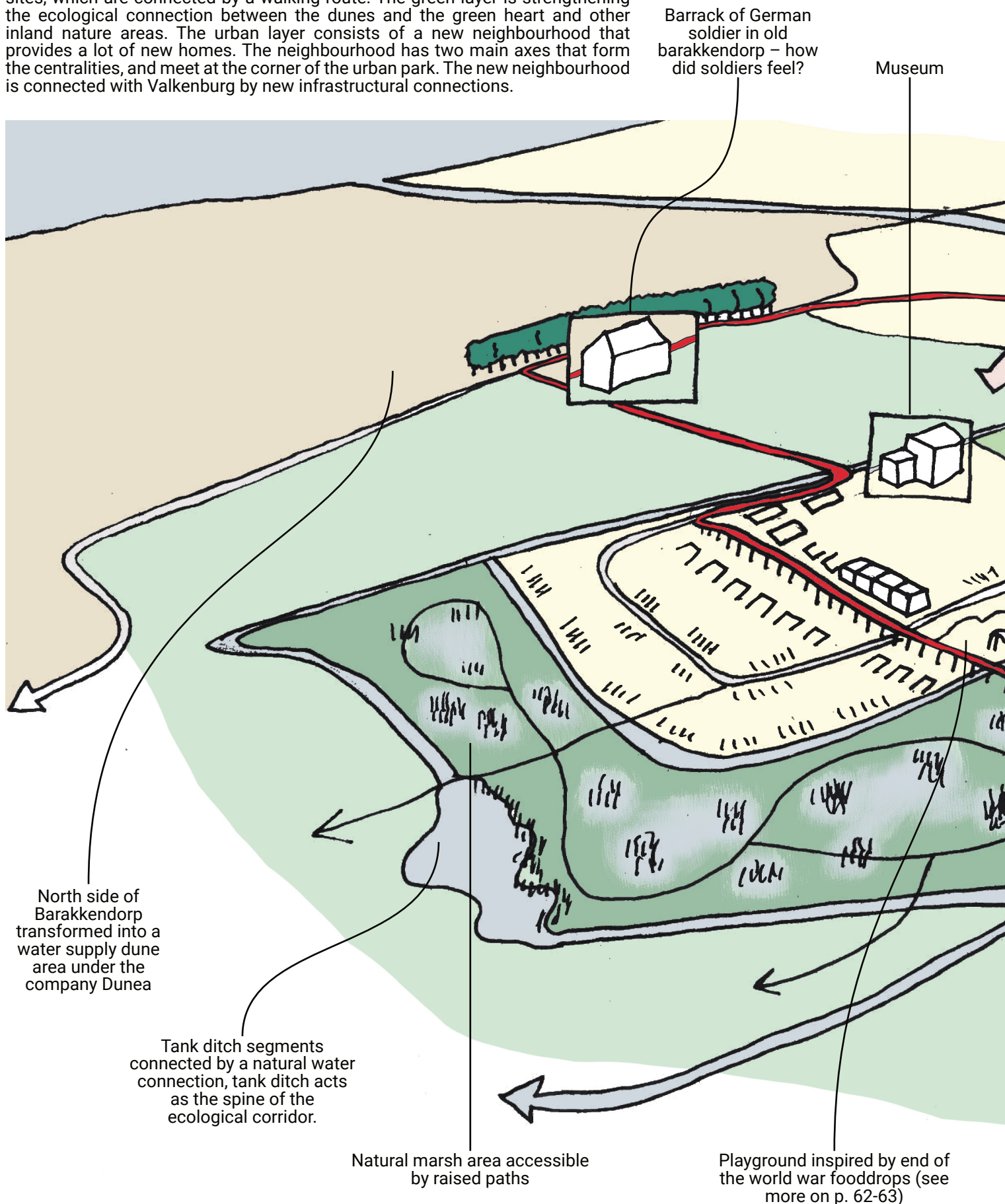
Permeability of urban area

Green areas

Map 29 Ecological network (by Milou Overdevest)

Future of Valkenburg airport – bird-eye vision

In our proposal for the Leiden Atlantic Wall chapter of the European WW2 narrative, we introduce three layers: heritage, ecological, and new urban areas. We chose multiple approaches on how to deal with heritage for the different sites, which are connected by a walking route. The green layer is strengthening the ecological connection between the dunes and the green heart and other inland nature areas. The urban layer consists of a new neighbourhood that provides a lot of new homes. The neighbourhood has two main axes that form the centralities, and meet at the corner of the urban park. The new neighbourhood is connected with Valkenburg by new infrastructural connections.



Selected locations

We present conceptual visions for four of the heritage locations, with different approaches to the heritage.

Home of soldier immersive experience



Unknown German Soldier



Interpretative use

The unknown German soldier used to live in this barrack during WW2. The building is kept intact, and added onto in an interpretative artistic way to convey the contradictory feelings of the soldiers. As the visitor goes deeper and deeper into the building, they are met with more and more signs of negative emotions, that peak into the regular lives of soldiers. The normal daily situations are contrasted with the war, that despite not being visible at first sight or even purposefully hidden, was omnipresent, hiding behind every corner, creeping from every crack in the wall.

By interpreting the heritage with contemporary interventions that lead a dialogue with the physical heritage remains, we support the historical value of the heritage by showing the meaning and value of the heritage through symbolic means, creating emotional effect on the visitor. This improves the educational impact and promotes self reflection, keeping the testimonials of the past in our collective memory, contributing to the social value of the heritage connected to cultural identity. The new artwork also adds aesthetical value to the heritage, increasing its general value for the generations to come.

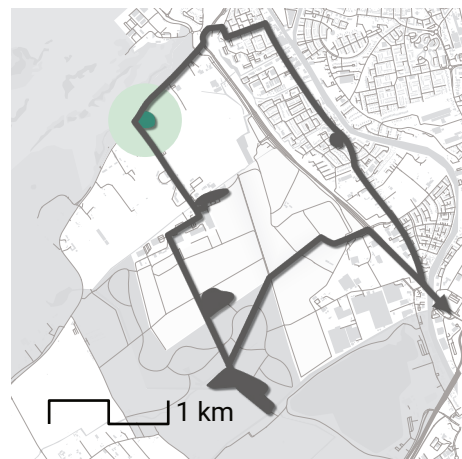


Fig. 53 Home of soldier location
(by Viola Ebermannová)



Fig. 54 Reference: Jan Palach Memorial by MCA 2019, Czechia
(Šmídek 2020)



Fig. 55 Reference: Spirit playground installation by Diana Orving 2024
(Orving 2024)



Fig. 56 Reference: In between installation by Chiharu Shiota 2012
(Margheri 2012)

Fig. 57 Home of soldier vision
(by Viola Ebermannová)



Artwork about fleeing the German invasion



Fig. 58 Artwork location
(by Viola Ebermannová)



Innocent child



Reintroducing traces

This is a street art monument to the regular people fleeing the German invasion on May 10 1940. It reminds us of the layered nature of the built environment heritage by reintroducing trace of history into an area, where it is not usually told. It is a mural painting conveying the feelings of the fleeing people, showing the rapid flow away from Valkenburg airport. The main art piece is close to Valkenburg city center, with the flow elements being repeated in art pieces along paths from the direction of the airport. This brings back in a conceptual way the historical memory of the events, having an educational impact by bringing them back into contemporary awareness. This artwork also invites to think about the memory of WW2, and ponder on collective identity.

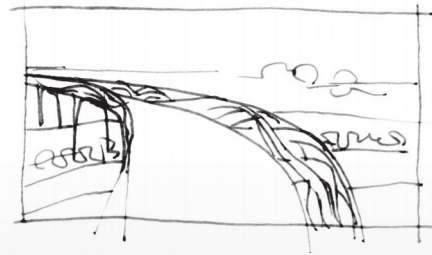
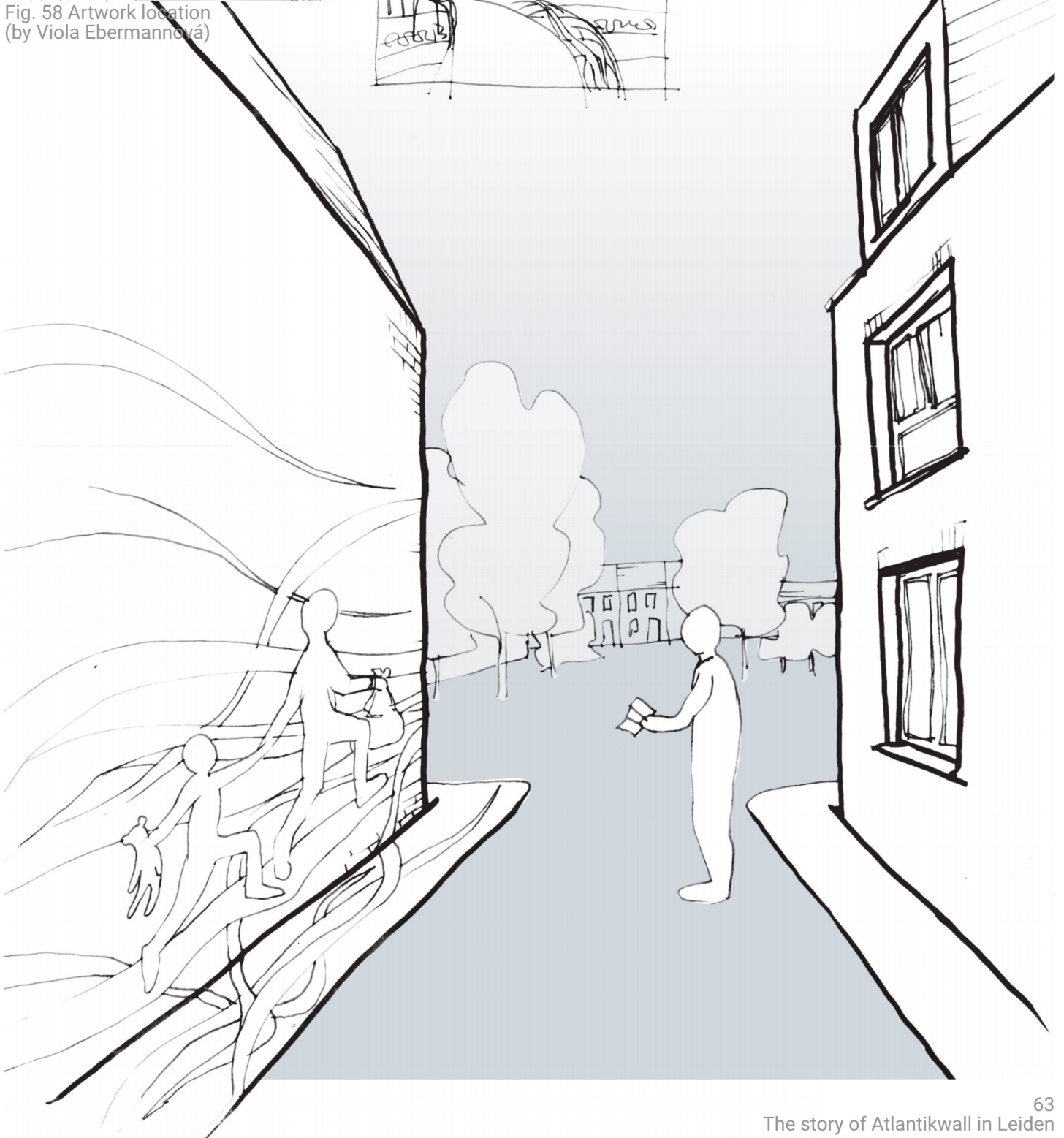


Fig. 59 Artwork vision
(by Viola Ebermannová)



Playground of food drops and end of war



Innocent child, Dutch citizen



Reintroducing traces

On this site happened the food drops in the spring of 1945, which the Dutch citizen helped distribute to the locals, including the innocent child. At that time, people had not eaten proper food for a very long time, and this event brought a lot of happiness into their life. The playground is a joyful place for all, offering joyful multisensory experience across age groups. It thematises the food drops and also the end of war. The runway bridge goes above the playground. This "second floor" of the space opens up opportunities to play with gravity in many ways, thematising the food drops.

The visitor can choose to think about the heritage, or easily opt out. The playground poses a friendly way to start conversations about WW2 with children, contributing to the educational value. The emotional impact can help us be more empathetic towards regular people of the past (and in turn regular people of the present) and contribute towards collective and individual identity.



Fig. 60 Playground location
(by Viola Ebermannová)

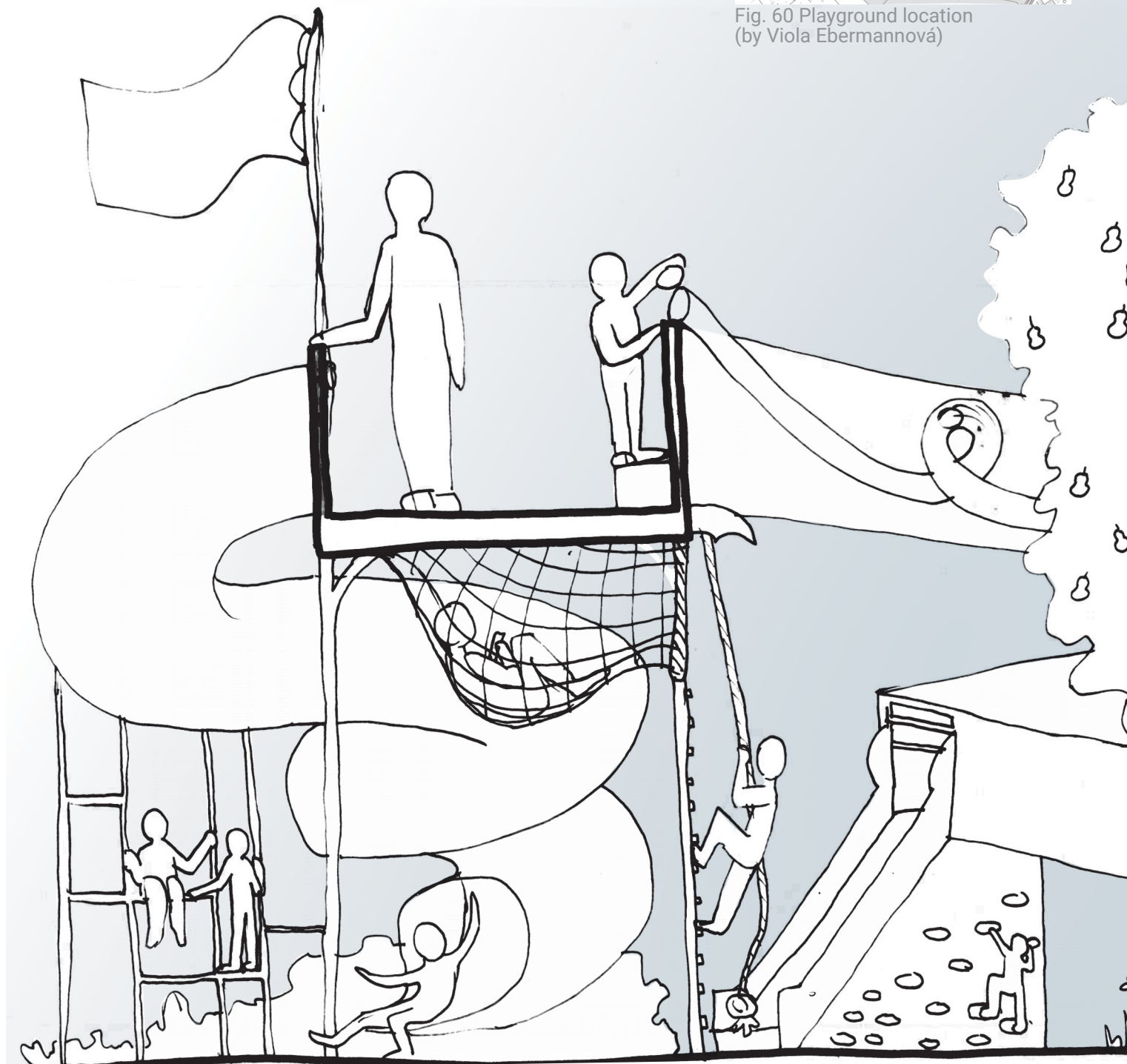
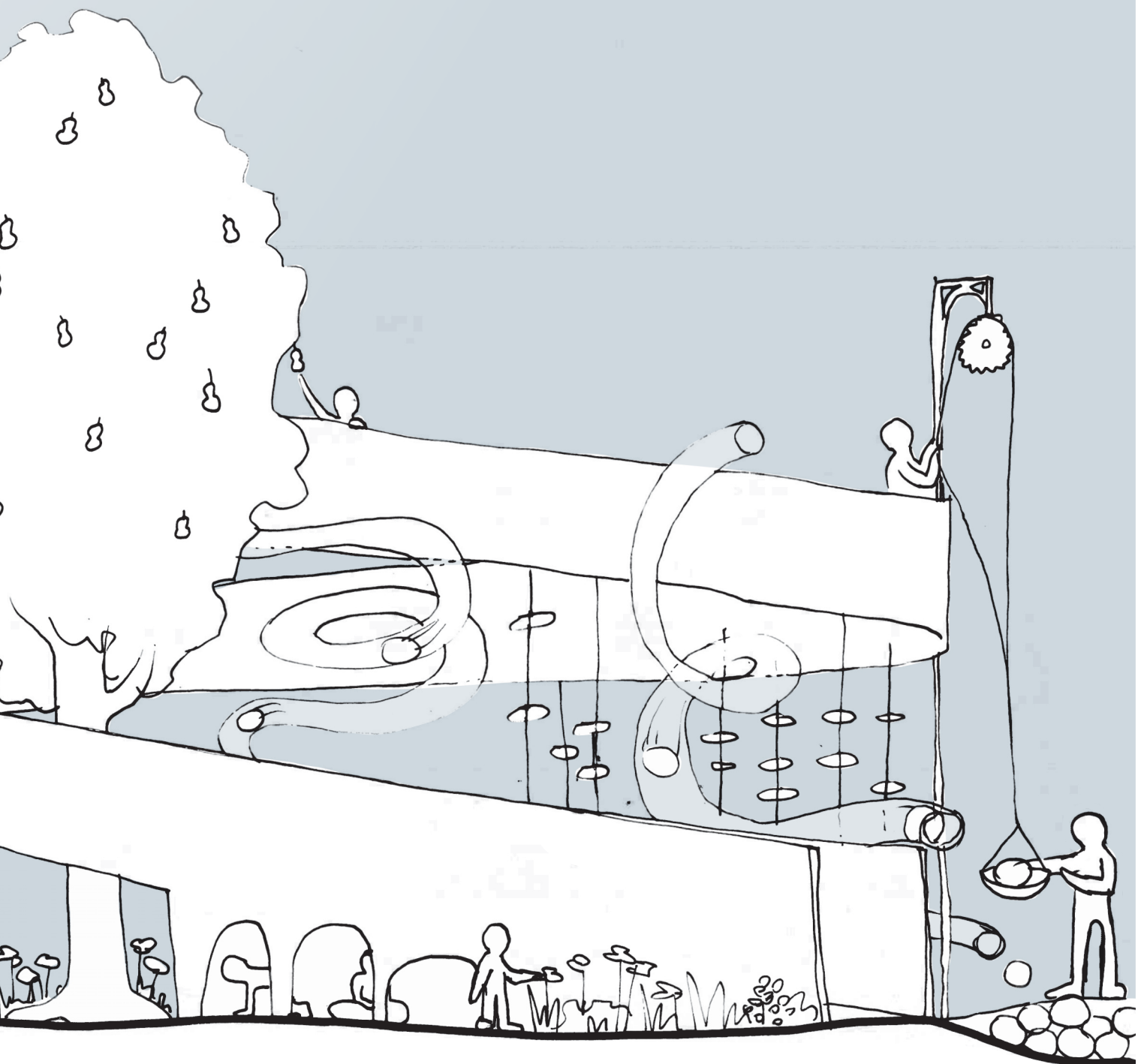


Fig. 61 Vision of the playground (by Viola Ebermannová)



Bunkerbos: restored, conserved, given to nature



Dutch citizen, Unknown German soldier



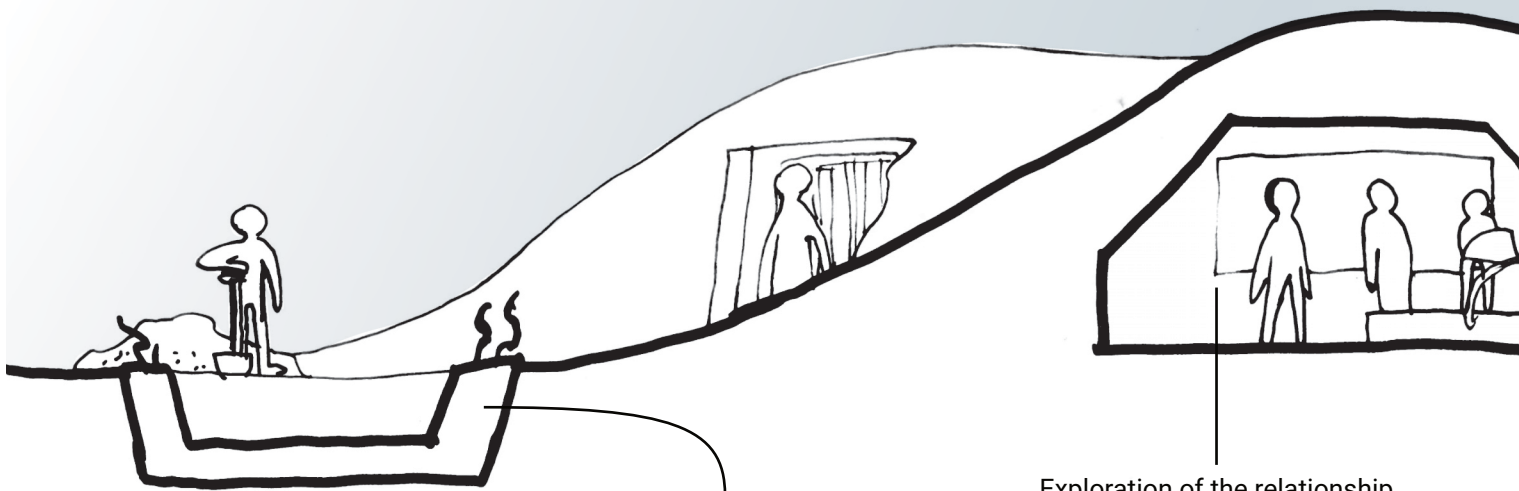
Conservation/reconstruction, Ecology

At the bunkerbos (bunker forest), the Dutch citizen was forced to work on the construction of the bunkers, and also it was the unknown German soldier's workplace. The site shows an array of ways to deal with heritage. Starting with reconstruction, part of the bunkerbos will be deforested to the WW2 bare state, and the bunkers restored. In part, the history will be reverted even further to show the construction of the bunkers. This reconstructed segment will be accessible and allow for exploration of the dynamics between the Dutch and the Germans during occupation times. Next to the restored are follows a gradient of first conserved bunkers in today's state, which are still intact, but with a forest on them. The sequence is concluded with a part of bunkerbos left for succession, allowing the bunkers to deteriorate and eventually disappear over time.

The historical value of the bunkerbos is supported by the educational aspects of the area, helping us understand and connect to the previous generations. The gradient of restoration-succession reflects on the passage of time and adds to the value of age. In general, the symbolically shown topic of the time that has passed since the end of WW2, and the presented dynamics between the locals and the occupiers during WW2, both contribute to the social value by prompting thoughts about evolution of the world and our place in it, collective memory, and national identity. In the part left for succession, the ecological value of heritage is prioritised.



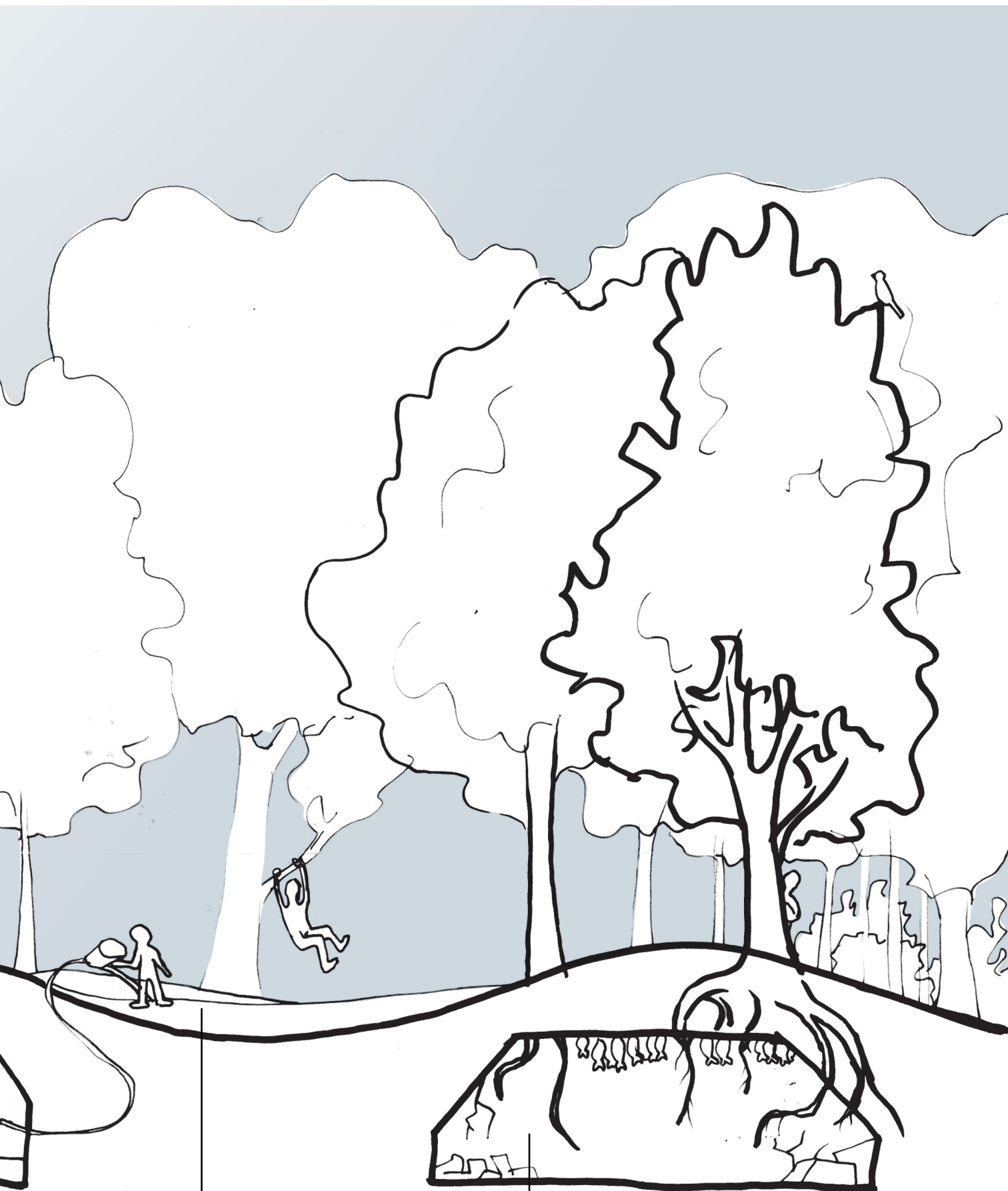
Fig. 62 Bunkerbos location
(by Viola Ebermannová)



Showing the construction of the bunkers, also by forced labour

Exploration of the relationship between Dutch locals and the German occupiers in reconstructed bunkers





Conserved area, showing the place of WW2 in collective consciousness, inviting to think about it in the context of the changing world

Area left for succession, where the passage of time and the growth of the society can be felt

Fig. 63 Vision of Bunkerbos
(by Viola Ebermannová)



Conclusion

Conclusion

Dealing with a common heritage viewed through different perspectives and narratives

When dealing with complex heritage such as the WW2 European trauma-scape, which is viewed differently by different communities and at the same time plays a large role in their national identities and in general the composition of the world today. It is important to not unify the perspectives but rather embrace the diversity. For peaceful coexistence of European memories within integrated Europe, we need to be open to hear other experiences and narratives. This will stimulate foster mutual learning, empathy, and understanding to create a solid shared historical consciousness. By doing that, we (as in the European community) can learn from our past and apply these lessons to our common future.

Evaluating heritage values

Heritage values are something that needs to be thought of in every design. This does not mean that the historical value has to be put on a pedestal, but that it needs to be addressed. Whether it is by embracing it, or mindfully prioritising other values.

Although it is precious to have physical pieces of heritage, we unfortunately cannot keep all and need to prioritise. The heritage that we do keep, we need to decide how to treat, maintain, and present. The framework we used (Pereira Roders, 2007; Speckens, 2010; Tarrafa Silva and Pereira Roders, 2011) can act as a good basis for the discussion on specific heritage site values, and can be helpful in figuring out the hierarchy of their importance. It distinguishes 8 types of values of heritage: Social, Economic, Political, Historic, Aesthetical, Scientific, Age, and Ecological. These are present in the pieces of heritage in different ratios, and thinking about them can help deciding on the approach we take in treating the heritage.

Spatial design and treating the heritage

When dealing with heritage, there are many options on how to treat it. On the conservative end are reconstruction (restoring the “original” or “intended” form) and conservation (preserving the desired/current state.) Heritage can be used for a new purpose, sometimes needing adaptations to enable it. Even when the educational, historical or aesthetical values are prioritised, the heritage can be modified and added onto, interpreting it in a new light. It might also be the case that other than heritage values are prioritised, for example ecology, and the heritage is let fade out.

Sometimes, physical traces of valuable societal heritage are already gone. Then, new interventions can be used resurface it. In new developments, this can help ground and contextualise the new design into the continuous development of the world.



Reflection

Reflection on the project

There are multiple approaches on how to deal with heritage and what values to prioritise. We chose to focus only on the World War II heritage values, even though there is a lot of valuable heritage from other time period as well. We chose for this approach to have a clear focus for our vision, and we believe if we had chosen more time periods, it would become too complex and not comprehensive. However, it is a limitation of our design.

Within the World War II heritage, there are still a lot of stories to tell. We struggled with balancing the many stories and creating a complete narrative. "Typically," the stories that are told from World War II are about usual protagonists, which leads to forgotten people/stories (children, women, comparatively less impacted minorities and communities etc). We tried to balance this by telling the stories from three different perspectives: the German soldier, an innocent child, and local protagonists. We could not find a lot of historical background on the story of the local protagonist in the site of Valkenburg airport. In future projects or further development of the design, this will need to be further researched.

We chose to tell the story of World War II in the site of Valkenburg, because we think it is important to not forget these stories. However, there are also people who do not want this story to be told or seen. They could have bad memories attached to the stories or they could think that presenting history through the eyes of a German soldier is problematic. However, we believe it is important to tell the story of World War II through different perspectives, including the one from the German soldier. History is never black and white. It is important to realise that people who were on the "wrong side of history" were also regular people, not dissimilar to us. We should think about our similarities and differences and learn from their mistakes.

We believe that in this neighbourhood it does make sense to base the design on World War II heritage, since it was a large part of the history of Valkenburg. However, you should always be careful and thoughtful about how much of the heritage you should keep, especially if you are keeping the heritage in a "normal" residential area. Not all people who are living in a neighbourhood would want to be confronted with World War II on a daily basis. They should be given an option to step out from being reminded of it, if they want to.

In this project we did not focus much on participation directly, but the plan of the train ride through Europe can function as a framework for participation. In participation the local protagonist could be discovered and decisions about what to do with heritage could be taken together. And local narratives could be tied into the framework and presented in a contextualised way.

Our proposal improves European integration by embracing, interlinking, and contextualising local experiences and narratives from World War II. By creating a pan-Europe train ride, we achieve a collective memory for the benefit of the complexity of the World War II. This leads to more emphatic acknowledgement of the different narratives.



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