

Reflection

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Thesis: Development of the river Aa catchment area to contribute to Mid-Brabant as a National Landscape Park.

Landscape architecture

mastertrack Tu Delft

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Reflection

The topic of the Van Gogh National Park caught my interest with its clear current relevance in the discussion of nature in the Netherlands and with its seeming contradiction of making a National Park in a landscape better known for its intensive farming and haphazardly spread-out urbanization patterns.

The National Park in Nieuwe Stijl broaden the concept of nature. Focusing on the wider landscape, better combining it with other landscape functions. Any success of these efforts will be difficult as previous decades of nature conservation have been unable to stop the decline of surface dedicated to nature and to halt the decreasing biodiversity. But new efforts are needed to reverse the trend. Which would require designs like these to give direction. This design stays on a higher more abstract level, illustrating how the Aa could look like, but the design gives little in detailing. It gives some elements and modules to implement, but the exact locations and how to implement them are not elaborated. This would require further detailed designs on a smaller scale as illustrated on page 110. The inclusion of urban bottlenecks is a nice addition to the design, but it should probably not have been part of this project. Using that spend time instead on better detailing the implementation of the nine components in the landscape. As the urban zoom ins are not in line with the concepts worked out in the rest of the project.

Streams as used in this project provide a good landscape basis for making an extended nature network. Hydrology is often used as a base layer in landscape design. Combining this with soil data gives the proposed landscape and nature types in this project. But this approach does simplify reality. Succession is mentioned but time is little used in the design. And the influences of people or the effect climate change might have, has not been studied for this design. This makes the implementation and further development of the design unclear. Designing for future recreation is well possible. When recreation opportunities are given, people will use it. Use might change over time, but flexibility can easily be accounted for in design. Designing for natural processes has a bit more uncertainty. Giving it room, and maybe a bit of a kick start will develop in natural processes, but the effects or consequences might be unexpected. Whilst designing for biodiversity is more difficult. Designing for ambassador species might have a positive effect on that species and species from the same biotope. But lessons from past decades of nature conservation have shown despite some success, that reversing the trend of biodiversity loss is difficult. But as this design focuses on making a regional nature network connected to the similar landscape to the east of the Dommel with that of the Aa, local success here is well possible.

Using the three landscapes of stream-, wet-, and higher landscape as the locations to design for is based on a historical perspective on land use. Because historically these three landscapes show how human usage and giving room to nature can be combined. But this is cherry-picking moments in history and subjective why this had a good nature-human balance. For example, the hedges in the wet meadow landscape did hold an important ecological and cultural value, But they are gone now for a reason. These hedges might be restored, but they do not fit the modern land use. These hedges need to be updated to fit the modern requirements, with mechanised agriculture and the

changing climate. This makes it unclear in the project how much is, restoration and how much innovation to make the landscape future-proof.

The overall design uses the nine modules to craft a coherent and clear story. The idea of then combining and repeating these modules throughout the landscape uses the concept of scale continuum. Both in repetition to create a consistent, recognizable landscape for a National Park and in cause-effect to bring the landscape and natural processes back to life.