

THE POWER OF THE NARRATIVE

Methodology for design with landscape narratives in wild natural landscapes

MSc Thesis

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0.0 FORWARD

PHASE STEP

Every location is part of a bigger picture, is connected to a more extended environment and simultaneously functions as a platform for (smaller or bigger) stories, always allowing to zoom in.^[1]

As a designer, one holds the power to pick and alter distinct elements in the environment, change conditions and establish relationships. While doing so, some of the existing narratives will disappear while others will obtain a stronger presence in the landscape. Therefore it is important, especially when working with Landscape Narratives, to be aware of which/whose story is being told and to emphasise the desired aspects. ^[2]

In this workshop you will formulate a landscape narrative for Holwerd and work towards a design that reflects your narrative. This booklet will guide you step by step in your quest.

[1] IBM (Director). (1977). *Powers of 10* [Motion Picture].

[2] Potteiger, M., & Purinton, J. (1998). *Landscape Narratives*. USA: John Wiley & Sons.



WHAT IS THE USE?

Although landscapes are dynamically changing in time local narratives have the ability to structure lasting events in a logical manner. Therefore narratives are useful instruments to visualize connections and relationships between elements in the landscape and their pasts, thereby creating a true sense of place.

In fact every landscape consists of a complex system of multiple layered narratives. There are different landscape narratives to be distinguished. Narratives based on history might for instance tell stories about: ancient natural processes, the struggle between man and nature, military battles, small human successes or epic failures. Since every modern landscape is as a palimpsest, i.e. as a smooth rubbed and reused piece of parchment (Potteiger & Purinton, 1998), the current landscape narrative is not always obvious at first glance.

Beside telling the story of the past, landscape narratives can also be used as tools for establishing existing relationships or emphasizing fresh aspects of a new design.

Summarizing:

landscape narratives can be used as a tool to untangle complex systems in order to expose hidden stories and simultaneously can be used as a design tool, thereby providing new conditions for future narratives. And therewith structuring the landscape from another – a new- starting point.

0.2

PHASE STEP

WORKSHOP

As mentioned you will formulate in this workshop a landscape narrative for Holwerd and work towards a design that reflects your narrative.

To the right the methodological framework is pictured. The framework consists of a series of 10 steps. These steps are divided in 4 phases; Look, Frame, Construct, Detail. Every step will be described separately. When following the flowchart, you will first be asked to analyse the existing situation and note patterns, then to frame the bigger structure of the narrative for the location, followed by construction and design. Working through the partial assignments will guide you step by step through the process.

DETAIL

Detail the design

- Detail the design in terms of materialization
- Keep in mind who's/what story it is and who will be the audience. The details may effect the cues in the landscape and how it influences the senses/experiences.
- Consider the effect of the design under different conditions and time.



CONSTRUCT

Relation of atmospheres

Design the borders and relations of the scene in terms of:

- Composition
 - Sequence/overlap
 - Transition
- Conclude with an overview of the complete design.



Spatial translation

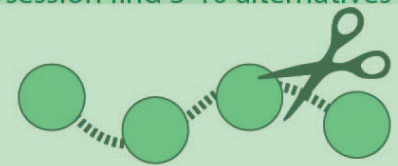
Note for every scene:

- Title, Theme, Location, Position in the Narrative, Goal, Target group, possible use and routings
- Ways to achieve this in terms of: Composition, Open/Closed, Sound, Smell, Balance, Touch, Movement, Dynamics



Scenes of the storyline

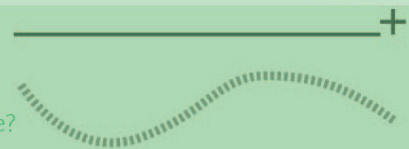
- Bring your narrative into a storyline
- Break the storyline up into scenes
- Define title and desired goal for every scene



Frame your narratives

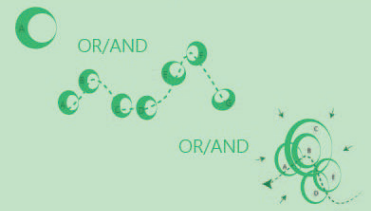
- For Whom? Who is the target group of each narrative?
- What are the main characters/driving forces in the landscape narrative?
- Summarize purpose, type & scale of intervention for each narrative
- Give each narrative a title

Brainstorm Make *How to reach the ...* the subject of a brainstorm session find 3-10 alternatives



Scale of intervention

- Define the scale and the focus of representation of time (Point, Sequence or Continuous Narrative)
- Describe what this choice will mean for the design of the desired narrative, the degree of control you have and which (interactive) role the future visitor will play?



Type of intervention

- Define the location of the narratives
- Define the goal of intervention: Restore, Preserve or Create?



Define your purposes

- Emphasize on which experiences
- Define the purposes based on the conclusion in step one.
- Relate the purposes to a type of Landscape narrative.
- Start building up the narratives: Which/Who's Story? Why?



Frame the existing

- Desk Analysis:** Determine the key patterns and driving forces by Answering the questions: Who, What, Why, When, Where?
- Field Analysis:** What do you see, hear, smell, taste and feel at the site? How do these impressions influence you when you walk through the area?



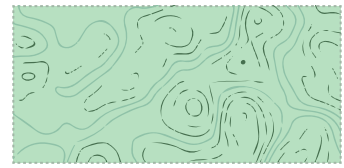
FRAME

ANALYZE

LOOK AT THE EXISTING

PHASE STEP

Frame the Existing



GOAL

Determine key patterns, characters and the driving forces.

BACKGROUND

Before one starts altering a site, one needs to be acquainted with the current situation. Framing the existing focuses on the analysis of the history, developments over time and the current representation of the site. Patterns of: Who, What, Why, When, Where need determination.^[3] Although vision is the strongest and best developed of the human senses, and hence a location is primarily judged by sight, a location is more than what meets the eye, since the human brain obtains information from sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Therefore a location is only experienced to its full extend when information from different senses is combined.^[4]

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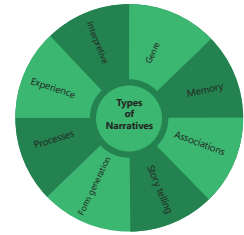
FRAME THE NARRATIVE

2

Define your Goal

PHASE

STEP

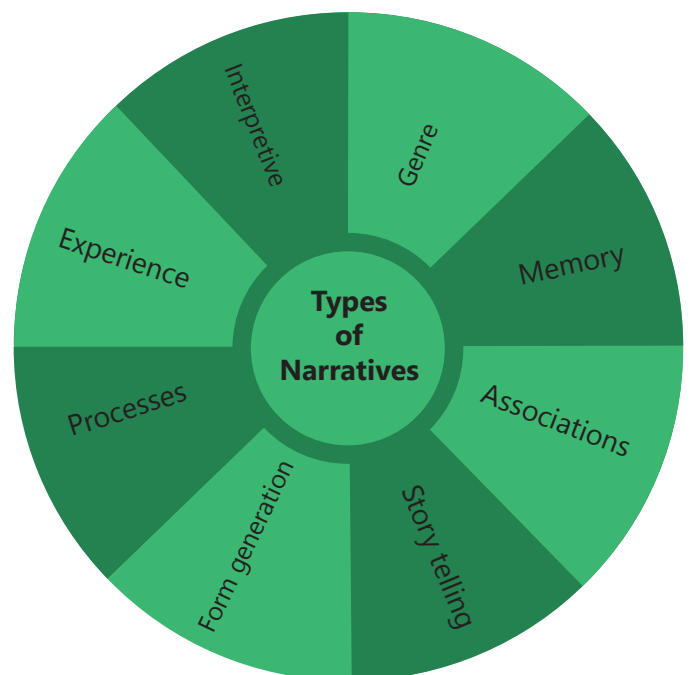


GOAL

Define your goal and choose the type of narrative that fits your goal best.

BACKGROUND

After the framing of the existing situation comes the framing of the narrative. What does this mean? As you can see in the picture, there are different kind of landscape narratives, all with a different angle of approach and a different goal. Some narratives focus on the experience of a place, others on processes, associations or memories. These narratives are described in Landscape Narratives.^[5]



Types of landscape narratives

2

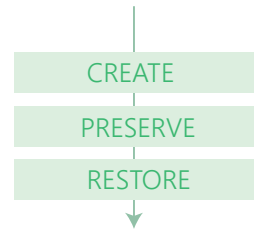
PHASE

FRAME THE NARRATIVE

3

STEP

Type of intervention



GOAL

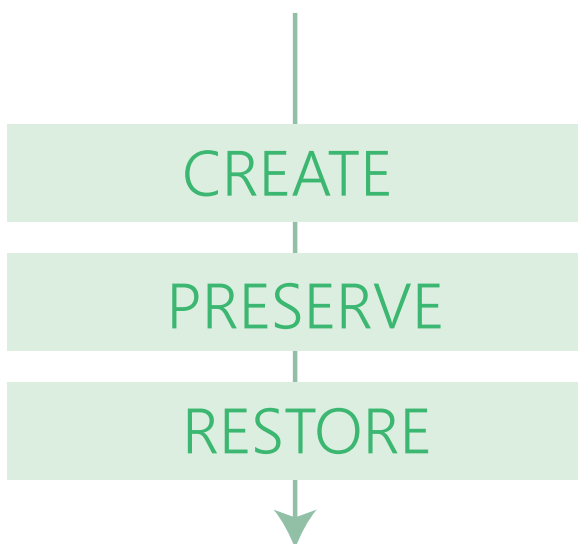
Define the **type** of intervention

BACKGROUND

The type of your intervention is related to the goal and type of narrative you decided for in the previous steps.

As for design approaches you basically have three options:

Do you want to restore certain previous conditions, preserve the present, or create a new situation?



2

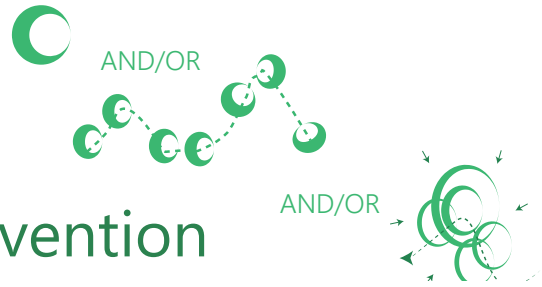
PHASE

FRAME THE NARRATIVE

4

STEP

Scale of intervention



GOAL

Define the **scale** of intervention

BACKGROUND

The type and scale of your intervention is related to the goal and the type of narrative you have chosen in the previous steps.

The scale of the project depends mainly on the spatial representation of time. Time is a key factor for every narrative as it alters the situation over the years. A story is only a story when action takes place, e.i. when something happens in time. Without the dimension of time a site remains an object without a narrative.

There are 3 representation of time: a Point in Time, a Linear Sequence, a Continuous Narrative. A Point in Time functions as a frame in the landscape. The narrative is related to the scene at a moment in time. Linking the same frame to other points in time constructs a four-dimensional (i.e. space-time) narrative. This narrative may be built up by biotic and abiotic changes.

A Linear Sequence consists a chronological order of events. The sequence and the route are among the main tools for building up a story in the Linear Narrative.

A Continuous Narrative is non-linear; characterized by an open framework where more than one story may take place. Continuous Narratives are places with multiple stories shaped by a plurality of voices. In this type of landscape narrative the role of the visitor is important in giving a meaning to a site. In contrast to a normal story the 'reader' of the landscape narrative may enter at any place in the story and even 'read' the narrative in unforeseen order. The landscape provides elements and clues so that the visitor may build up his own storyline. The visitor constructs the story himself by linking the elements and filling in the untold pieces with his/her knowledge and/or imagination. Especially in the category of the continuous narrative, the visitor plays an active role in the forming of the landscape narrative; therewith becoming the narrator of his/her own story. ^[6]

Since every continuous narrative is a collection of countless points and sequences in time, almost every design based on its principles consists of all three representations of time.



ASSIGNMENT

- **Define the Scale and the focus of representation of time (Point, Sequence or Continuous Narrative) Describe what this choice will mean for the design of the desired narrative. And describe the degree of control you have over the narrative and which (interactive) role the future visitor will play?**

NOTES

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PHASE

FRAME THE NARRATIVE

2.5

STEP

Define the Framing of your narrative



GOAL

Summarize goal, and choices of the narrative

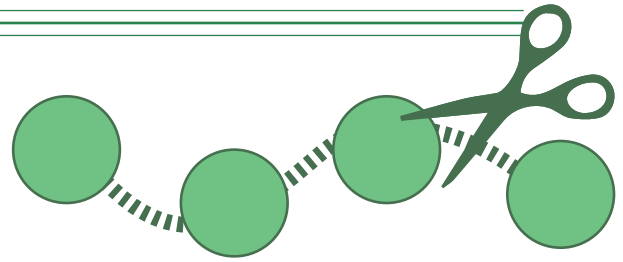
BACKGROUND

Take a moment to summarize your work. The conclusions will give you a direction for the rest of the project.

3.6 CONSTRUCT THE NARRATIVE

3.6
PHASE STEP

Scenes of the storyline



GOAL

Break the narrative up to workable pieces

BACKGROUND

Every narrative consists of a sequence of events. The first scene frames the setting, while the next change(s) the circumstances. The contrast makes the story.

3.7 CONSTRUCT THE NARRATIVE

3.7
PHASE STEP



Spatial translation

GOAL

From narrative to design

BACKGROUND

Every visitor will absorb a scene with his/her senses in a unique, personal way. Although it is impossible to create a design that has maximum impact on every individual visitor, it is feasible to design cues in the landscape that can be sensed by any visitor and simultaneously evoke profound experiences among some of them. ^[6]

The experience of a place depends, apart from the direct sensoric impressions, on the visitor's motility. Motion evokes changes in the direct surroundings. It opens and closes the landscape. In this way it triggers the visitor to start moving or to continue the hike or the skeler/bike tour. ^[7]

[6] Havik, K. (2012). *Urban Literacy, A Scriptive Approach to the Experience, Use, and Imagination of Place*. Delft: TU Delft.

[7] Kaplan, R., Kaplan, S., & Ryan, R. L. (1998). *With People in Mind*. Washington: Island Press.

3.8 CONSTRUCT THE NARRATIVE

3.8
PHASE STEP



Relation of atmospheres

GOAL

Relate the scenes to the bigger storyline

BACKGROUND

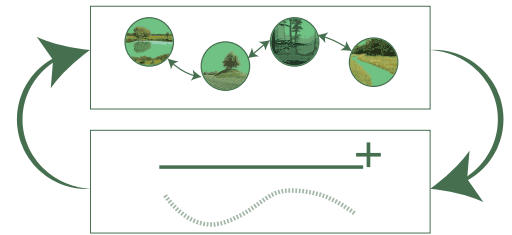
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DETAIL THE NARRATIVE

4.9

PHASE STEP

Test your Narrative



GOAL

Test the Narrative

BACKGROUND

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, so use evaluation and feedback as the test of your design. Adjustment is required when the scenes and/or sequences appear to be inconsistent with the goal/ hypothesis of the desired landscape narrative.

DETAIL THE NARRATIVE

4.10

PHASE STEP

Detail your Design



GOAL

Detail the design

BACKGROUND

Now the bigger structure of your design has been tested and adjusted you have validated the structure of your narrative and you can work out the design in further detail.

Keep in mind whose/what story it is you are telling (goal), and what your audience consists of. Who are the visitors and how will they use the site? The details may have effect on the cues in the landscape and how it effects the senses/experiences.

Consider the effect of the design under different conditions. Think f.e. of daily, seasonal or atmospheric changes, of the 'arousal' (how busy will it ever be in Holwerd?) on a summer holiday or the solitude during an autumnal sunset etc.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

5

PHASE

0

STEP

Feed back

GOAL

Feedback on the workshop and booklet of landscape narratives.

BACKGROUND

As in any project feedback and evaluation is important for personal development and therefore should not be forgotten or deliberately skipped. In this case feedback and evaluation has an extra dimension because your feedback is extra valuable since it is a vital tool for evaluating the value of my hypothesis concerning the usability of the narrative as a design tool.

For this reason I hope you will share your uncensored opinion with me when it comes to using the narrative as a design tool.

With the prescribed approach in this booklet I forced you to concentrate on the narrative. Do you feel this approach restricted you, e.i. would you have ended up with a design that is significantly different (better?) in case you had been led free?

I hope you I may hear your narrative in spoken words also.

What do you think of the workshop, the booklet, the framework etc. All remarks and questions are welcome.



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- Havik, K. (2012). *Urban Literacy, A Scriptive Approach to the Experience, Use, and Imagination of Place*. Delft: TU Delft.
- IBM (Director). (1977). *Powers of 10* [Motion Picture].
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- Potteiger, M., & Purinton, J. (1998). *Landscape Narratives*. USA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wit, S. d. (2014). *Hidden Landscapes, the metropolitan garden and the genius loci*. Delft: TU Delft.