

A FIELD GUIDE TO

ROTTERDAM'S LEFT-OVERS

A pocket size booklet to take with you to discover the hidden, forbidden and forgotten green corners of Rotterdam, inviting you to get curious, to engage, to care. Walk, talk and explore, wonder and experience the enchantment of Rotterdam's Interstitial Space

Based on the research (Dis)Enchantment of the Interstitial Space, exploration on wonder and accessibility in the in-between in Rotterdam

Hello there,

Welcome to a new terrain. To the 'Terrain Vague, the Left-Over, the Lost Space, the Non Space and to the Interstitial Space.

Where are you? Honey, you are in Rotterdam, just not the part you ever go to. Ever wanted to know what happens behind that fence? That place you drive by on the train but never seem to find?

Get your walking shoes, your compass and brace yourself, we are going into the wilderness.

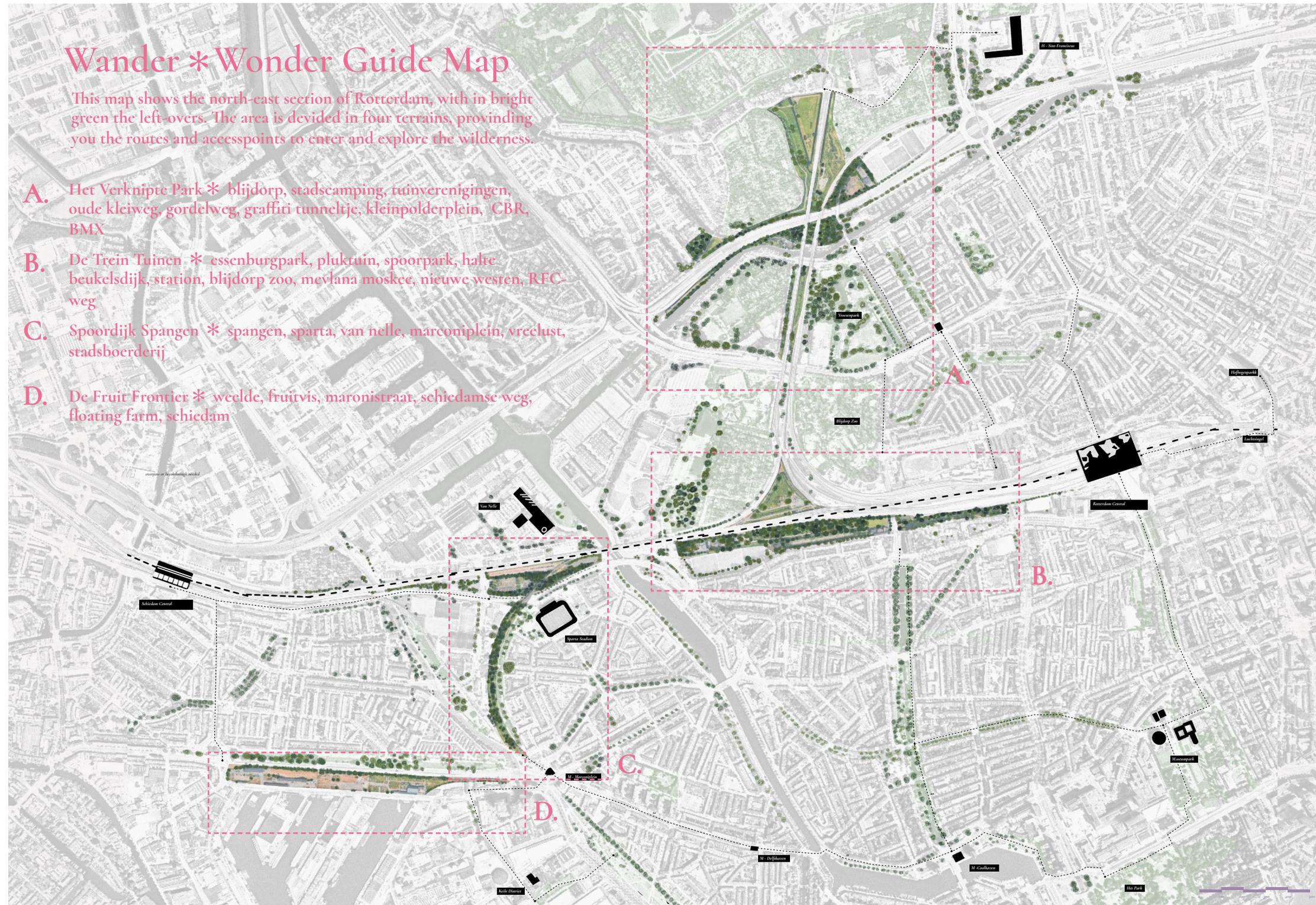
See you on the other side,

Laura

Wander * Wonder Guide Map

This map shows the north-east section of Rotterdam, with in bright green the left-overs. The area is divided in four terrains, providing you the routes and accesspoints to enter and explore the wilderness.

- A.** Het Verknipte Park * blijddorp, stadscamping, tuinverenigingen, oude kleiweg, gordelweg, graffiti tunneltje, kleinpolderplein, CBR, BMX
- B.** De Trein Tuinen * essenburgpark, pluktuin, spoorpark, halte beukelsdijk, station, blijddorp zoo, mevlana moskee, nieuwe westen, RFC-weg
- C.** Spoordijk Spangen * spangen, sparta, van nelle, marconiplein, vreelust, stadshoerderij
- D.** De Fruit Frontier * weelde, fruitvis, maronistraat, schiedamse weg, floating farm, schiedam



a fieldguide to * Rotterdams Left-Overs

Presented on this page is a map of Rotterdam north and east side, familiar right? The green plots highlighted on the map however are not your normal common park, they are areas of left-over, forgotten or abandoned land and - as you can see - they are also very green!

Almost all of these places do not have an official name, some are known by locals under names mostly relating to their surroundings. For example De Spoordijk, or Essenburgpark. Not having a name makes them harder to find and harder to talk about them to your friends or family. 'Hey, we are having a barbecue in the field next to that train-line, you know the one next to the highway!' Got it? Not really.

But not having a name also gives us the opportunity to come up with one! Through writing your own stories in these places and by making memories, they become embedded in our collective mental maps. Next to the terrains are a made up name, but more importantly keywords, so you might understand where they are.

This map is not final, I am sure there are endless more left-over green spaces in Rotterdam scattered all over, between some building blocks, roads or in the harbor. Be my guest, take a green pencil, and color them in!

a fieldguide to * Rotterdams Left-Overs

INTRO	p. 6
The wild secret life of ruderal plants	p. 10
<hr/>	
A. Het verknippte land	p. 20
B. De trein tuinen	p. 28
C. Spoordijk Spangen	p. 40
D. De Fruit Frontier	p. 50
<hr/>	
Final words	p. 58
Bigger Vision	p. 59
How to make jam out of knotweed	p. 62

a fieldguide to * Rotterdams Left-Overs

SO WHAT THE HELL ARE LEFT-OVERS?

If you are from Rotterdam you might be looking at the maps, wondering what these highlighted areas are. You are pretty sure there is nothing there, right? Haven't you walked by that street at least a handful of times, still not noticing what lies behind? Surely it cannot be that special — or perhaps not?

The spaces that are in this field-guide are precisely those overlooked, neglected, and hidden places. They are not designed squares, not programmed parks, not commercial plazas, but something in-between. They are what is left over, what lies in the cracks of the city, what slips from our conscious maps. In short: the interstitial space — literally, the space between spaces.

They might be strips of wild bushes along a railway, wastelands left after demolition, abandoned harbor sites, fenced-off plots, or infrastructural in-betweens. Their scale ranges from tiny forgotten patches in the city to extensive abandoned rail yards on the suburbs.

But what makes them so exciting is not their form, but their vagueness. They don't have a function, no program, you don't need any money to be there and no one tells you what to do. They are public, or maybe not? Kind of safe?

WHO USES THEM?

If you think that these places don't offer any social function, think again. Left-overs are used for skating terrains, self-made BMX parks, campfires, raves, sleeping places, and of course now you!

But humans aren't the only ones, also rabbits, foxes, birds, butterflies, spiders, ferns, grasses, trees, bushes, mosses and lichen live and grow here. These places are therefore super important, they give space to humans and more-than-humans that sometimes not always perfectly fit in the structured city. Be aware of this, you are a guest.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

These places are called wild for a reason, they definitely do not look like Vroesenpark or the Euromast Park. The nature found in left-overs are not planted, but have grown spontaneously. But it is not the same kind of nature as in the forest or marshes. This kind of nature is called 'Ruderal' nature, coming from the Latin 'rubble', as it often grows on soils full of building debris, railway rocks, old concrete and pavers and so on. Ruderals often don't look anything like garden or park plants. They are prickly or rough and look kind off messy and almost always only grown in the city. Sometimes we call them invasive! But how can plants in the city be invasive, if we humans have built the perfect terrain for them to grow?

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS FIELDGUIDE?

Left-over spaces are not very popular with the large public. They are deemed as unsafe, ugly and messy. Because they don't seem to have any qualities to add to the city, municipalities are often tended to or clean them up, close them down, or redevelop them.

But I believe left-overs are unloved because they are unknown! They can offer us city people a totally different urban experience apart from parks and plaza's, and the best is, they are already here! I think they can offer us a sense wild urban nature from which we can learn a lot, next to the fact that they are crucial places for some groups of people and animals that use them as sanctuary. We should be proud to have fringes in a city as Rotterdam, that don't have a program or function, and where anybody can stay, explore, play without paying money or being told what to do.

This fieldguide will give you an introduction to these places in Rotterdam, with routes and starting points and basic background info, but it will not tell you how to experience them or what to think about them. The only thing I ask of you is to open up your mind and senses, and see how maybe your perspective will change about these messy and unloved places.

Maybe, just maybe, we can become enchanted with the in-between, seeing it as a valuable public domain of Rotterdam that we want to take care of.

RULES OF ENCHANTMENT IN THE IN-BETWEEN

- Slow down; go from walking to wandering.
- Enter without a goal, do not look for function or destination.
- Allow yourself to follow a path you have never taken.
- Notice the traces of past and current use.
- Use your body as an instrument to understand, what do you feel, see, smell, hear?
- Accept discomfort. Mud, noises, awkwardness, uncertainty are part of the experience.
- Notice what grows by itself. Trees, weeds, moss, rust, cracks.
- Respect what is already there. Do not clean, correct or improve things right away, understand first.
- Resist black and white thinking. The place can be a shelter, shortcut, playground, or threat, all at the same time
- Allow space for the other

The wild, secret life of

* Ruderal Plants

Ruderal plants are often the first to arrive when places become left-over. They often grow on rocky, dry or disturbed soil. Sometimes full of nutrients from industry waste, sometimes totally barren. These characteristics are not often found in natural environments in the Netherlands. Because these terrains are so hard to grow on, they are often colonized by ruderal plants that don't perse come from our lowlands. Funnily enough, ruderal nature in Rotterdam is very identical to a lot of other cities like Berlin, London or even New York. It seems that the conditions in the city (warmer, more hard surfaces, often disturbed by people, toxic soils) only allow the most hardy plants, plants that often don't grow outside of the city context.

'Invasive' is a term you will hear often in this context. Rather than viewing plants through whether they are or are not native to the Netherlands - city conditions are not native Dutch conditions anyway - it seems more interesting to see how these plants have found themselves living our cities.

Some are drifters - the ones that came along our human traces across the continent. Over dry train-lines, disturbed verges next to highways, or even earlier, under the boots of travelers and farmers.

Voyagers - are the ones that have accidentally come to the Netherlands via cargo, animal food or ballast water. They often come from overseas and have somehow persisted our climate.

The fugitives - have been brought to the Netherlands for their beauty and were supposed to stay inside (botanical) gardens but have seemed to escape their golden cage into the wild.

Then the custodians - are the ruderal plants that are native to the Netherlands and often come from dry hardy locations as the dunes or our sandy soils. Someway they have found themselves growing amongst us in the city too.



DRIFTER - spreads along highways & rail lines

GERANIUM PURPUREUM

LITTLE ROBIN



comes from Mediterranean & Africa. Only grows on dry traintracks with low nutrient. has little pink flowers. is very uncommon and is on the red-list. Arrived in the Netherlands in the 90's, is very resistant to pesticides.

LENTHRANTUS RUBER

RED VALERIANUM



also known as 'railwayflower' has grey-green leaves & bright pink flowers. Comes from South Europe. Used as rock garden plant now also behaves feral on ruderal terrains & walls. loves dry grounds. butterflies love them profits from climate warming up

HELIOTIS ALBIS

HONEY CLOVER



Comes from Eastern Europe and Siberia. has little white flowers. Bees love them. It's a 'culture follower', taken along routes as animal food and soil improvement. Seen in left-overs and along traintracks. Very common, loves rocky soils, with disturbances

SENEGIO INAEQUIDENTIS

NARROW-LEAVED RAGWORT



Originally comes from South Africa. Arrived in Europe as seeds on a cargo of wool and explored slowly after first sighting in Netherlands in Tilburg. grows along traintracks & highways. yellow flowers, white fluff. usually only on left-overs, but also in dunes now. Very common

VOYAGERS - Carried from far away

BERTERDA NICANA

HOARY ALYSSUM



has been in Netherlands since 1600. family of mustard. Comes from Eastern Europe/Asia. Carried to the West with grain and seeds and were commonly found near grainmills. Now grows in sandy places and ruderal terrains

SENEGAL INCANDEANS

NARROW-LEAVED RAGWEED



Originally comes from South Africa. Arrived in Europe as seeds on a cargo of wool and explored slowly after first sighting in Netherlands in Tilburg. grows along train tracks & highways. yellow flowers, white fluff. usually only on left-overs, but also in dunes now. Very Common

LEPIDIUM VIRGINICUM

VIRGINIA PEPPERWEED



originally from the Americas have been accidentally imported with seeds and grows and grows near the mills. the leaves can be cooked or eaten fresh. the young seeds taste like pepper.



grows on stony places, low nutrient, left-over places. very cosmopolitan, common

AMBROSIA TRIFIDA

GIANT RAGWEED



comes from North America and grows on wet soil.

has been imported via soybeans and was found on transfer places.

now grows along the rivers in industry areas.

can be 3m high, very uncommon, not permanent but could start to grow here more regularly.

FUGITIVES - escaped from horticulture

HERACLEUM MANTEGAZIANUM

Giant Hogweed



Introduced to Europe as ornamental species for its impressive size, and exotic appearance. It has since escaped gardens and estates, and now grows along rivers, roadsides, railways, and other disturbed ground. Labeled as invasive.

ALANTHUS ALTISIMA

tree-of-heaven



a tree originally from China & Taiwan. It was introduced in the 19th century as street plant, as it grows well in disturbed soils. It spreads mostly through roots, although it does have seeds. It has a open pollination and can cool down the city, while being very hardy against drought, salt, pollution & distribution.

FAUPEA JAPONICA

Japanese Knotweed



Introduced to Europe from Japan as ornamental piece, but also for erosion control because of its root system which is really strong. It has escaped quickly and now grows in in-between places. It spreads from fragment, so when cut down, it quickly regenerates. It is also a large carbon captiver and a foodsource for birds & insects. Labeled as invasive.

BUDDLEJA DAVOUI

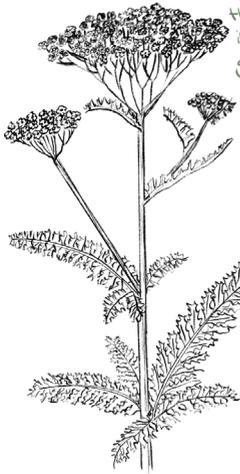
Butterfly bush



Once introduced to Europe as a ornamental plant, it still is, but also grows in railway sites, demo plots, and bridge edges. It has a lot of light weight seed, spreading by the wind. It likes dry, mineral substrates, with little soil. It has large benefits for insects, especially in late summer. Labeled as invasive.

CUSTODIANS - natives to the land but also like the ruderal

Achillea Millefolium Common Yarrow



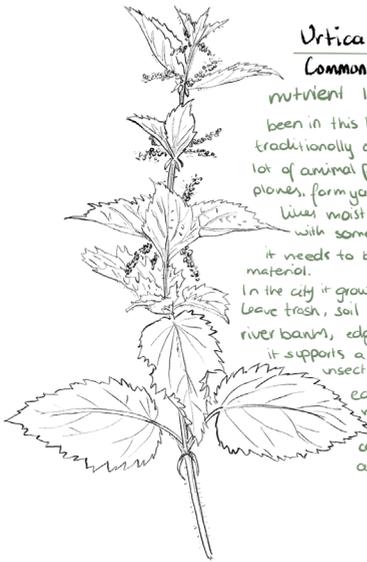
has been a long time in the Netherlands.
it normally likes open conditions, grasslands, river terraces, meadows & grazed landscapes. it prefers poor to moderate soils, full sun & regular disturbance.
In the city they appear in road verges, embankments, vacant lots & paths.
its roots improve soil structure & help retain moisture.
has medicinal value.

Plantago Major Broadleaf Plantain



has followed human traces for centuries. long before asphalt: it lived in compacted soils by roads, nover & feet. it wants regular disturbance & full sun. in the city it grows in paths, playgrounds, sidewalks, & vacant plots. it protects the bare ground, absorbs impact, reduces erosion, holds moisture, is edible & medicinal.

Urtica dioica Common Nettle



nutrient loving plant. it has been in this landscape for centuries, traditionally often in fields with a lot of animal presence. riverbanks, flood plains, farm yards.
likes moist & nitrogen rich soils, with some disturbance.
it needs to be 'fed' organic material.
In the city it grows where humans leave trash, soil or compost like river banks, edges of housing blocks.
it supports a lot of animals, insects & butterflies.
edible, medicinal & can be used as fibre.

Papaver rhoeas Common Poppy



Seasonal custodian. is very closely tied to agriculture. likes open soils often ploughed, or grazed. it likes bare & mineral soils, with full sun. seeds can stay dormant in the soil for decades.
In the city it lives construction sites, waste grounds, temp clearings, feeds pollinators.

Hemelboom of * Helboom?

One of the more reoccurring trees that you will, or have already seen, is the Tree of Heaven, the *Ailanthus altissima*. Although she used to be a street tree commonly used in Rotterdam, she has been banished to the cities left-overs. The cities have gotten too warm and suddenly she started to spread! Apparently the warmer conditions remembering of Taiwan and China - where she is originally from - promote growth.

Originally the Tree of Heaven has been brought to Europe for two reasons, firstly because it is a stunning tree, and secondly, because some wealthy estate people wanted to cultivate it for the silkworm that uses it as its food source. These nurseries were called 'Ailantheries' and were recommended to grow ... next to train rails and shunting yards, because of its rocky soil and good drainage.

Well, the silk industry didn't stick around, but the tree did.

She now grows in the toughest of tough conditions, mostly seen in Rotterdam in-between side walk paving and your house, providing a nice little greenery in your non existent ant front garden.

We could look at the Tree of Heaven as the name says, a beautiful tree that reaches for the sky with an airy open foliage, with a trunk that is still good looking in the winter. Yet, we choose to look at them as the Tree of Hell, suckering where we didn't tell it to go, breaking our ideology of control and maintenance.

Funny tough, like we weren't the ones trying to make it grow in exactly those conditions.

WANTED



Ailanthus Altissima, one of the most hated invasive trees in the Netherlands. Waarnemingen.nl, Rotterdam, 2025.

* Japanese Knotweed

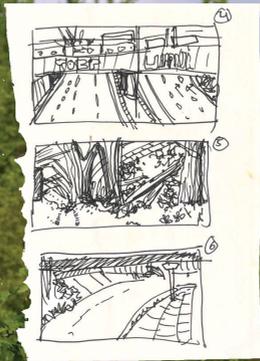
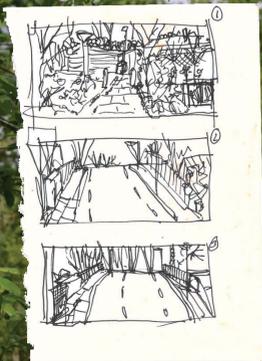
Another not so popular plant in the ruderal kingdom is the Japanese Knotweed - *Fallopia japonica*. It is said that she is the most invasive plant of them all, growing straight through concrete, having roots so strong it can shift foundations and infrastructure. Imagine having such powers... Imported mainly because she was - see a pattern? - really beautiful, she escaped our botanical garden in the 1900's. The Knotweed often grows in in-between spaces, also in Rotterdam she is seen mostly next to railroads, like in terrain A, next to tuinvereniging 'Tot Nut en Genoegen' or het Kleinpolderpad, next to the highway.

Rotterdam keeps cutting her down, unfortunately for them, this makes Knotweed only grow back quicker and stronger. More holistic approaches could be using goats or sheep to graze them, or by making sure they don't spread by using root barriers. Maybe accepting that Knotweed is - just as the Tree of Heaven - a part of the urban landscape that we have created is the first step to dealing with her.

Anyhow, until they have figured that out, gives us a chance to also enjoy this beauty. On the last page is a recipe on how to make jam with the fresh shoots of Japanese Knotweed.



Fallopia japonica in the harbor of location D. De Fruit Frontier. In the middle of summer it has a bright green color, with contrasting red stems, Own work, Rotterdam, 2025



On Site Sketching

4. Unofficial walking path
(often wet, lots of puddles)

3. Regulated bottom-up BMX park initiative
(used around the clock)

2. DIY pony park
(made out of construction fences)

7. Walking shortcut up bridge
(often used by bikes as well)

1. Unofficial DIY BMX park
(often maintained and used for sleeping)

5. Donkey and goat paddock
(Do not feed)

6. Bicycleroad on waterside & graffiti tunnel
(Important route for cyclists)

8. Secret Pathway
(next to trainline)

31 april - highway sound
i find that, if you wonder
from the paths, actually noise
sees you. it is as if you disappear,
perhaps the terrain vogue makes
you invisible, vague. Not seeable
for the ordinary jogger, dog walker,
city dweller.

the paths are easy going,
its just spring and the nettles do
not cross my ankles yet.
in a few months this might be
unaccessible again.
does it matter? it only leads me
to fences, every type of it.
temporary fences, belinal official
gates, barbed wire and wooden
planters. Am I not supposed to go in
or something not supposed to
go out?

how to access

* A. Het Vernipte Park

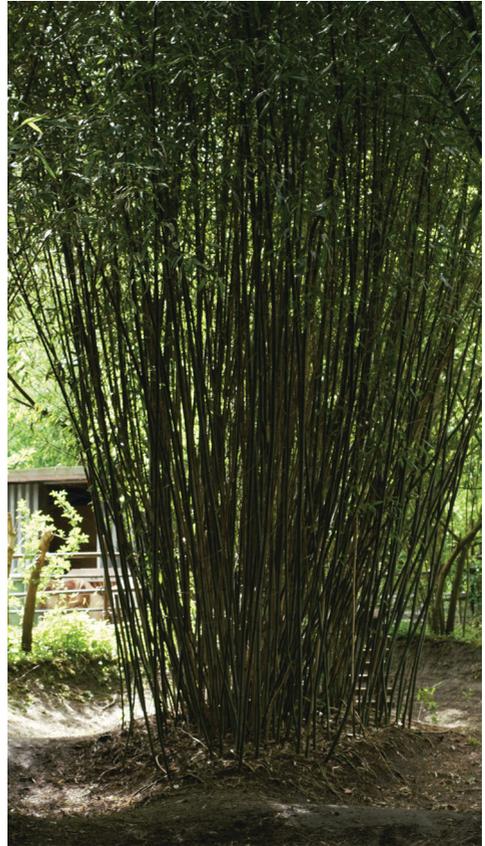
We will start at the north of Rotterdam. This left-over region spans from Vroesenpark, over the Canal and Highway, towards de Kleiweg. It is an area totally chopped up by train lines, highways and canals, leaving pieces of land you will have never heard about, or noticed. However when you look at the map you will realise that this area is huge!

The interesting areas are put on the last page, and are mainly accessed from the main roads next to it. Just walking the route would give you a great impression of this terrain, next to being a super diverse path. I invite you to slow down and notice the fringes of land tucked away between infrastructure and the strangeness of life that evolves here.

If you really want to explore these left-overs lands, one has to leave the main roads and enter the void here and there. An example to this would be number 1. the unofficial BMX park, which you can enter at the corner of Vroesenkade & Noorderbocht, on the left of the house. You can descent into a somewhat shady diy BMX park, filled with invasive bamboo and material to work the site. People also use this area, locked in between the canal and the highway, as a sleeping place, tucked away behind the sound wall.



Location 1: Care and precision are put into making a DIY BMX track. Rotterdam. Own work, 2025.



Location 1: typical fringe, pony's in the background, invasive bamboo and people appropriating space as BMX track. Rotterdam. Own work,

Who will I meet? *

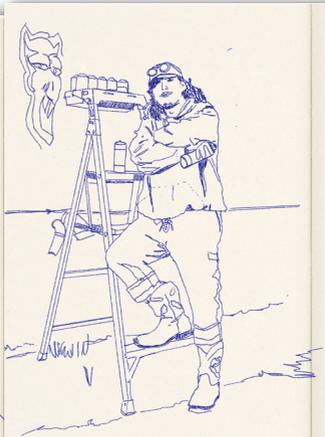
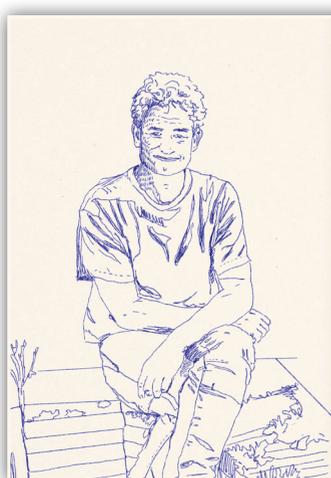
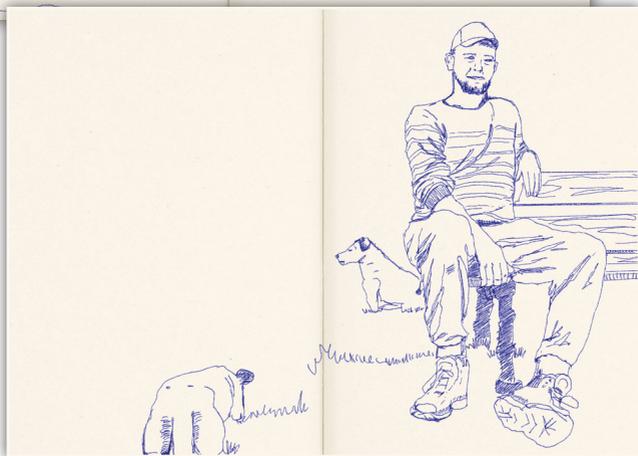
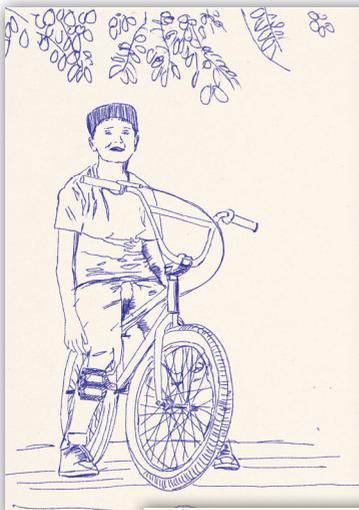
The main people using this area are people actually using the routes to get from one place to another, or to relax or sport. A lot of people walk in this terrain, just because it is super green, not super busy and close to the city.

However, these type of places have strong internal social life as well. The people actually taking care of the place are often those who don't seem to find this kind of freedom anywhere else.

This goes for example for the BMX'ers shaping their own space, but also graffiti artists making their piece in 6. the graffiti tunnel. Next to those, a important typical custodian in this area is the gardener, who - with their garden in the 'tuinvereniging' - spent a lot of time in and around the area. This terrain is known for its many many 'tuinverenigingen', which are all publicly accessed from dusk to dawn. I really recommend waking in someday, you will be stunned by how beautiful their gardens and cottages are, the people are an amazingly diverse bunch or Rotterdammers.

Another custodian of Het Verknijpte Park are people that don't have a permanent roof over their head. The type of places these left-overs offer often also offer as a more quiet and hidden sheltering place than the city does. It is important to understand that these people, although maybe very different than you, have as much right to the city as one that sleeps inside a house each night. Left-over places in the city provides them with a space that has a sense of privacy and autonomy, the same qualities you appreciate about your home.

Who did you run into?





Pictures of the terrain from 1. to 6.



B. De Trein Tuinen

ENTRANCES:

1. trough gate at corner beukelsdijk
- 51.923134, 4.462083

2. Essenburgsingel 48

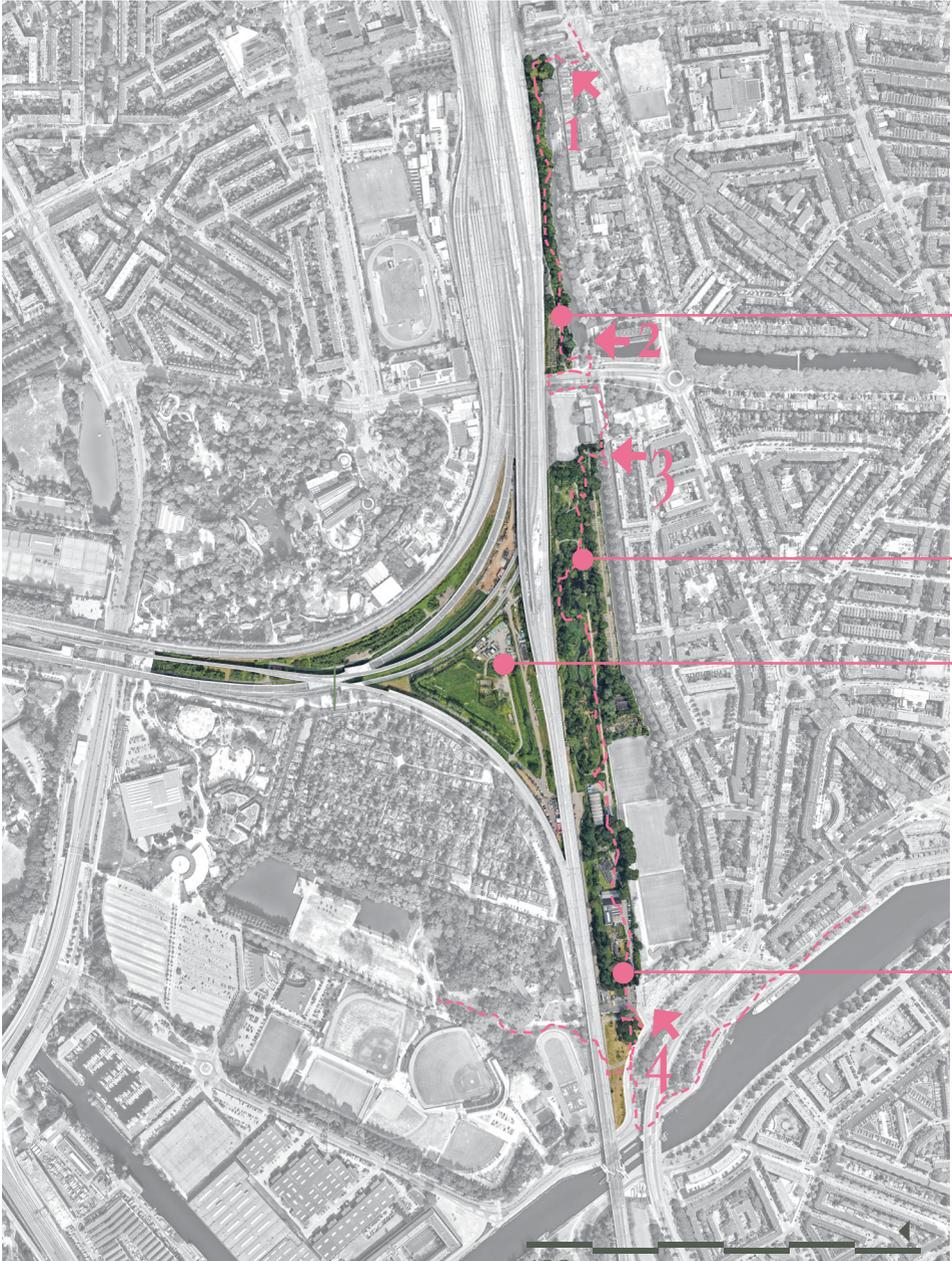
- 51.922886, 4.455338

3. left of Marnix gymnasium through gate

- 51.922429, 4.453414

4. RFC-weg next to mosque

- 51.921823, 4.441513





Spoortuin

(vegetable garden waiting list full! Lots of neighbourhood residents,)

Essenburg Park

(official park now! Maintained by neighbourhood)

Train Triangle

(inaccessible, rented by Zoo)

RFC-road

(back entrance of park, industrial zone)

how to access

* B. De Trein Tuinen

De Trein Tuinen are an area of what left-overs can become, once people start taking care of it. The Essenburgpark and The Spoortuin are both located here, and are accessed only lengthways, making it a nice long walking path of 1,5km disconnected from the rest of Rotterdam. The spoortuin is open day and night, however, Essenburgpark does close at night, making it not a totally unregulated space. Next to beautiful wild landscape and waterbodies with paths meandering through it, there are also community gardens here.

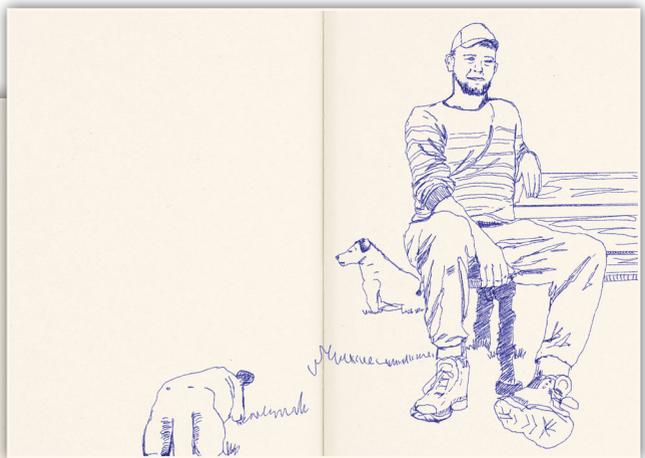
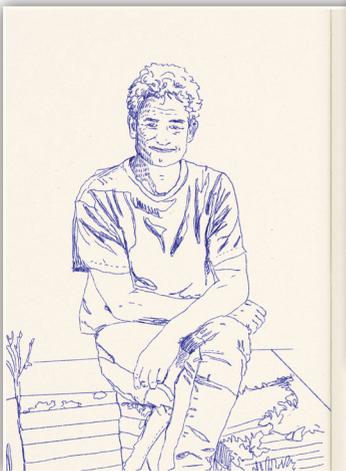
There is one area on the map that is very much unknown, it is the triangle in the middle of the three train-lines departing from Rotterdam Central. If you see the map at the front page, you realise what a huge area this is! However, you cannot get there! This zone belongs to the municipality, but is rented out to Blijdorp Zoo for them to grow food and store stuff. Though, it would be an amazing place to wander around while having trains drive by you from all sides.

Who will I meet? *

In the Trein Tuinen you will find a diverse group of involved community members collectively taking care of the area. Especially the community gardens are much visited by their gardeners. Next to that you will meet a lot of people coming here to escape the busy city, and as it is right in the city center, it is quite known. Some just to walk, but others really for the reason to escape the urban controlled environment.

An initiative that has their main location here is Huize Middeland, a 'buurthuis' collective that organises activities and help for marginal groups in Rotterdam center. Who knows, maybe you will walk in on a cooking workshop with refugees, or a ballgame with local youth.

Who did you meet?



a conversation with Philip

* Essenburgpark & de Spoortuin

“You know, all the initiatives, the green initiatives, the neighborhood initiatives, the social cohesive initiatives, they all want the same thing, its space. Space to be, to create, to connect, space to play”. - Phillip





14-05-2025

Conversation with Philip —
Spoortuin & Essenburg Park

Philip is working in the Spoortuin when the conversation starts. While watering the garden beds, he explains how this place came to be. The Spoortuin and Essenburg Park used to belong to the railway company (NS). For a long time, they were not cared for by the city. Because of that, many trees and plants grew freely: poplars, willows and birches. The area became wild and quiet.

Problems started when NS wanted to cut the trees down. They said this would give a better view of the trains from the street and help prevent graffiti. The people living nearby did not agree. The trees blocked noise and views and made the place feel separate from the city. That was exactly why they valued it.

When the neighbourhood was finally allowed to use the area as green space, the city asked what kind of design they wanted to make. Philip says this missed the point. “We already liked what was there. We didn’t want a finished design. We wanted to take care of it ourselves.” So the place slowly grew through use and work, not through a plan.

The gardens are made from stacked pavement tiles, shaped into simple geometric beds. Some are used to grow food, others are just there to be looked at. Together they show that the place is cared for, but not controlled.

Philip often stops to look closely at nature. He takes photos of insects and listens to birds. He talks about the yearly Bioblitz, a day when people come together to observe and record as many plants and animals as they can find. Learning about the place happens by being there, not by signs or rules.

There are plans to connect Essenburg Park and the Spoortuin across the railway. Philip also dreams of extending this green route further, towards the bus stops near Central Station. He sees these spaces as part of one larger network.

“All kinds of neighbourhood groups want the same thing,” Philip says. “Space. Space to be, to meet, to make things, to play.” Play, for him, means space without rules or fixed programs. Because of this, the people involved want to keep control over the place themselves,

instead of handing it over to the city. Making the place visible is important. Not only in a physical way, but also in people's minds. Philip explains how the idea of the Groene Connectie was used to show that these green spaces are connected and meaningful together. This helped the neighbourhood defend Essenburg Park in talks with the city.

Nearby stands a small building, once used by NS. Now it works as a neighbourhood living room, called Huize Middelland. It hosts many activities, including meetings for refugees. Philip says the building feels safe because it is slightly outside the city. "Hard conversations are easier here," he says.

Philip also talks about people who need places like this to live their lives. He mentions Farouk, who cannot deal well with schedules or fixed plans. "He needs a place where he can just be," Philip explains. The Spoortuin allows this without asking questions.

Walking through the area, the work becomes visible: compost piles, vegetable beds, benches and fire places made from simple materials. Teenagers hang around without being told what to do. Philip talks about how difficult it is to find the right balance. Too many rules, signs or paths can quickly take away the special feeling of the place. A gate can welcome people, but it can also push them away. If everything becomes too easy and organised, the wild and free character is lost.



1. *Phaseolus vulgaris*
French Bean
2. *Caretum tomentosum*
Snow-in-Summer
3. Old sidewalk pavers used as planters



1. A watering pump made in the centre of the garden
2. Inside 'Hütze Middelands' poster wall
3. *Allium schoenoprasum*
Chives

C. Spoordijk Spangen

ENTRANCES:

1. at marconiplein, northwards in-between Spangen polder & Metro line
- 51.913981, 4.430925

2. at busstop Beukelsbrug / Van Nelle, northwards to concrete parking
- 51.921548, 4.435971



Abandoned concrete parking lot
(used for skating)

Dead end of abandoned train track
(used for graffiti, trainwatching)

Horvath bridge still with train track
(ruderal plants growing on it)

Newly made access

*(with lightpost! Connecting Spaanseweg and Spaanseveld
bridges)*

Overgrown sunken concrete stairs up
(People sleep under the crevice of the bridge)

Blueberry heaven
(often meeting people picking them in summer)

Entrance pathway on 'Spoordijk'
(Informal pathway following old traintrack)

Vroom people
laughing

crowd laughing

rustle of leaves
wind

Metrol drives
by

Van Breeb
bridges

Crow
motor

ram bunny
definitely a bunny

br...

how to access

* C. Spoordijk Spangen

A true gem in Rotterdam! It is said that this is the real deal of Rotterdam left-overs

The terrain really exists out of two different areas, firstly the dike and secondly the parking lot next to the train-line. The dyke is more vegetated, sheltered because of the height, and really out of sight. The parking lot is also very hidden, but really big and open. This area is truly a Terrain Vague, you can do whatever you like here.

You will be able to enter this space via Marconiplein, where you can follow a sandy path into the woods between the Tjalklaan and Spaanse bocht. This dyke used to be the main connector from the main train-line to the harbor, and has transported all sorts of goods. Even circus animals! Slowly the harbor came in disuse and in 2008 the rail closed for good. The tracks have been taken out so it is easier to walk here, but many switch boxes and signal posts are still here.. You will find a lot of brambles and beautiful vista's over the city while crossing two abandoned bridges (yes they are safe).

The end of the dyke leads to a dead-ended bridge that connects to the main train-lien and the area underneath diffuses into a very wide left-over area used as flow-over parking for Sparta. But it is way more used as a totally unseen free zone. Skating, art exhibitions, bonfires, raves, graffiti artists, shelters and (many) bunnies.

You will be able to exit this site from the bus stop Beukelsbrug on the east.

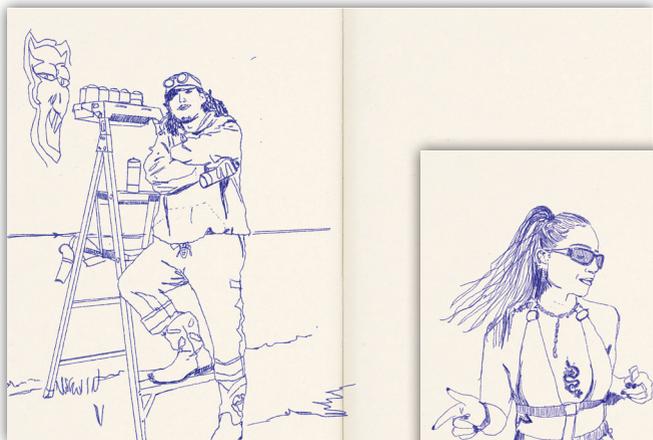


Who will I meet? *

This area is far from unused. A lot of people have discovered this space as a haven of freedom and use it all for their own best purposes. The dike is visited already a lot by walkers, sometimes accompanied by their dog. But also foragers come here, picking the delicious brambles around august.

In the norther part, people tend to use this area more for their lack of surveillance. Many good raves get thrown here, unable to be found by the police, but also almost no-one will be disturbed as it is quite far off. Also graffiti artists come here for this reason. When the gates of Sparta are closed, they know no police is able to surveil here and they can do their thing.

This area once again houses many people not having a house to sleep at night. The sides of the train bridges provide a strip of dry shelter and is fully appropriated by many. Unfortunately, this place is also known for its substance use, therefore not being a fully safe place to wander around at night. Freedom can mean organising a bottom-up art exhibition, but it can also mean the freedom to use drugs or other illicit things.





1. Old railway sleeper
2. *Fraxinus excelsior* & *Quercus Robur*
Ash and Oaks at the end of summer
3. Old paver, broken

1. Pavers on the old bridge
2. Sand ad gravel
3. *Populus x canadensis*
Poplar growing through fencing

1. Concrete with rebar sticking out
2. *Ailanthus altissima* & *Rubus*
Tree of heaven in summer, with
brambles blooming
3. *Polygonum aviculare*
Knottgrass growing through asphalt





Dead end of the Spoordijk

Why do we come here? To spot trains as well? Haha no.. My friend made that tag on the train that just went past. I think it is the one from Hoek van Holland, it drives up to central station and then comes back. So let see, 15 minutes from now it drives back around? I better get a picture of that tag tho, it looks cool as.

But no no, we are graffiti artists. And well, this is one of the only left places in Rotterdam where we can spray without anybody telling us off. If not here you could go to Schuttersveld or that little tunnel in Overschie (see chapter 1), those are all 'legalized', this one is more underground tho.

Because it is so hard to access (by car) ofcourse. If the gate down there is closed, we know the police is not patrolling here. But the other day, we were under the trainbridge with a whole diy scaffolding to make this big piece, they just drove by and said nothing, haha. They don't care about this place, it's of the football club Sparta for extra parking. It's just an overflow terrain for cars, but humans use this all the time ofcourse.

Yeah this place is important for us, I mean just look back for a second, doesn't that view - with all those wild trees, the signal poles and old rails - look super sick. It reminds me of Berlin, the roughness and the 'just do whatever you want'.

Shit!!! Was that that train?? Fuck man, literally had my phone out, but it was in selfie mode, shit. Oh man, that sucks.

But yeah, do you have contacts with the municipality? Can you tell them to not built here? This is like literally one of the last wild places of the city.

Hey, but don't rat us out heh.



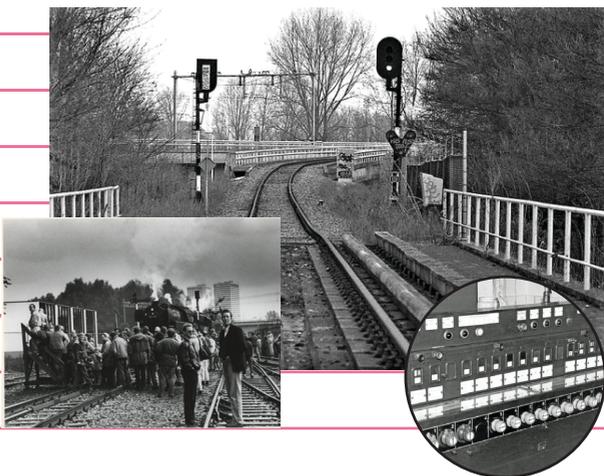


1. *Leucanthemum vulgare*
 Oxeye Daisy
 2. *Agrostis* sp.
 Grass in bloom
 3. *Platanus x hispanica*
 London Plane with seed

1. DIY fencing
 2. *Rosa* subsect. *Cantinae*
 Dog-rose
 3. *Rhus typhina*
 Stag's-horn Sumach

1. Metal beam corroding
 2. *Cornus sanguinea*.
 Common Dogwood in bloom
 3. Old signal post in poplar

Notes *



D. De Fruit Frontier

ENTRANCES:

1. at marconiplein, south in-between
Schiedamsseweg & Marconistraat
- 51.912986, 4.430242

2. halfway Schiedamsseweg, into bushes

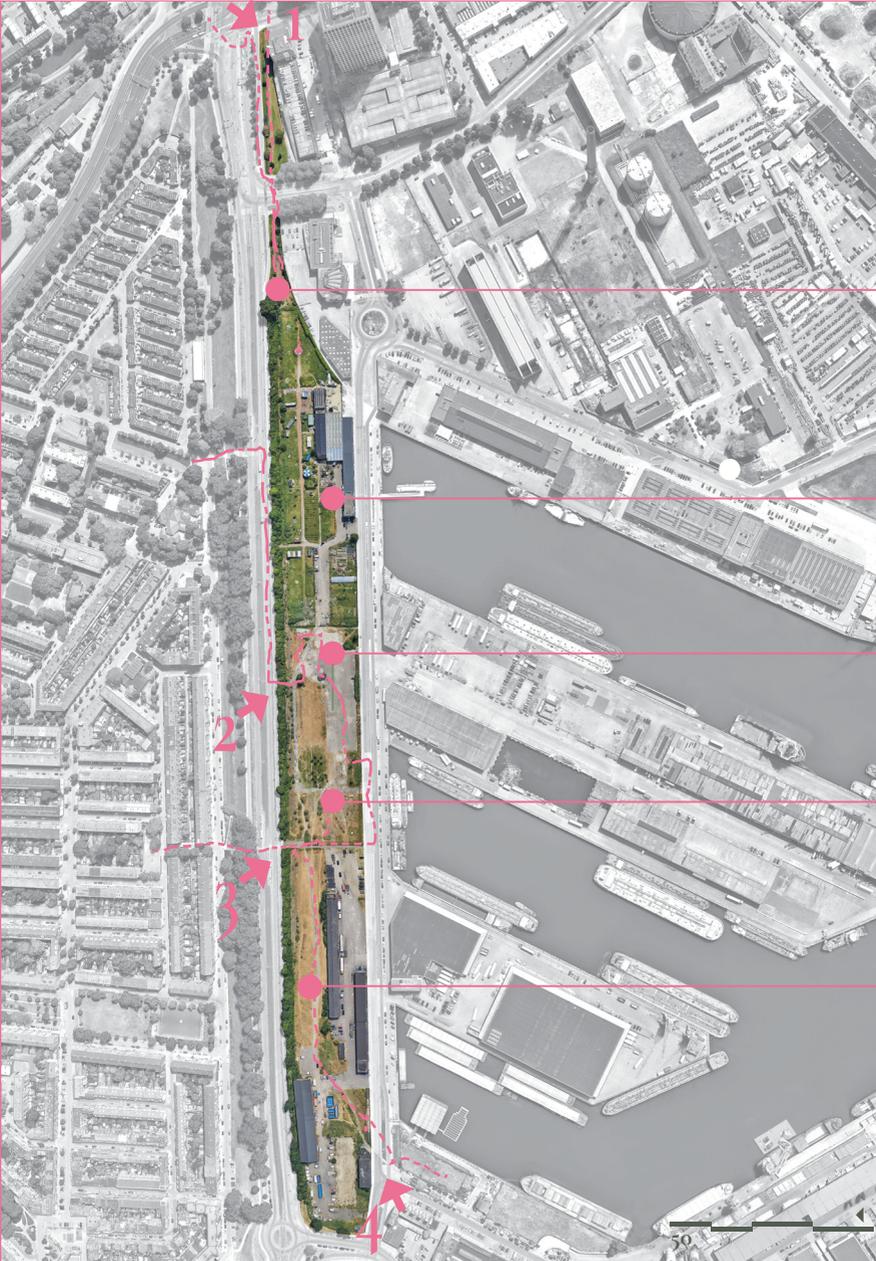
- 51.913604, 4.420600

3. official entrance Schiedamsseweg

- 51.913746, 4.418217

4. Olifantenpaadje next to Marconistraat

- 51.913257, 4.413670



Vroom
People laughing

zzzt

Door bangs shut

Poplar leaves rustle in the wind

Metro drives by

Vroom Beeeeb
brids far away

Crow *meow*

Rock garden
(Nobody comes here! dead end)

tram bunny
definitely a bunny

buzzing of insects

Weelde festival terrain
(not always open, forever temporary, fun parties tho)

Temporary construction site
(blocked by construction fence)

'Designed' area
(trees are planted, entrance is made, paths made of concrete slabs)

Walkpath
(looks like a praiy from a western, lots of suitcases?)

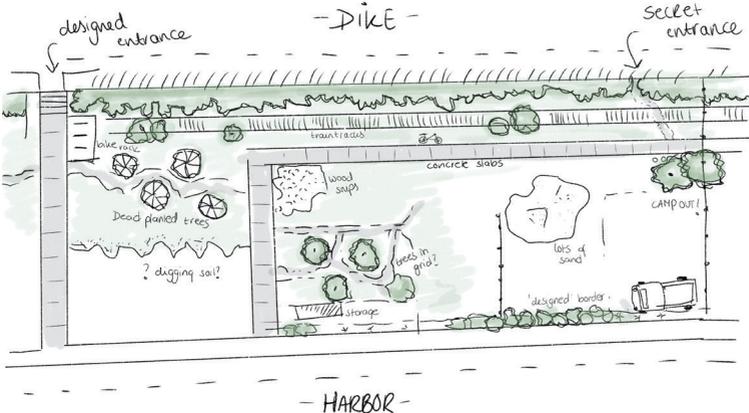
how to access

* D. De Fruit Frontier

This terrain is named after its history as being the main dock for the import of fruit in the harbor of Rotterdam. The long shape of the area used to be a large shunting yard for trains, which some of are still visible today! Once the transport via truck became more efficient, the area came to be abandoned and has been used as free zone for a long time, though a designated function never seemed to stick.

You would maybe know this terrain from Weelde, a culture hub and festival terrain hosting fun parties and events. This area is unfortunately not publicly accessible, only on opening times.

The rest however is so open and dry, it resembles somewhat of a prairie landscape in the midst of summer. You can enter basically from all sides and it is fun to discover the old railway lines and see the overgrown plants between them. There is also a more secret entrance; number two, into the bushes and down a slope. This has been used by people as camping spot.



Who will I meet? *

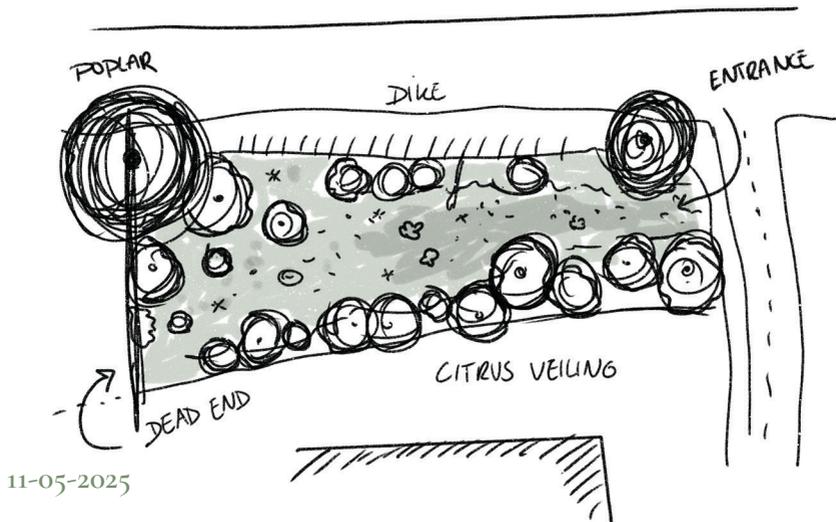
Because the area is much more open, large scale appropriation doesn't quickly happen here. The site is used often enough for a randomly thrown party or event, or simply by people waking their dog.

At the same time, because it is quite far from the center, people also hang out and sleep in the more vegetated edge of the site. You will find campfires, set-ups for barbeque's and bikes stored here.

Around the site is a quite a bit of social life as well, as there are multiple small scale creative businesses around. You could find people working on their car outside or having their large garage doors open while blasting music.







I walked in here from the pedestrian path, sneaking in between the 'Citrusveiling' fence and the Schiedamseweg dike leading to Schiedam. I am unsure when I approach if I might be mistaken, I'm unsure if this is really the place I thought it was. Perhaps my desk work had led me to the wrong place.

But then it appears, the old rock bed laid for the traintracks leading to the big old shunting yard. This used to be the traintrack connecting the whole of the Merwehaven to the rest of Rotterdam. Yet, there are no rails or wooden slots to be found anymore, just this almost uncannily clean rock bed. It kind of looks like a 'Rockery' with alpine plants growing here and there. I see the most beautiful pink flowers, I have never seen it before.

I walk further down and the space feels narrow and like everyone can see me as there is no screening from the dike or the fence on both sides. People must wonder what the hell I am doing here. People laugh at me from their car, music is playing around me. After all, it is a Sunday and 30 degrees Celcius.

I Walk further down and the vegetation becomes denser, the dike higher and the space wider. Poplars have settled here and there, rusting in the warm wind.

I see a bunny! It shoots away.

When I walk further down, trying to follow it, I realize there is a fence at the back, overgrown with plants. It is a dead end.

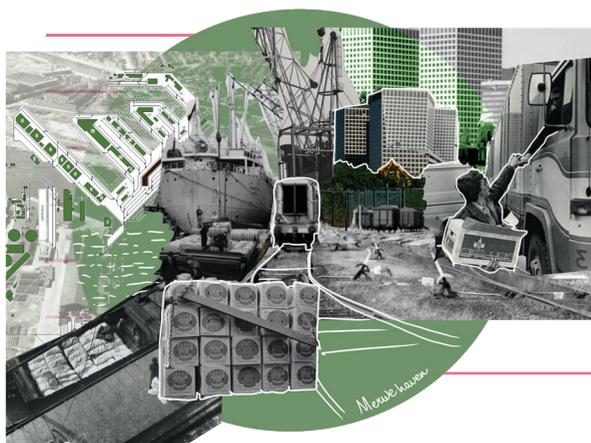


1. *Senecio sylvaticus* L.
Heath groundsel
2. *Valeriana rubra* L.
Red Valerian
3. Traintrack rocks from 50's

1. *Rubus fruticosus* L.
Blackberry
2. Old railway plank
3. *Oenothera parviflora* L.
Northern evening primrose

1. Seeds from *Populus nigra* L.
Black Poplar
2. Seeds from *Populus nigra* L.
Black Poplar
3. *Cornus sanguinea* L.
Common Dogwood

Notes *



a final word

* The Value of the Left-Over

I hope you had a great time skipping through this booklet. I also hope you have started to walk and wander into the vague zones of the city. Perhaps you have even found yourself amazed by the wildness, the greenness and silence it can offer, or you have had encounters with plants, people or animals leaving you with a wider worldview.

Yet - even though now integrated in our mental landscapes - these places are still very left out of the city in a physical and visual way and are therefore fragile to not be recognised for their value.

Therefore this field-guide is accompanied by a larger vision for the left-over network of Rotterdam. Once these places are better integrated into our city structure, they could be easier to find and access. Or just viewed from a safe distance. The vision therefore integrated suggestions how they could be connected as one big wander-route of over 7 kilometers of wilderness in Rotterdam's in-between. Interventions are big and smaller entrance gestures, connecting walkways via bridges or tunnels and by giving space for more ruderal nature!

However, input will be needed. Designing in left-over places poses a paradox as their value lies in their undefinedness! Sites need to be analyzed super context specific before an attuned design choice can be made. This vision hopes to start that conversation, while understanding the fragile nature of left-overs.

Now you have immersed yourself in the left-overs, what would find a fitting solution? Or would it be best to do nothing? Would you want to help?

Interstitial Network Rotterdam North-West

How the interstitials can operate collectively as a network across the city



interstices
left-overs in project scope



public green
parks, allotment gardens,
zoo's, countryside



connective possibility
option to be made visual or
physical



major connection
overpass or breakthrough
needed



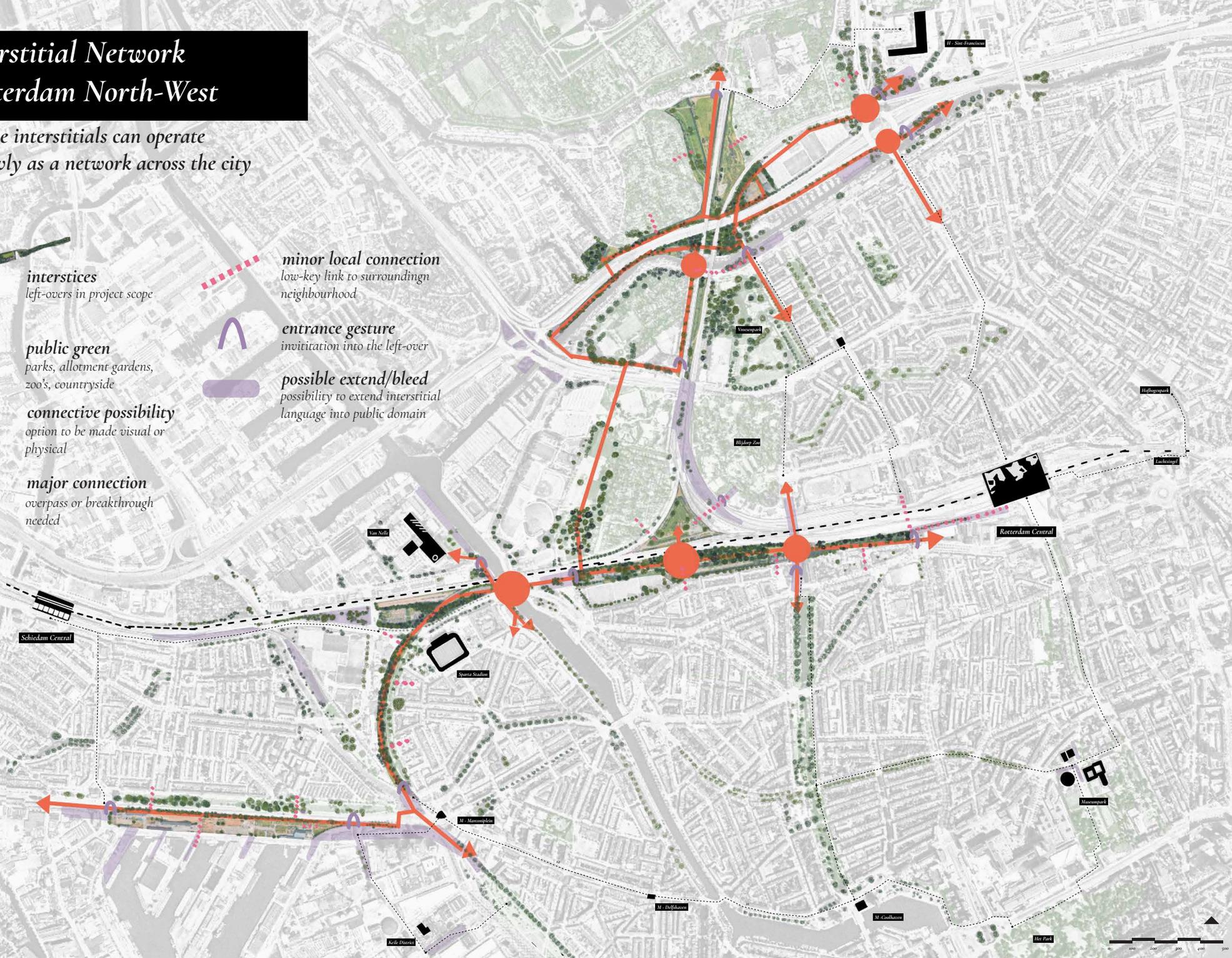
minor local connection
low-key link to surrounding
neighbourhood



entrance gesture
invitation into the left-over



possible extend/bleed
possibility to extend interstitial
language into public domain





*Design proposal for making the entrances mentally, visually and physically accessible, using *Ailanthus altissima*, old railway sleepers, and ruderal substrate as materials. Own work, 2025.*

TREE OF HELL IN YOUR GARDEN?

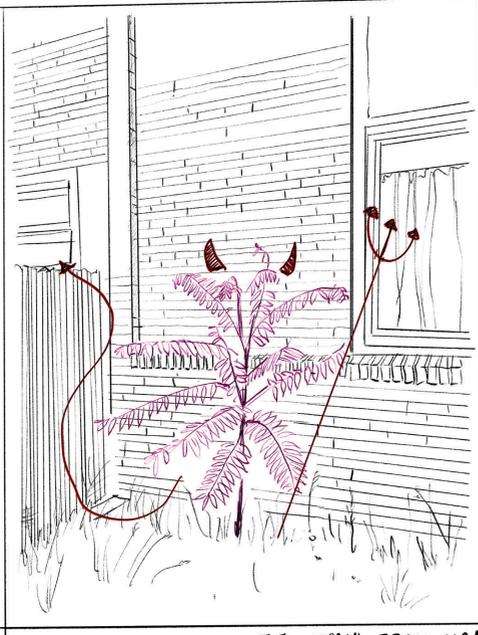
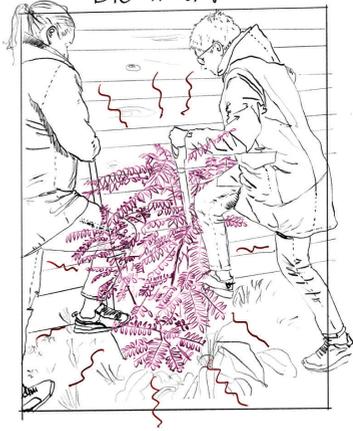


FOTO: FRANK BRUGGETIAN

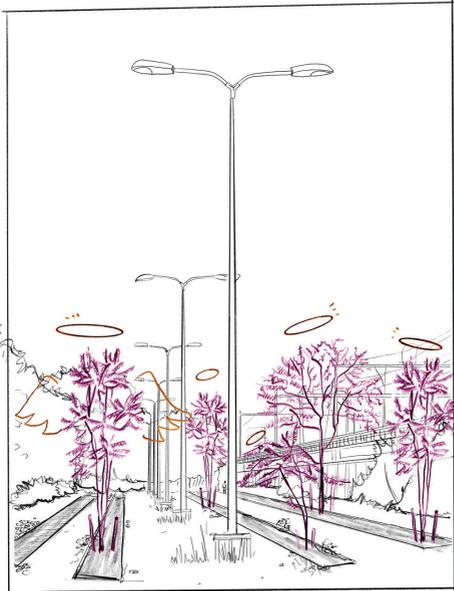
DIG IT UP!



BRING IT TO THE LEFT-OVER SPACE



FIND A SPOT IN THE AILANTHERY



GIVE IT SOME LOVE ♡



Bring your Tree of Heaven to the * Ailanthery

Tired of your landlord telling you to take out your Ailanthus from the front garden? Do you feel bad about it having such a bad reputation? Do you believe in second chances? Bring your tree to the Ailanthery at location B. De Spoordijk!

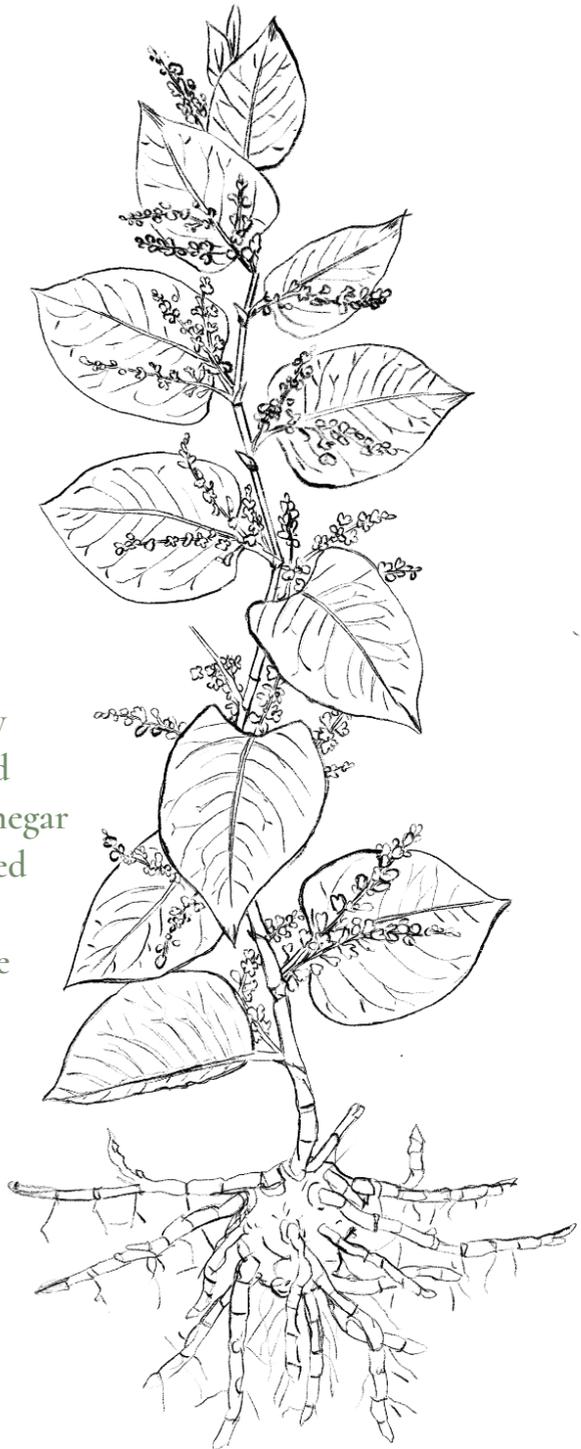
A speculative experiment in this vision is also using the Ailanthus as new ruderal city tree. To give this run-away youth another chance to being the beautiful tree it is, a program has been launched to experiment with ways to use the Ailanthus in an non-invasive manner.

By bringing the trees to the nursery location at B. De Spoordijk, they will get taken care of, rest and get pruned into a good shape and, once recovered and grown, transplanted into metal planters containing their suckering roots.

This way they can be used to create entrances and treelines in Rotterdams left-overs, making this wilderness a little bit more inviting. And also, by challenging people to change their perspective about control, beauty and greenspaces.

Ingredients for 4 - 6 pots:

- 900 gram Japanese Knotweed
- 225 gram (brown) sugar
- 2 big spoons of oil
- 2 large onions, cut finely
- 4 cm fresh ginger, grated
- 250 gram apple cider vinegar
- 3 tea spoons mustard seed
- 2 sticks of cinnamon
- 1 tea spoon ground clove
- 1 tea spoon salt
- 1 red pepper, cut finely
- juice of 1/2 lemon
- grated lemon zest



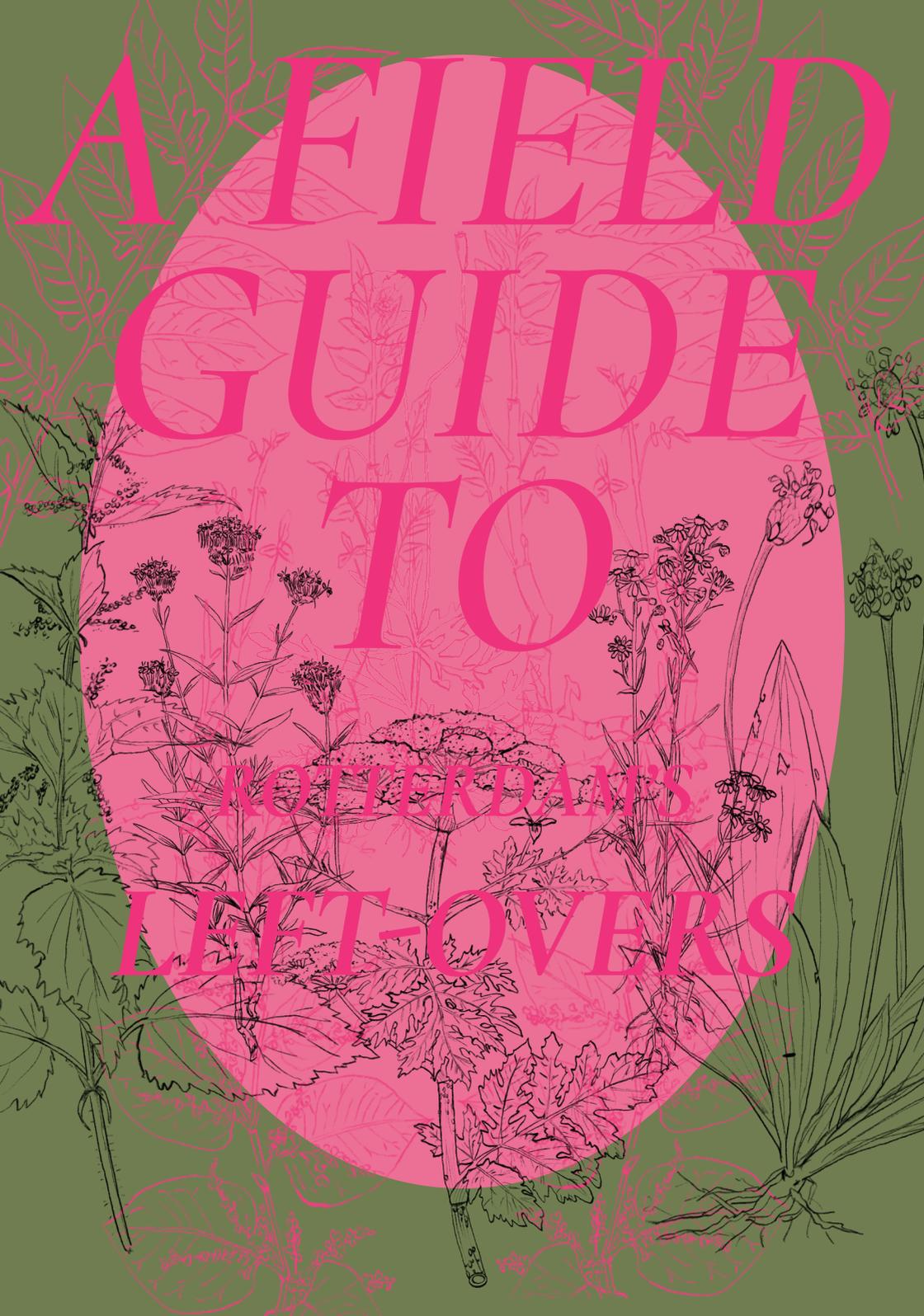
How to make chutney out of:

* Japanese Knotweed

Recipe:

1. pick the young shoots of the Japanese Knotweed around may, when they first appear above ground. The most thick ones are the nicest, use the top 40 cm. Careful: pack them in a bag so you don't drop cut-offs on the ground
2. At home, take the leaves and side shoots off. Wash the stems and cut them in rings of half a centimeter.
3. Put them in a bowl, put the sugar on it and leave it in the fridge overnight covered.
4. The next day, fry the onion in the oil on low heat. When glazed, put the grated ginger, bake, and put in the spices.
5. Put in the Japanese Knotweed with sugar and juices included. Boil until they become soft.
6. Lastly put in the vinegar, lemon zest and juice, salt and red pepper. Leave to boil for a small bit.

Thank you :) * * *



A FIELD
GUIDE
TO
NORTH RAIN'S
LEFT-OVERS