A photograph of a pond in a park. The pond is in the foreground, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. The water is calm, with some lily pads visible. The banks are covered in lush vegetation, including tall reeds and various trees. In the background, a tall, white, modern building is visible through the trees. The sky is clear and blue. Bare tree branches frame the top left of the image.

# A\Wakening

## Essenburgpark

Explorations on how to map the wild





**A\Wakening:** Essenburgpark  
N° 01

Concept, Research, Photography, Text © Femke Lokhorst  
Design and Illustration © Femke Lokhorst

Research Assistants:  
Frits van Loon  
Suzana Milinovic

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the Explorelab graduation studio at the TU Delft faculty of  
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For distribution enquiries, please contact:  
[info@awakedesign.nl](mailto:info@awakedesign.nl)  
[www.a.wakedesign.nl](http://www.a.wakedesign.nl)

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Awake Design



# Narrative

## Nature inclusive design or human inclusive nature?

Now that we no longer need to prove, but can fully locate ourselves in the trouble of a disconnectedness with nature, we can envision and work towards desired, collective and whole futures for all on this earth. Through being part of the problem, we can become part of the solution, which is much more enjoyable than debating the mistakes of human kind that led to the state of imbalance we live in today.

A\Wakening is an inquisitive approach to awaken - or to bring life to - the process of creating a living environment for ourselves in a way that allows for other species, that we need to also thrive, to coexist with us. It is a search for how we can reshape our relationship with the natural through a focus on becoming and being part of.

These new paradigm ideas might be unpolished, dream-like and intuition driven, but very involved in the real. As is familiar to visionary thinking, there will often be a gap between what is desirable and what is possible. It is exactly this gap that we need to look for and focus on: to revalue our former decisions and give push to the frame of what is possible.

# Who am I

Throughout my studies in Architecture, I have devoted my projects to design for a better balance between human impact and the rest of the natural world. My parents both being biologists, I am truly passionate about nature and have learnt a great deal about in what ways it can thrive. As David Attenborough said, “for a species to thrive, the species around it need to also thrive.”<sup>1</sup> What I have always had trouble with understanding, is how cities have become so ‘unnaturally’ organized, with separated spaces for human activities and spaces containing some resemblance of nature, perfected in our own ways. This way, the city desperately needs maintenance to stay in the same orderly way, while nature is dynamic and changing. I think adapting how our rational design process relates to dynamic processes of nature might become a huge step forward into recreating balance with the natural world, so that future generations can enjoy the beauty of life around us for longer and with greater well-being.

*Femke Lokhorst*



1 A Life on Our Planet. Directed by Alastair Fothergill, Jonathan Hughes, performance by David Attenborough. Netflix, 2020.

## Nº 01 Essenburgpark

### Explorations on how to map the wild

In the city centre of Rotterdam there is a forgotten piece of land. It lies next to the train tracks. Here, cityscape has made way for an abundance of life. The only reminder of the city is a distant view of a high-rise building peeking through the trees, the ultimate opposite of a flower in a steel frame. No urban planning seems to be in place. Life lives and shapes itself here, using all the space and resources they are given. Although, there is a clear boundary of where this wilderness begins and ends. If you visit the place often enough, you will most definitely come across people with some gardener shears, cutting away prickly plants that would make the area impassable. If you look even closer, you can discover whole arrays of wooden logs laid down in sandy paths to prevent them from becoming too muddy to walk on when there is rainy weather. This area is not forgotten at all, neither is it inhabitable, yet on first sight it gives the impression of true wilderness. Perhaps wilderness is not something inhabitable that we can't be part of. Perhaps we can re-introduce ourselves to living as a part of this interconnected web of life. A life in balanced co-existence with other natural existencies, that we largely seem to have distantiated ourselves from.

A remarkable thing about the philosophy behind Essenburgpark is that considering the fact it is not an objective desire, to want to save our species from extinction, apparently it is not necessary to share those thoughts, to act in accordance with the same goal. Or as Erik Wemmers, one of the initiators of the park said in an interview "The world will spin just as she wishes. For me human well-being and the experience of nature are important".

This first edition of A\Wakening is focussed entirely on Essenburgpark. It is an experimental attempt to develop a process that could create an understanding of a place of nature, that is alive and dynamic. A process of mapping, observing, capturing. A process of visiting every day, bringing life to the understanding of the place from within. It aims for a consciousness that makes it possible to create balanced design here, which acknowledges a synergetic cohabitation between people, plants and animals.



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# Human Ecology

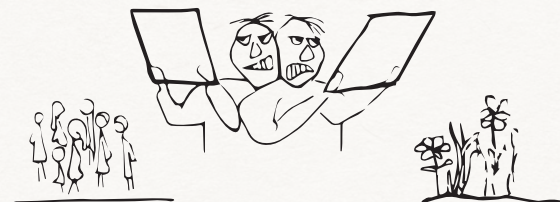
It can be problematic to speak of a relationship with 'nature' as this suggests that we are not that. We are inherently a product of nature and subsequently is all our behaviour, our modes of organising ourselves and the constructs we create. This makes it challenging to distinguish what it is that we need to focus on, as a relationship with nature is also a relationship with ourselves. You could describe that what we have a relationship towards as other natural existencies, or other natural processes. However, in this dualistic way of seeing things, the role that humans have as a part of the interconnectedness of life is neglected. How can we truly view ourselves as an integral part of an ecosystem?

'Am I still an animal?'. This wouldn't be an odd question for a person to think about. The word 'animal' is rarely used in referral to a human being. Yet, it is what we are. Dogs, as our pets, probably live an even more artificial life than we do ourselves, yet they don't seem to worry about the validity of their animal existence. Perhaps it is the very fact that humans are able to have this thought, that starts to create the divide between the human as a creator of constructs and the human as a being of nature.

It is even possible for an individual person to experience a sense of not belonging in the natural world, not being allowed to have an influence there. In the documentary 'My Octopus Teacher'<sup>2</sup> Craig Foster obtains a remarkable awareness of this strange conception. Craig is a documentary film maker with a burn-out. To heal, he moves back to his home near False Bay, South Africa, and picks up an old hobby: diving. During one of his dives, he meets an octopus and becomes so fascinated with her, that he decides to visit her every day. One day he drops his camera, which startles her. She is not seen near her den for days. When Craig finally finds her, she is in a much more unsafe place, where she is prone to shark attacks. Craig becomes distraught with the thought that he has interfered with nature, thinking he didn't belong there. What the octopus however teaches him throughout the film is that him being there already makes him a part of that world, whether he wants that or not. The octopus starts to trust him and shows joy over his company and the intellectual stimulation she finds in him, being also an animal of high intelligence and consciousness.

Humans are inclined to think rationally towards fix-it solutions of our problems. This mentality is beautifully captured by Buckminster Fuller's words "You can never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete"<sup>3</sup> It is not strange that this mentality got us to a state of advanced civilisation. As for most of our problems: we simply wouldn't live a long enough life time to see any of the solutions we brought into life, fall short and become replaced with something new. However, we have reached a limit where the resources, to keep replacing our deficient designs with new ones, are depleting. Naturally, our surroundings constantly bring about new conditions. A fix-it solution can never withstand this process of continuous change. Now with climate change on the rise, it becomes eminent that our designs are being build into a climate of fast paced change. We no longer have the time or the resources to wait for our designs to become redundant and replaced. Our designs need to be a part of the process of adaptation.

There seems to be a conflict between the natural, ever expanding, dynamic mode of becoming of the world and the more linear, rational human mind, with a fix-it, single intervention, performance based perspective. That very human however also contributes to this dynamic world of the natural. The view of Human Ecology approaches the human-environment problem seeing the individual as an entity between society and the environment<sup>4</sup>. Society and the environment being two process-based, organic behaviours. Therefore the distinction here is not to be made between the human and the non-human, but between the rational (the individual



*the individual as an entity between  
society and the environment*

entity or the designer) and the natural (society and the environment). Placing society and environment in a single category creates a holistic approach to the human and the non-human entities in this world. It encourages to not only think about nature inclusiveness, but to also think about the human ecology and how that interacts and belongs within its environment and thus creates a new challenge in seeing design as a process of rational in a non-rational world.

To have a high level of understanding of the natural world would allow for an architect to perform conscious decision making. To be able to influence who lives and who dies with the best possible awareness of the consequences of those decisions. Ultimately, we live in a limited world. The question remains how to get a grip on complex behaviours such as society and the environment. The living world can be understood as a system of exchange and influence. Species each have their specific needs and providings, which have an impact on all those around them. The ways in which humans have become able to understand and describe these processes is through observation, speculation and experimentation. What would happen if an architect would visit its site every day, before attempting any kind of design, describing the place as a non-distinctive ecosystem of agents? And might it even be possible that they themselves could thus acquire a true sense of being part of the place as a human animal of the natural world?



*Still from My Octopys Teacher*

<sup>2</sup> *My Octopus Teacher*. Directed by Pippa Ehrlich, James Reed, performance by Craig Foster. Netflix, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Pawlyn, Michael. *Biomimicry In Architecture*, 2Nd Edition. RIBA Publishing, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Steiner, Dieter, and Markus Nausser. *Human Ecology: Fragments Of Anti-Fragmentary Views Of The World*. Routledge, 1993.



# Mapping



The process of map making dates back as far as human existence. Even cavemen drew maps of their lives and surroundings with charcoal on stone walls. When making a map, one needs to wonder why they are making this map. Through map making a large amount of tiny decisions are being made, on what is important and what isn't. This could be seen as an unscientific, subjective process, carried out by the mind of the mapmaker. However, if there is no mapmaker involved, the map would be an exact copy of the real world and couldn't provide any new understandings. Thus, the map is a tool for its creator

to convey a message. The map becomes interesting as things are decided to be left out, unveiling patterns and leading to new interpretations, until too many things are left out and the map returns to a state of meaninglessness. It is important to note that any map is a static moment in time. The world it tries to grasp is already changing as the map is being made. Especially very detailed maps, such as a map of all the cigarette buds lying around in a neighbourhood, can become outdated quickly and much faster than, for example, a map with the contours of European countries.

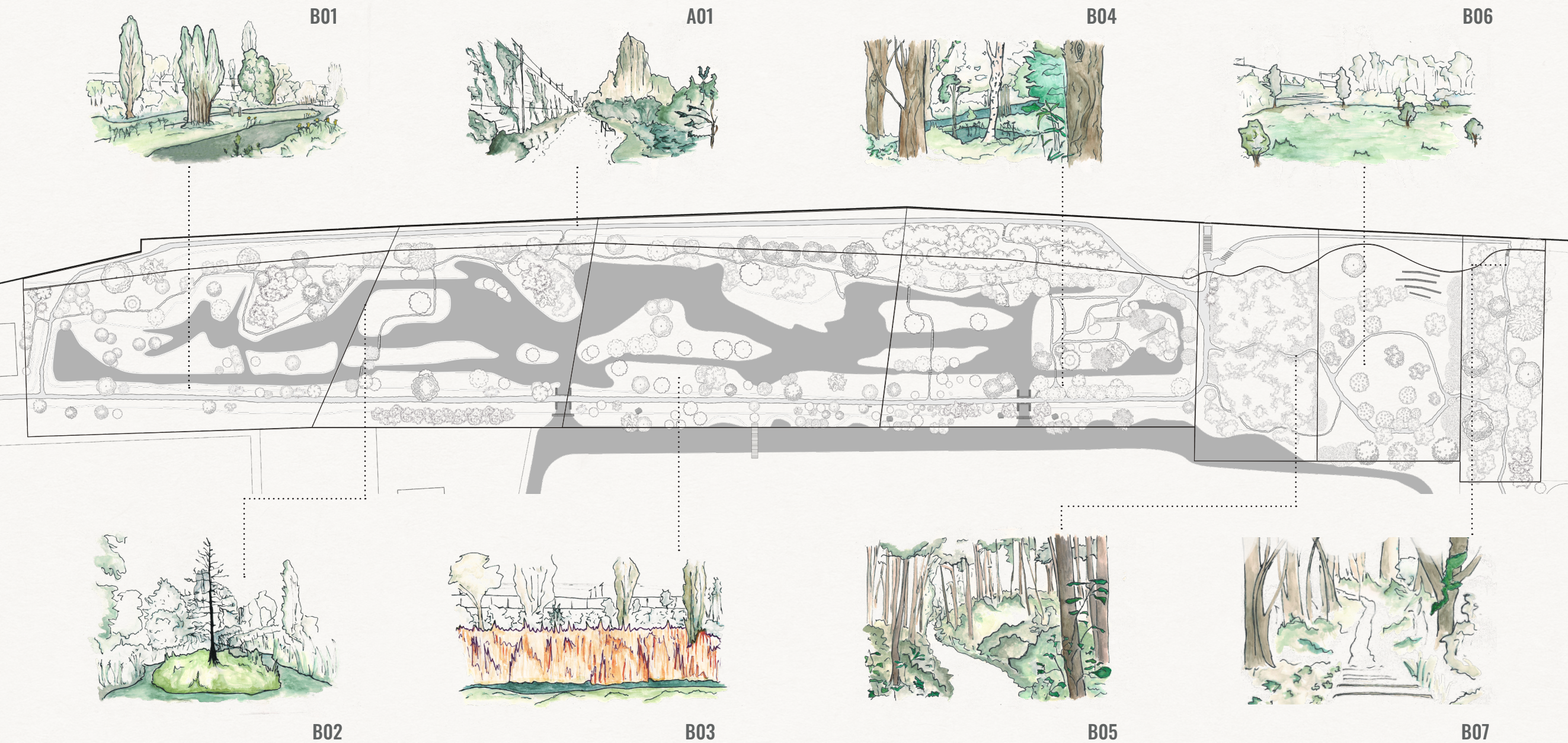


# Classification by impression

The first intuition was to classify areas in the park according to the impression they gave. When moving through the park, a constant feeling of arrival in a new place with a different character is provided by the sense of different atmospheres. Considerable factors that influence this sense of atmosphere are openness, presence of the water body, type of

vegetation and notion of human elements. There are places where you can't get around the presence of the neighbouring train tracks for example. Yet there are also places where you would almost forget it is there, until a train passes by and your senses are being inundated by a deafening rumble and trembling of the ground.

- A01 the railway embankment
- B01 the open
- B02 the island
- B03 the swamp
- B04 the dense forest
- B05 the alder forest
- B06 the arena
- B07 the old forest



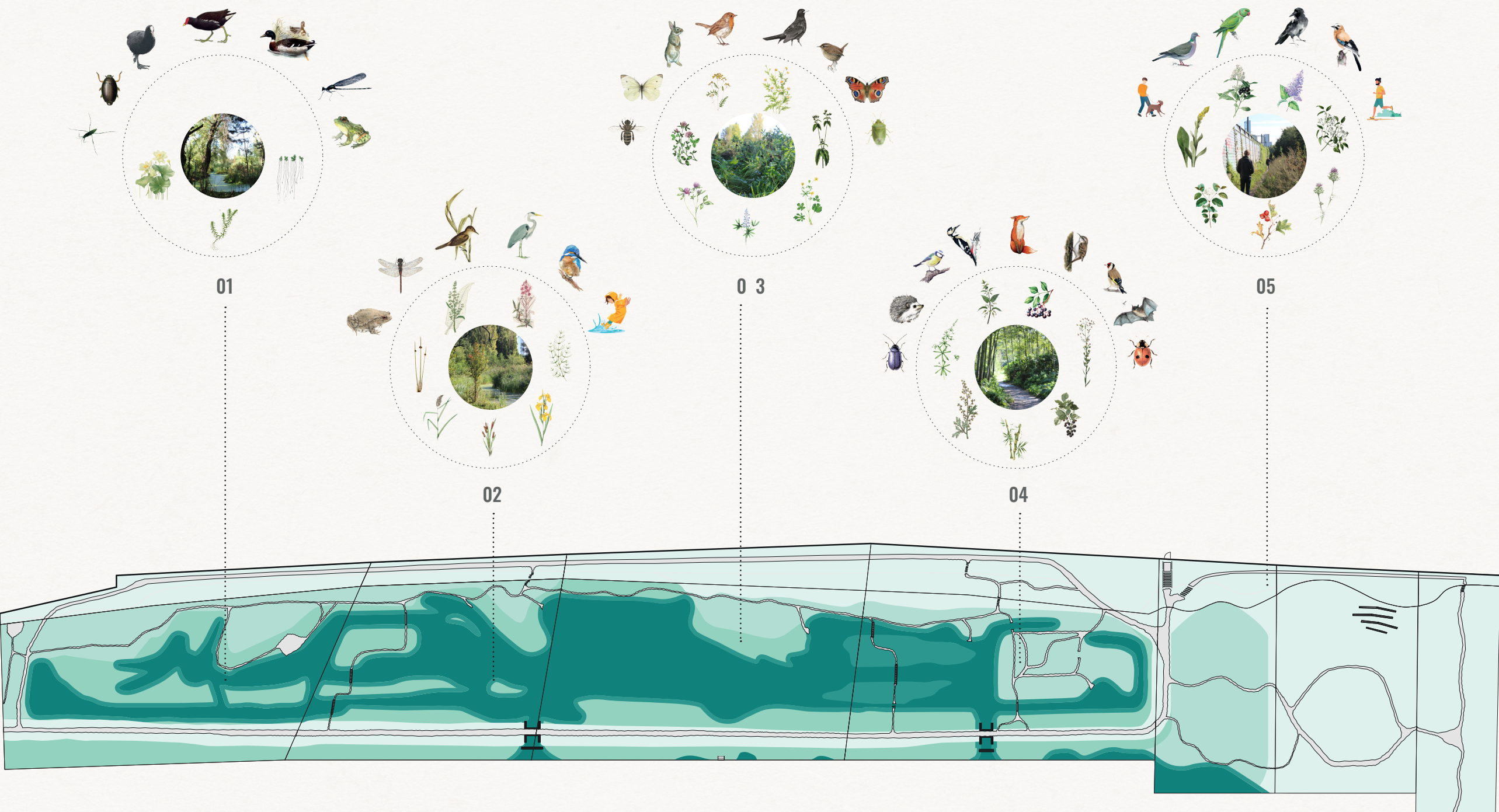


# Classification by biotope

An ecologist would take a different approach to classify places of different characteristics. For an ecologist the most important factor in distinguishing classes of landscape, is the type of species that can be found in a particular place. This is mostly determined

by the dampness of the soil. Different plants grow in different levels of dampness, which attracts certain types of animals. This together creates a 'biotope': an area with certain environmental conditions, suitable for a specific assemblage of plants and animals.

- 01 wetland
- 02 riverbank
- 03 grassland
- 04 forest
- 05 embankment





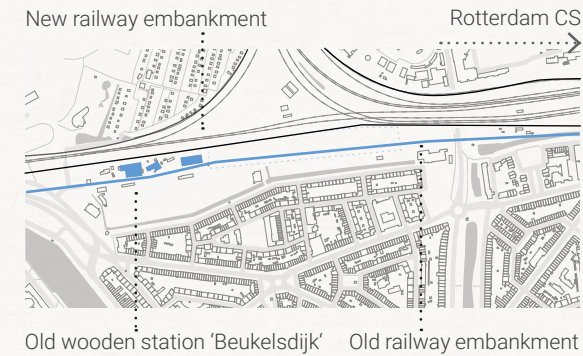
# History\*

- In 1902 Rotterdam annexed the Blijdorpse polder. All farms were demolished in 1914 to build the city. Until 2017 the Essenburg area has been in ownership of the Dutch railway company.
- In 2000 a part of the park served as parking spaces for the sport fields. The rest were allotments which NS had to clean up in 2015 by order of the municipality.
- In 2008 the Pluktuin is initiated by local residents to obtain a negotiating position in the attempt to make the whole area into a park.
- In 2012 Spoortuin, lederstuin and Pluktuin form an alliance as the 'Essenburgparkgroep'.
- The NS has been trying to develop the land since 2008. In 2016 it almost gets sold to a developer who intends to build the country's longest building. He eventually gives up, due to high sanitation costs.
- In 2015 Essenburgparkgroep reaches out to Hoogheemraadschap. They happen to have a 2020 water resilience plan, with an unrealized water buffer drawn into this neighbourhood, laying around. Essenburgpark turns out to be the only viable location for it.
- In 2017 the municipality pressures NS to sell the land to them for one million Euros, including the sanction that NS needs to sanitize it. Essenburgparkgroep is officially considered to have the responsibility over the park.
- In 2018 the water buffer is realized. Essenburgpark had its official opening in March.
- In 2019 the park becomes part of 'the green connection': a walking route that connects 20 green locations in the city.
- In 2020 a pull ferry is built to bridge the canal from Essenburgsingel to de Pluktuin, which attracts many visitors. The park becomes popular.

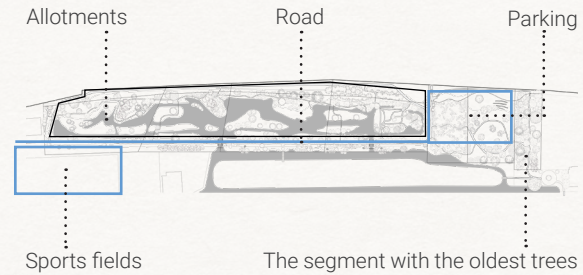


**1900** Up until a hundred and twenty years ago, Essenburgpark was part of the Blijdorpse polder.

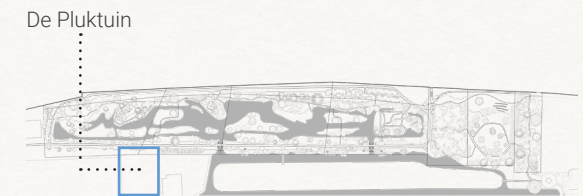
**1914 - 2017**



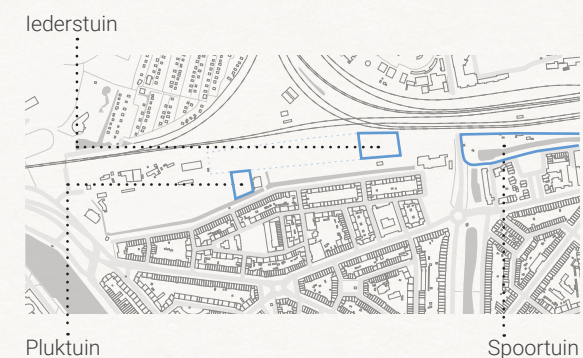
**2000 - 2015**



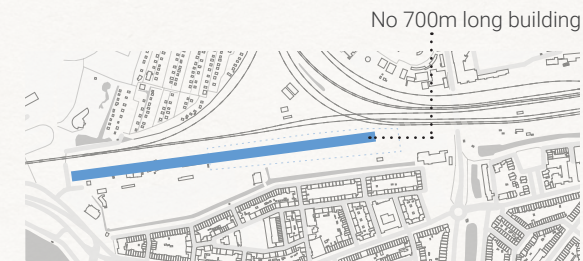
**2008**



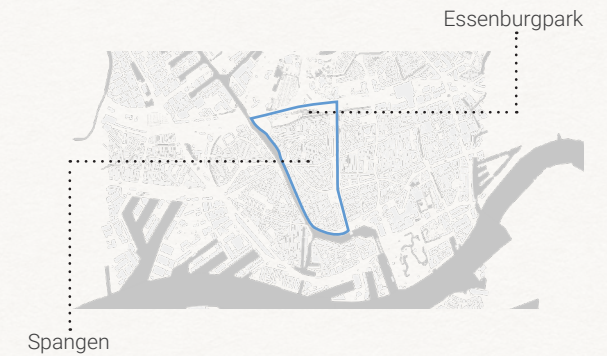
**2012**



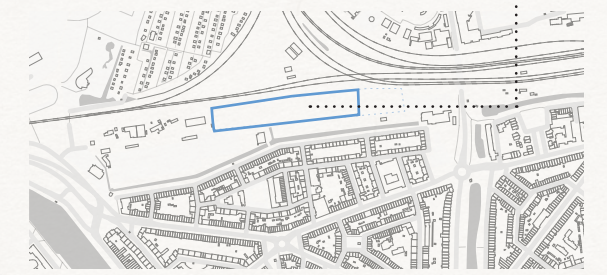
**2008-2016**



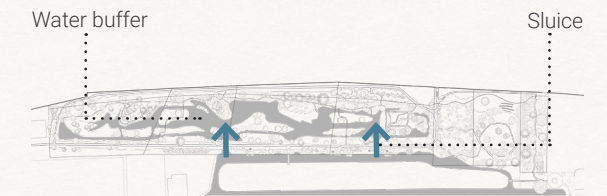
**2015**



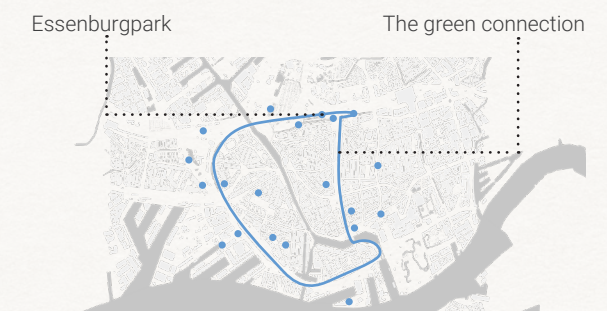
**2017**



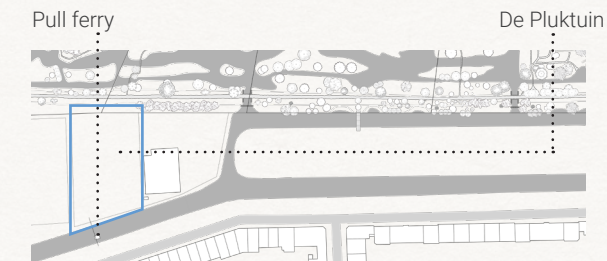
**2018**



**2019**



**2020**



\*The information on this page was acquired through an interview with one of the main initiators of the park from Essenburgparkgroep.



# Activity

If the living world can be understood as a system of dynamic processes of growth, it becomes important to live in close relationship to those we ultimately depend on. To remain informed on their development and understand possible ways in which they might change through environmental influence. How can we obtain a holistic, relational understanding of society and the environment in a way that allows for us to be more closely connected to those we depend on for our own well-being?

How one could imagine a life in balance with other species is beautifully illustrated by the example of a Dutch fashion designer, Claudy Jongstra. Everything she uses in her process to create clothing, she grows and nourishes herself. From the wool of her sheep, to the flowers and roots used for colour in her dyes. By collecting, storing and growing a large variety of seeds she managed to save a lot of colours from the natural world, as opposed to chemically made dyes that are common in today's clothing industry, that otherwise might have gone extinct. She calls this the "community seed bank for colour". Some of the plants she grows for their roots are known to need ten years of growth before they are developed enough to be used. The level of consciousness that she acquired about all elements of her process of creating makes it possible for her to deeply care for each individual living individual that is a part of that, thus she helps them thrive. Not only on the scale of her own undertakings, but also on a larger scale planting gardens and opening seed banks throughout the country to fight for the future existence of her precious colours. As Jongstra says "You can't understand nature without really becoming a part of it. You have to connect yourself, obtain a feel for the phenomenon of time, for the seasons."<sup>5</sup>

In native American language, the concept of a noun doesn't exist<sup>6</sup>. Without the concept of the individual entity, the world can be understood in a very different way. To them, every existing thing is described as an activity. As something that is always moving, evolving from one state to next. For example 'water' would be referred to as 'the flowing'. There is a specific word for everything, but these words include a notion of their activity. If you really think about it, every existing thing is doing something, be it growing, flowing, moving or decaying. Bringing ourselves to understanding things as activities might be the first step in becoming

able to design in ways that are more involved in the real. Another interesting thought, found in the native American culture, is the belief that it is indispensable for personal well-being and sanity to be able to call the things you live side by side with by their right name. Hence the title of a book on native American thought and philosophy: "If You've Forgotten The Name Of Clouds, You've Lost Your Way."<sup>6</sup> The ability for language enables the human species to be able to communicate to others what we think and experience. By naming every thinkable element in our lives, it becomes possible to express ourselves better and better. However, words that might have used to be very important to us, like the names of clouds (which would enable us to predict storms) or the names of species of plants and fungi (which could provide us with information on whether we could eat them or not and in which seasons they fruit or flower), a majority of people in the western civilizations don't seem to remember them anymore. In school, we learn a great deal of 'general knowledge', like which politicians are

**"You can't understand nature without really becoming a part of it. You have to connect yourself, obtain a feel for the phenomenon of time, for the seasons."**

Claudy Jongstra



influential now and when the great wars of the world took place, but we seem to have forgotten to teach ourselves about the things that are right in front of us. Perhaps because we thought the technology we've created ensures that we wouldn't need them anymore. Our technology however does depend on a limited amount of resources, that have been so kindly provided to us until now, through the success of the very ecology we are slowly forgetting is living amongst us.

Apart from the fact that all existence is indefinitely performing activity, it is also possible for an entity to activate another. Atelier Hoko, an independent research agency in Singapore, did an enquiry into how street cats inhabit the man-made space of the urban landscape<sup>7</sup>. An interesting conclusion that can be drawn from their research is that our territories are spatial extensions of ourselves. Meaning they change according to the entities that interact with them, be it humans, other creatures or the weather. In this way a

space can be physically definite, yet indefinite in potential at once. In their enquiry this phenomenon is illustrated by drawing attention to the ways in which cats can charge objects with new functionalities, but the infinitude if this can go way beyond that, if we start to consider the memory of a place. The bench, build for humans to sit on, becoming a place of shade for the cat on warm summer days, becoming the place where two people broke up. One can wonder, is the bench still this bench when the cat is not lying there? Or when the people who carry this particular memory aren't around? Without them, is it merely a bench slowly decaying?

To gain a better consciousness of all entities we design with and for and to become aware of the impacts our designs might have on the continuity of those, it might help to see all existing elements that surround us as dynamic modes of becoming. Becoming not only through their self-driven way of evolving, but also through the influence of what's around them.

**"If You've Forgotten The Name Of Clouds, You've Lost Your Way."**

Bayard Johnson and Russell Means

<sup>5</sup> Translated from: Heerma van Voss, Daan et al. Claudy Jongstra. See All This, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Bayard, and Russell Means. If You've Forgotten The Names Of Clouds, You've Lost Your Way: An Introduction To American Indian Thought And Philosophy. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Atelier Hoko. Habit©At. Math Paper Press, 2014.



# 01 Soil



When architects and urban planners need to know about the soil composition of a site, they would commonly refer to soil maps and historical maps of the region. However, these maps need to be

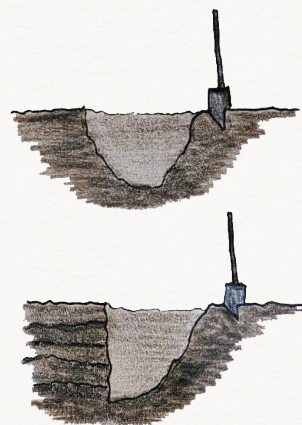
quite general about the information they convey to still be readable. To really know what is going on in the soil of a specific site, this wouldn't suffice. What if the architect or planner would just pick up a shovel?





## Method

When a biologist needs to research the soil of a site, they commonly make a soil sample. To make a soil sample, you dig a hole with a 1 meter diameter, 1 meter deep into the earth. This reveals how the earth 1 meter below the surface is layered and can tell you a lot about a site's past, present and potentially even its future. To save time, it is also possible to dig a hole sloped to one side only and straight on the other. This makes it easy to collect samples of equal proportions along the depth of the hole.



## Top Layer

The top layer sample contains a characteristic element of vegetation or ground covering.





Riverbank



Grassland



Forest



Embankment





**Embankment**



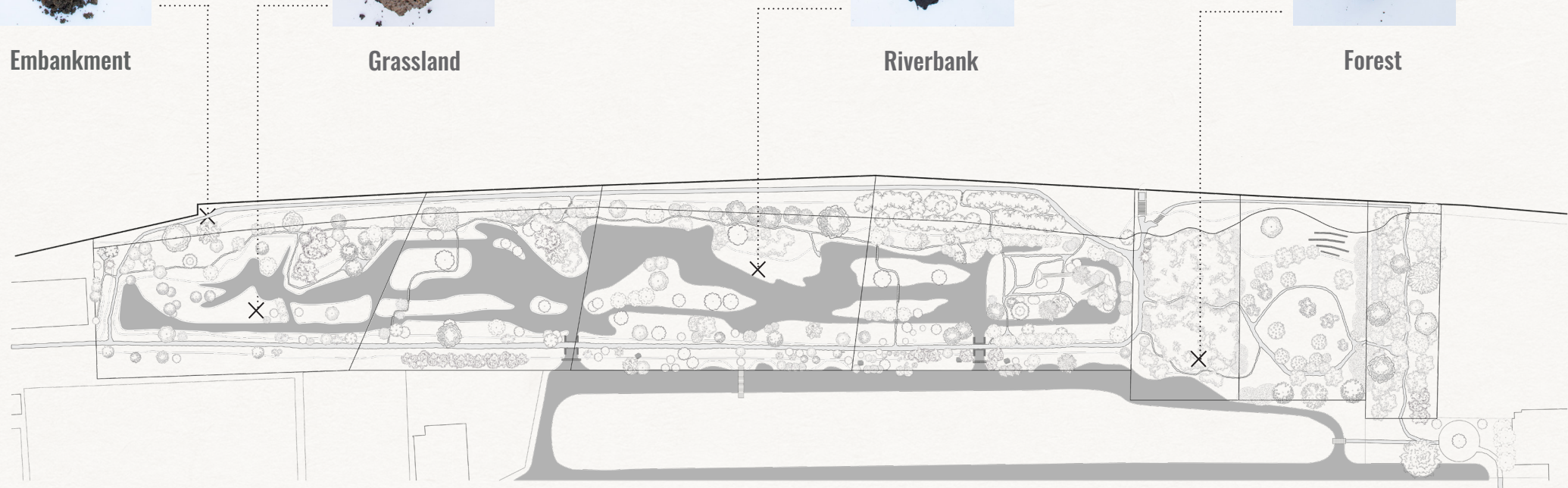
**Grassland**



**Riverbank**



**Forest**



## Locations

To make a comparison between the soil in places of different vegetation in Essenburgpark, four holes were dug, each 1 meter in depth. The locations were chosen according to the biotope map in which five biotopes are distinguished throughout the area. From wet to dry respectively: wetland, riverbank, grassland,

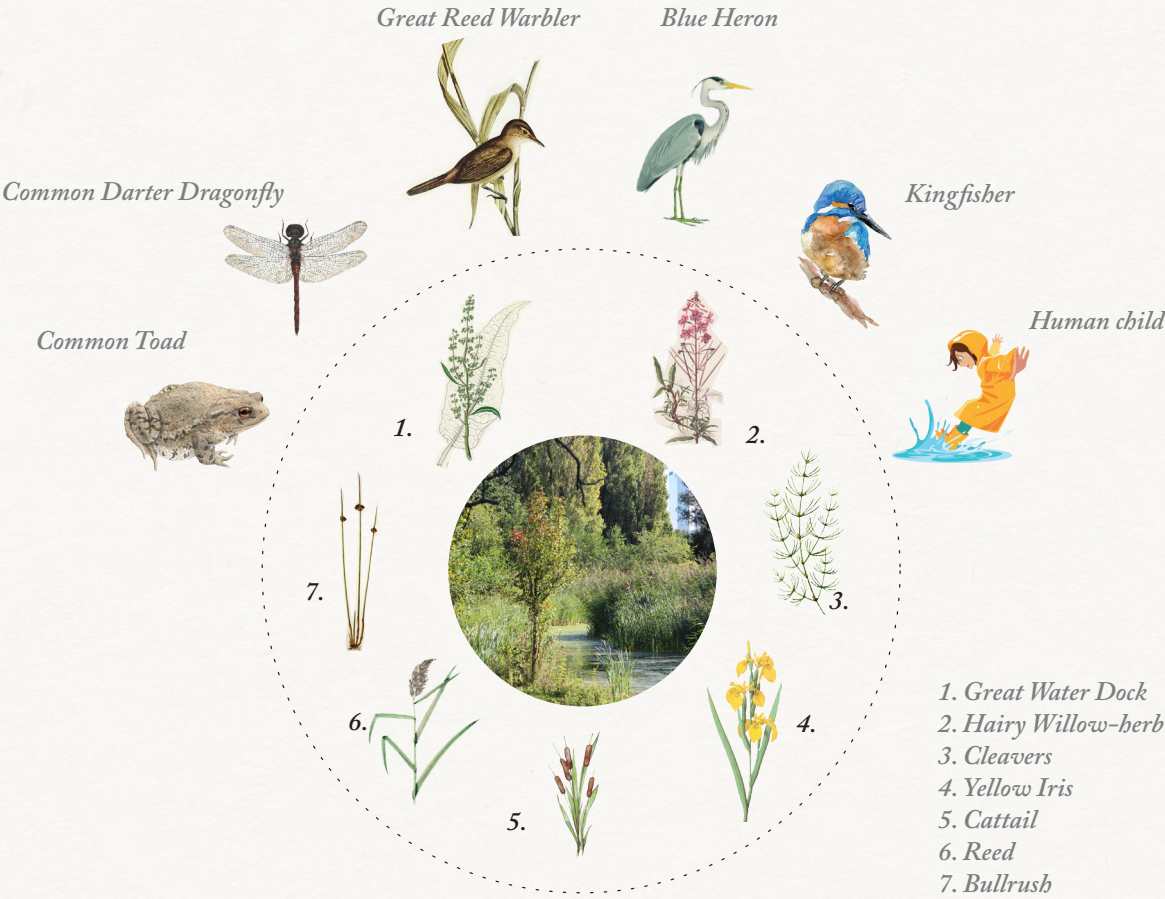
forest and embankment. Because digging in the soil of the water body requires special equipment, one biotope had to be left out of the comparison. Another requirement for finding a suitable location to shovel within each biotope, was to find places slightly hidden from nosy park visitors.



Riverbank

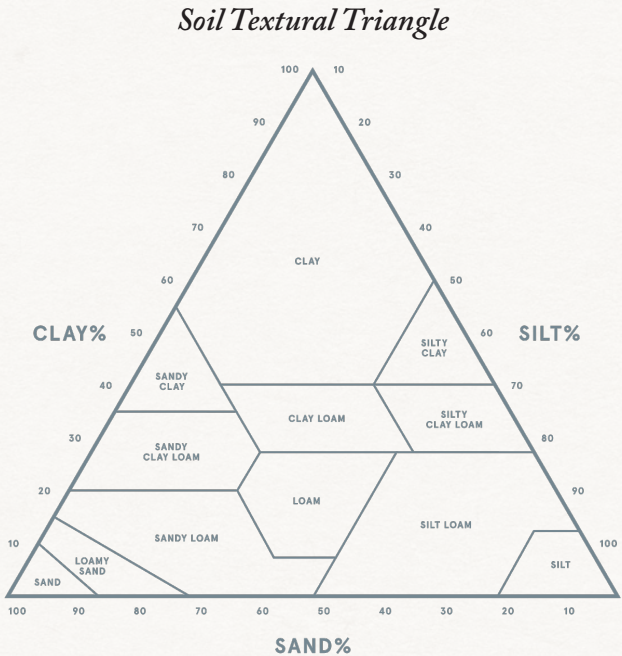
Noticeable in the riverbank soil sample, is the vast amount of loam in the first few layers. This makes sense, as loam soil gets deposited by rivers or by wind. As can be seen in the top layer, the reed had just been cut, which seems to happen on a regular basis taken the fact that the next 15 centimetres also contained a lot of reed remnants. The sample is quite

dark in colour, showing that it is hummus rich soil containing large amounts of organic material. Digging a bit deeper revealed human interference with the soil. Quite a lot of slags (a waste product of steel ovens) came up with the next sample. Slags are used by humans to create a foundation in the soil to prevent subsidence.



Soil Textural Triangle

By analyzing the grain size, a distinction can be made between clay, silt and sand. Sand being the biggest and clay being the smallest in size. Each sample contains a certain ratio of these elements, expressed in percentages. By reading the triangle, the kind of soil in each sample can be determined.

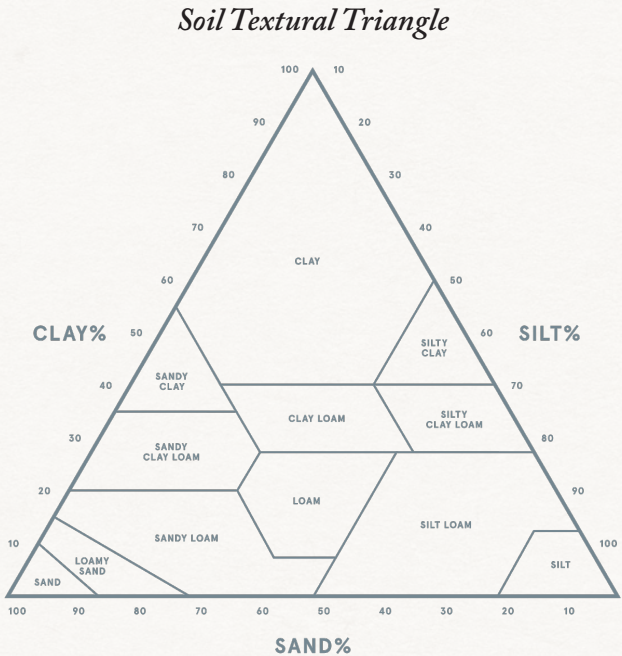
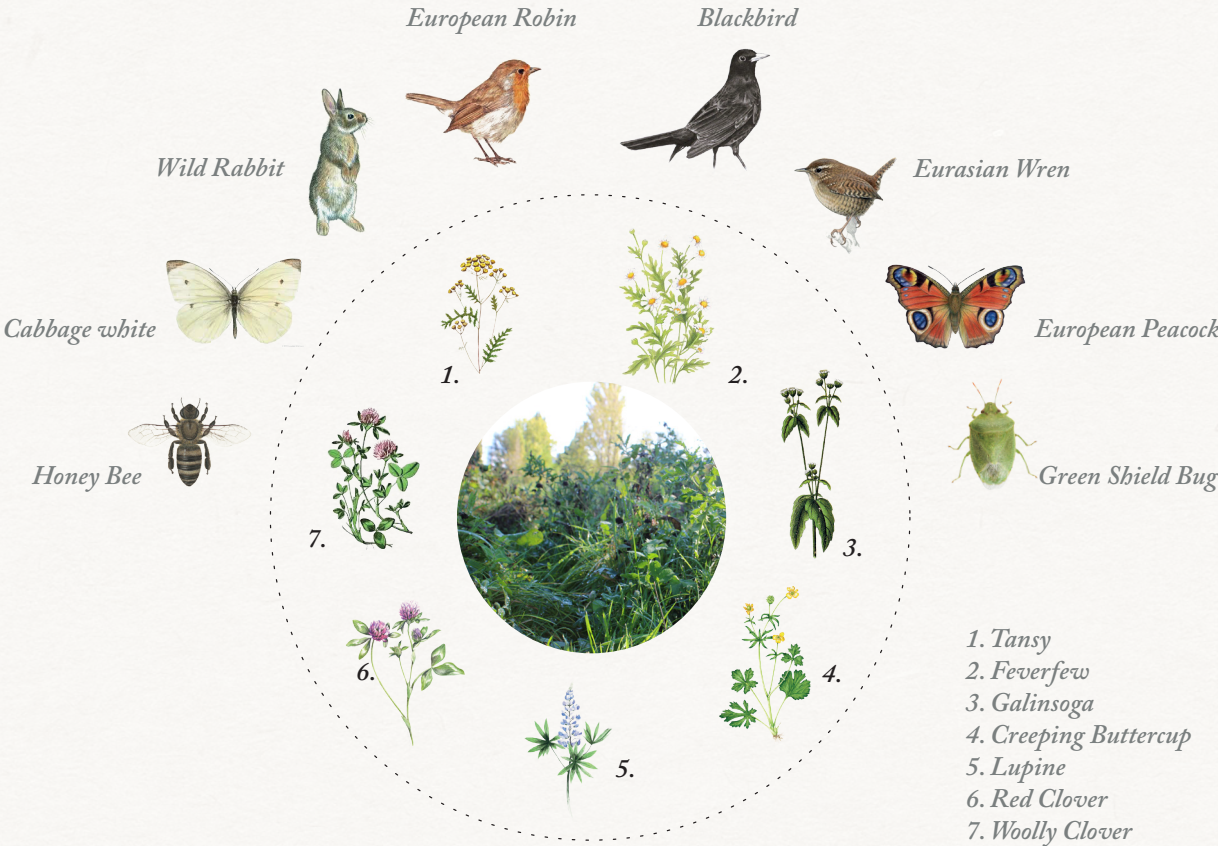
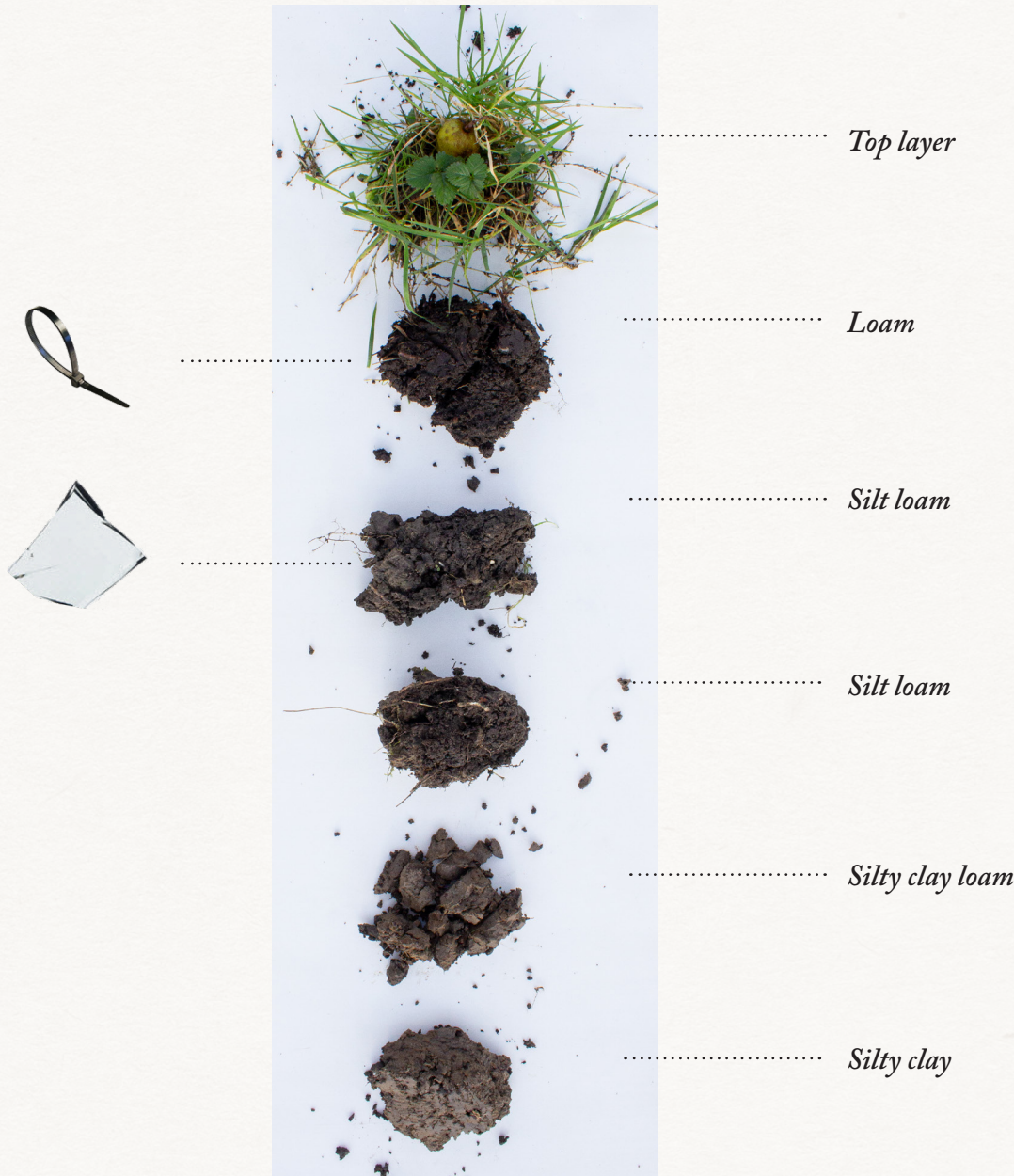




Grassland

The grassland soil sample is characterized by a slow transition from loam to clay, with a larger presence of silt instead of sand. Especially in the deeper layers, where the soil is of a more light brown colour than in the loamy layers near the top. From only one sample in this grassland biotope, already multiple items of human waste were found.

A tie-wrap and a piece of glass. It seems probable that waste was dumped here in the levelling of this land. Would this have happened before there were the allotments? Could NS have something to do with it? Or was it perhaps done for the construction of Essenburgpark itself? Thus, the soil provides us with clues and leaves us to wonder.

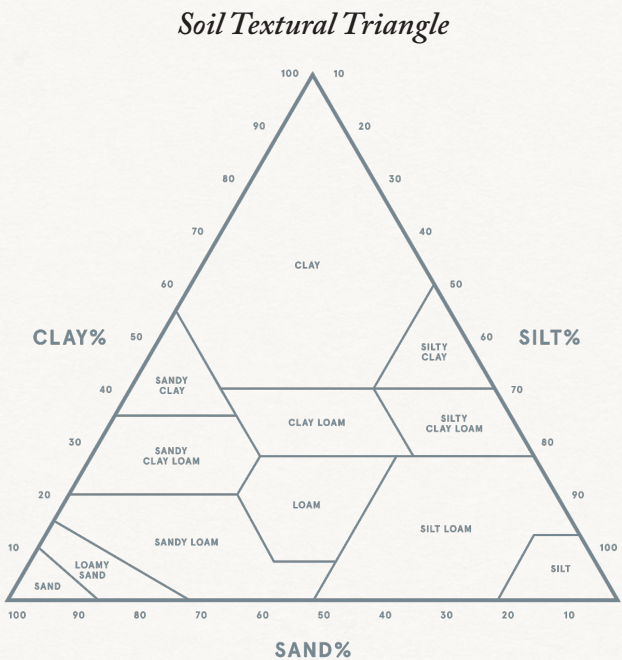
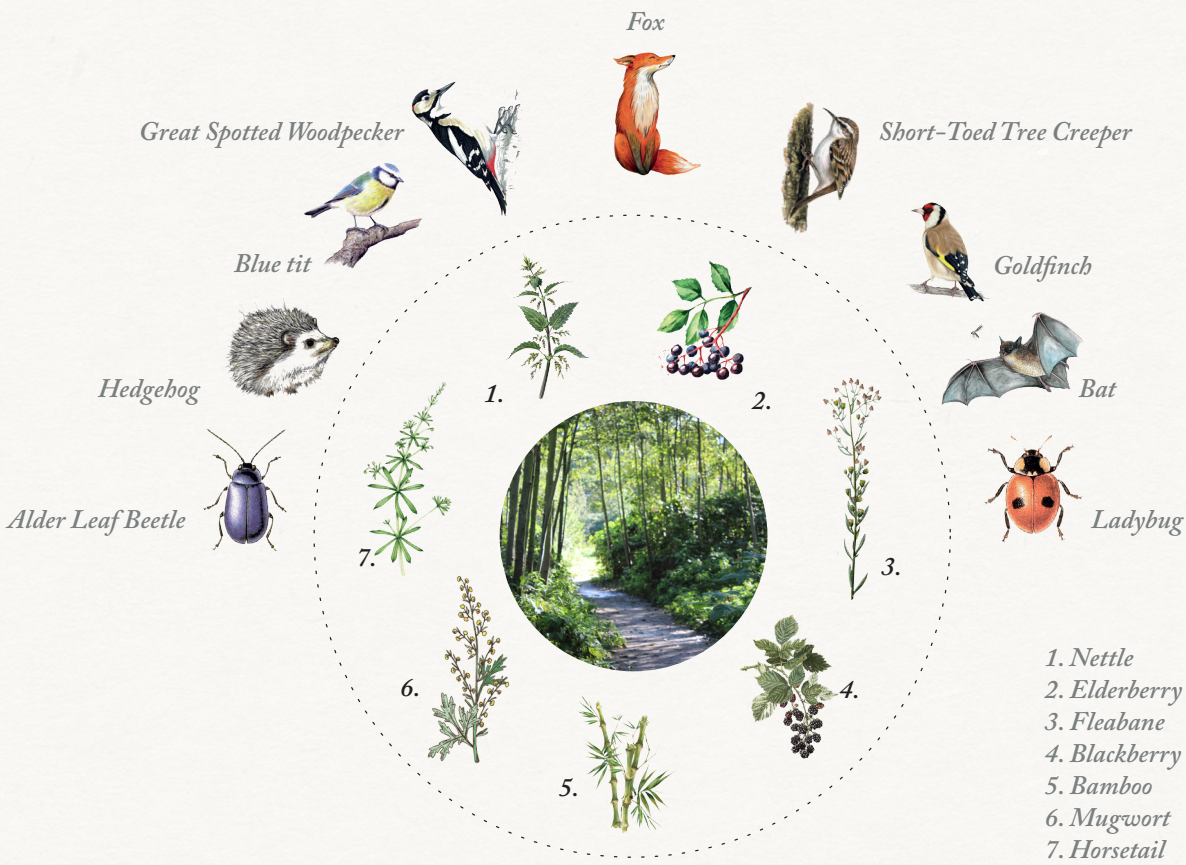




Forest

The forest biotope contains an average grain size that is a lot bigger than the ones of the locations discussed before. The sample had many surprises in store as deeper layers did not only contain smaller grain sizes (as is usually the case), but also larger ones, as stones appeared to be irregularly scattered throughout the soil. The first layer underneath the surface layer, contained a lot of smaller stones, close

together in the loamy soil. Deeper into the sample, it seemed the soil was getting more and more sandy, mixed with clay. Probably, the land here got levelled with sand when the park was constructed. Underneath that was loam again, then sand again and lastly loam again with huge pieces of brick! Human interference showed its presence here with more than just a chup-a-chup wrapper popping up.

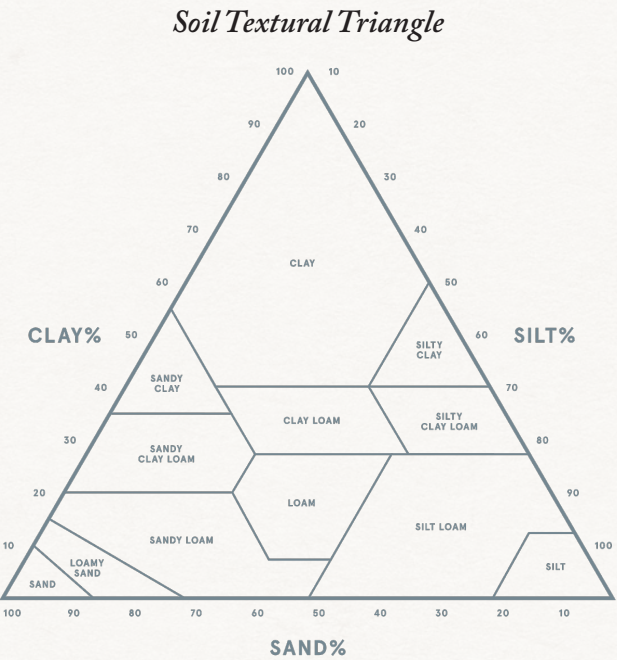
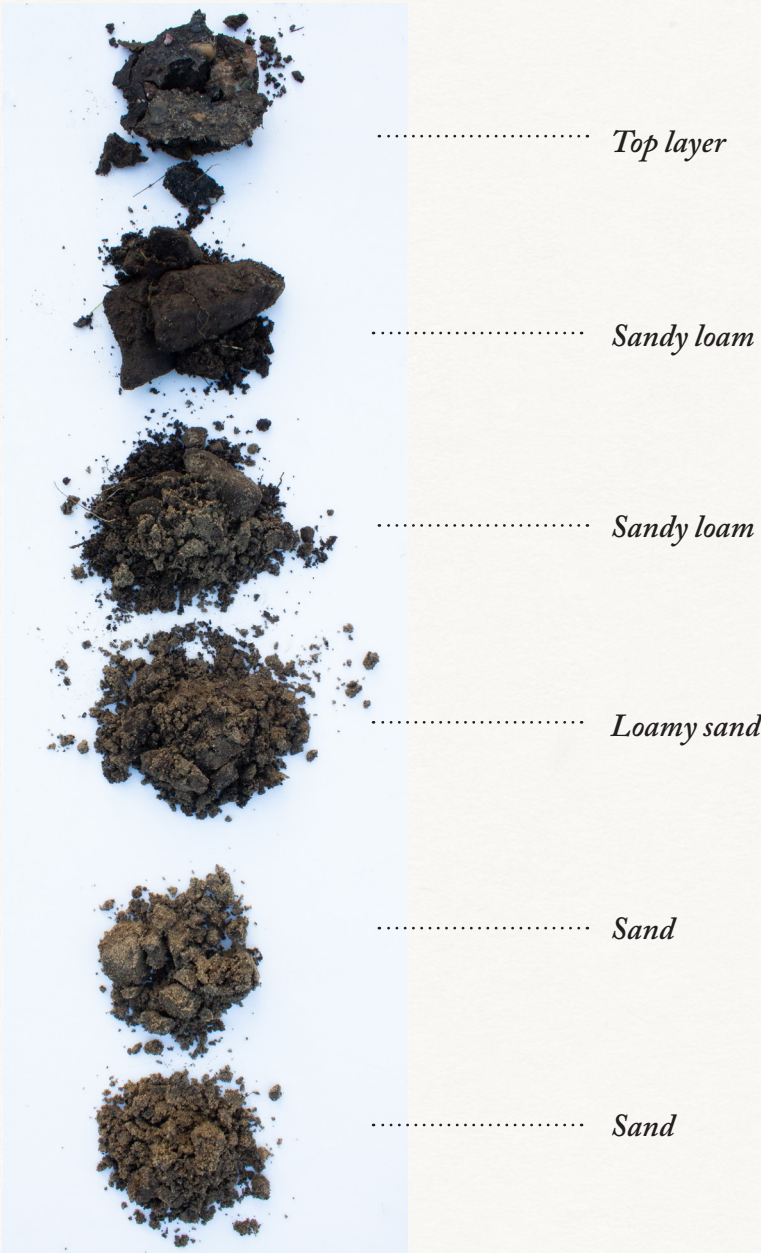




Embankment

It is needless to say that the embankment is a sample of human interference. The embankment is the highest part of the park and was constructed to support the adjacent railroad tracks and infrastructure, situated behind the wall along the length of the park. The sample shows layers that make sense

with how humans would construct an embankment. It shows deeper layers containing a lot of sand used to raise the ground and layers that are becoming a bit more loamy and darker (humus rich) nearing the surface. The ground of the embankment is topped with gravel to create the path, explaining the stones.





# 02 Water



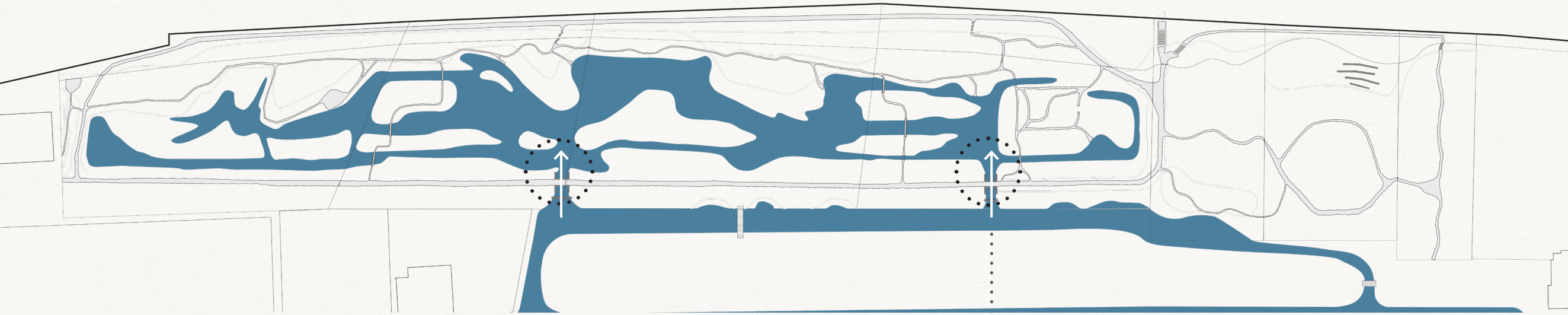
The water body of the Essenburgpark is a very significant feature both in ecological as in sociological terms. The presence of a water body has a huge influence on the types of vegetation that can be found here and on the animal species that call this place their habitat. Amongst them is the human animal. To travel through the park, humans

have to find or build elements to ensure a safe (or sometimes risky) crossing, in the occasion where they would like to keep their feet dry. A lack of places to cross can also prevent people from having access to certain islands or edges. Not only is the water an infrastructural boundary element to humans, it is also a great provider of joy and cool air.

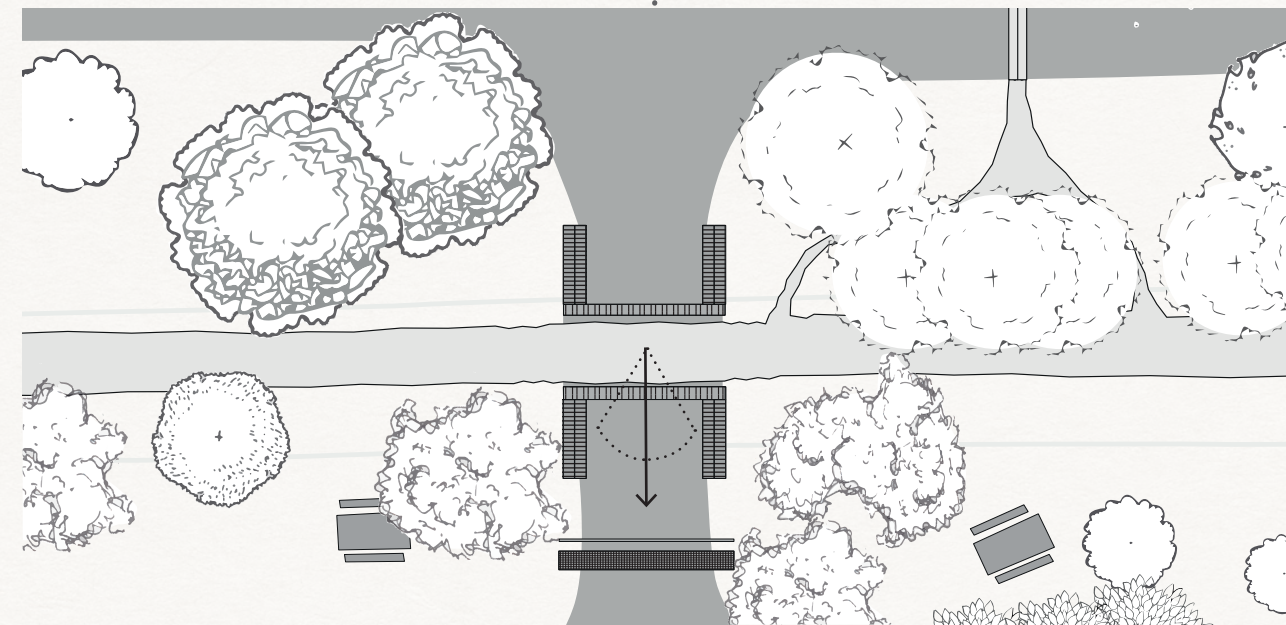


## Water buffer

The 5000m<sup>3</sup> water buffer contains two sluices that only let water into the park from the adjacent canal that is part of the city's water infrastructure. In times of heavy rainfall the sluices can be opened to drain the canal and prevent the surrounding streets from flooding.



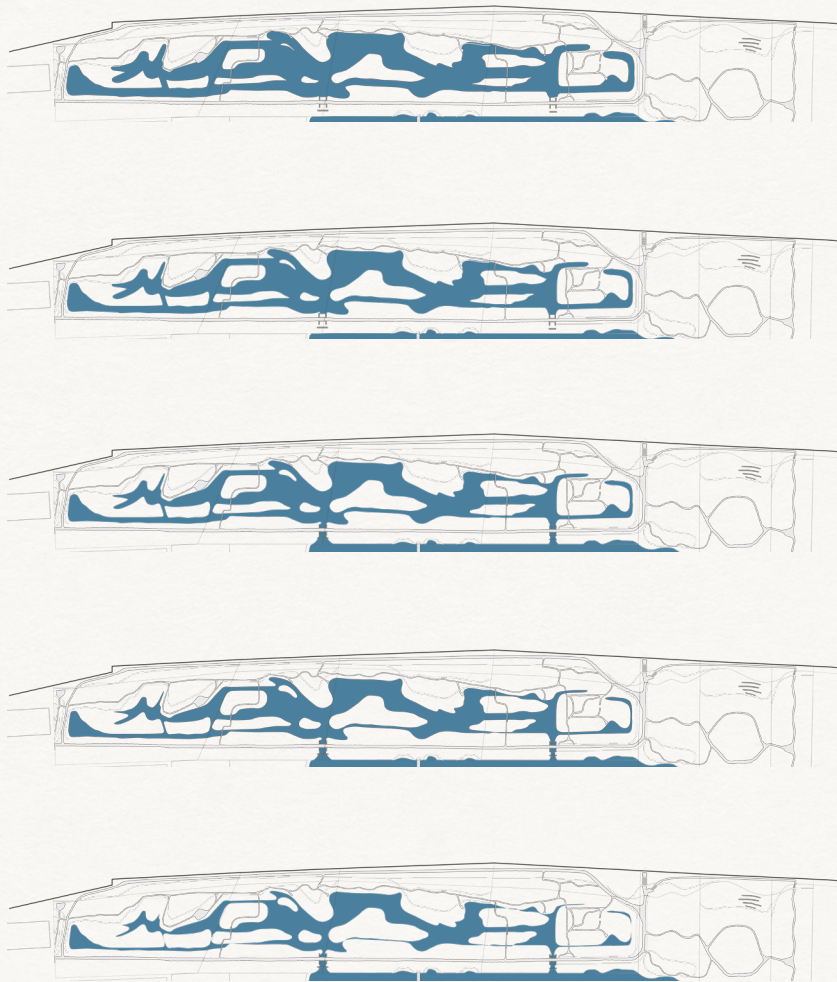
1:1500 A





## Movement

Shaped through periods of drought or heavy rainfall, the water level, and thus its edges, are not static. This continuously creates new experiences of the place. Islands can become bigger or smaller, or even disappear. Places of recognition might not be found after periods of a certain precipitation. Sometimes causing erosion of soil in the situation of a drought or in heavy rainfall a local flooding of trails or a landslide, requiring the visitor to always wander in a state of caution and awareness of the unreliability of their surroundings.



## Unlocked

If it gets cold enough in winter for the water body to attain a layer of ice on its surface, making it passable, this can unlock previously unavailable experiences of the park. New routes to known places can be imagined and access to previously unreachable parts now becomes a possibility.



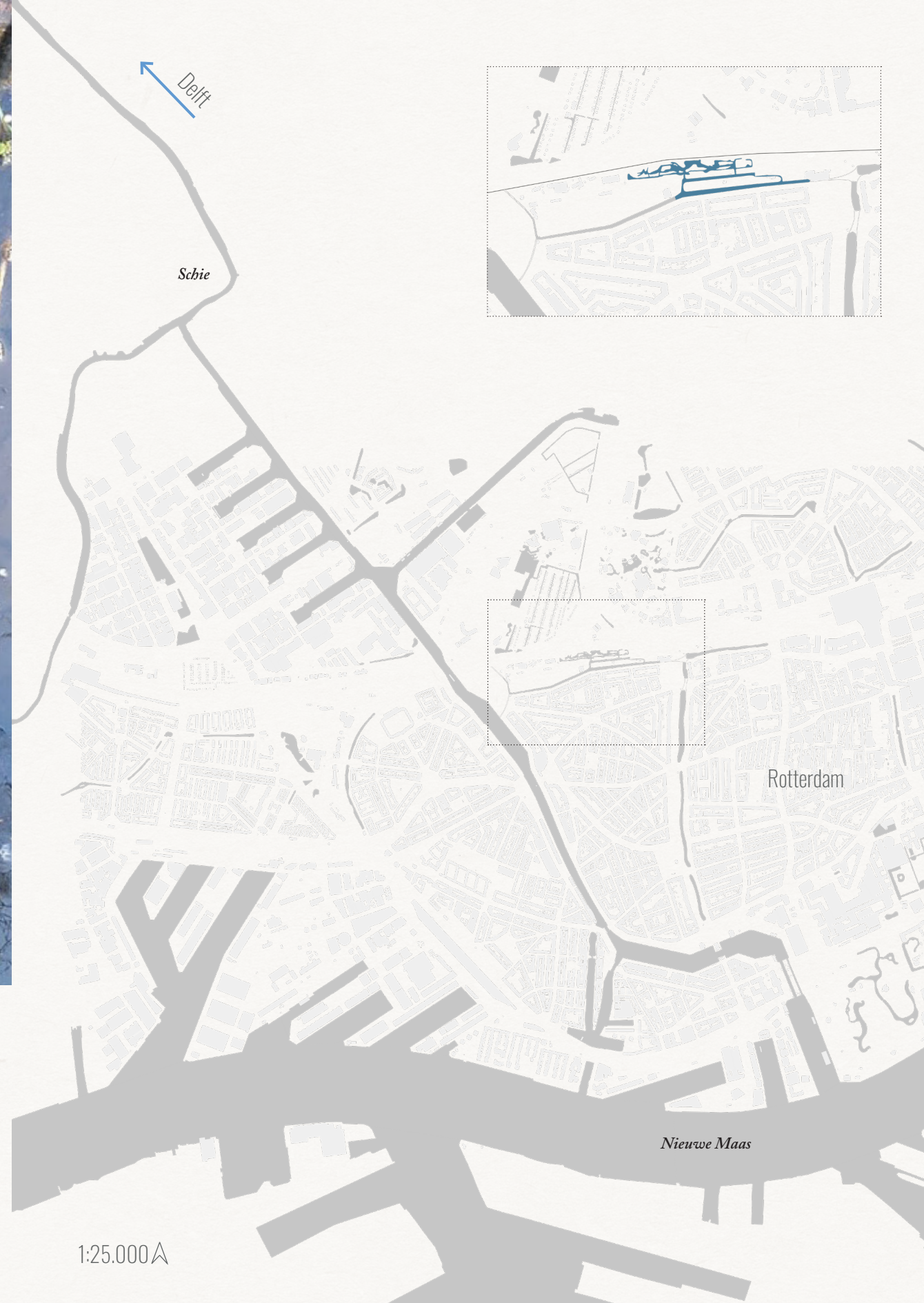


## Water resilient city

The decisive factor for the municipality of Rotterdam to help local residents acquire the land and build the Essenburgpark, was the need for a water buffer somewhere in this area of the city, so that the city can face a water resilient future. The water buffer is connected to the water infrastructure of the city, which before only drained into the Schie: a canal that connects Delft to the Nieuwe Maas. The latter being a river that flows into the North Sea.

## Equipment

The right attire can provide you with great advantages in where you can or cannot traverse.





# 03 Trees & Shrubs



The lives and behaviours of trees and shrubs are filled with activities that are not so easily noticeable if you don't spend a lot of time with them and are unaware of their characteristics. Trees are social creatures. They work together with their environments. Just as different animal species, such as the human species,

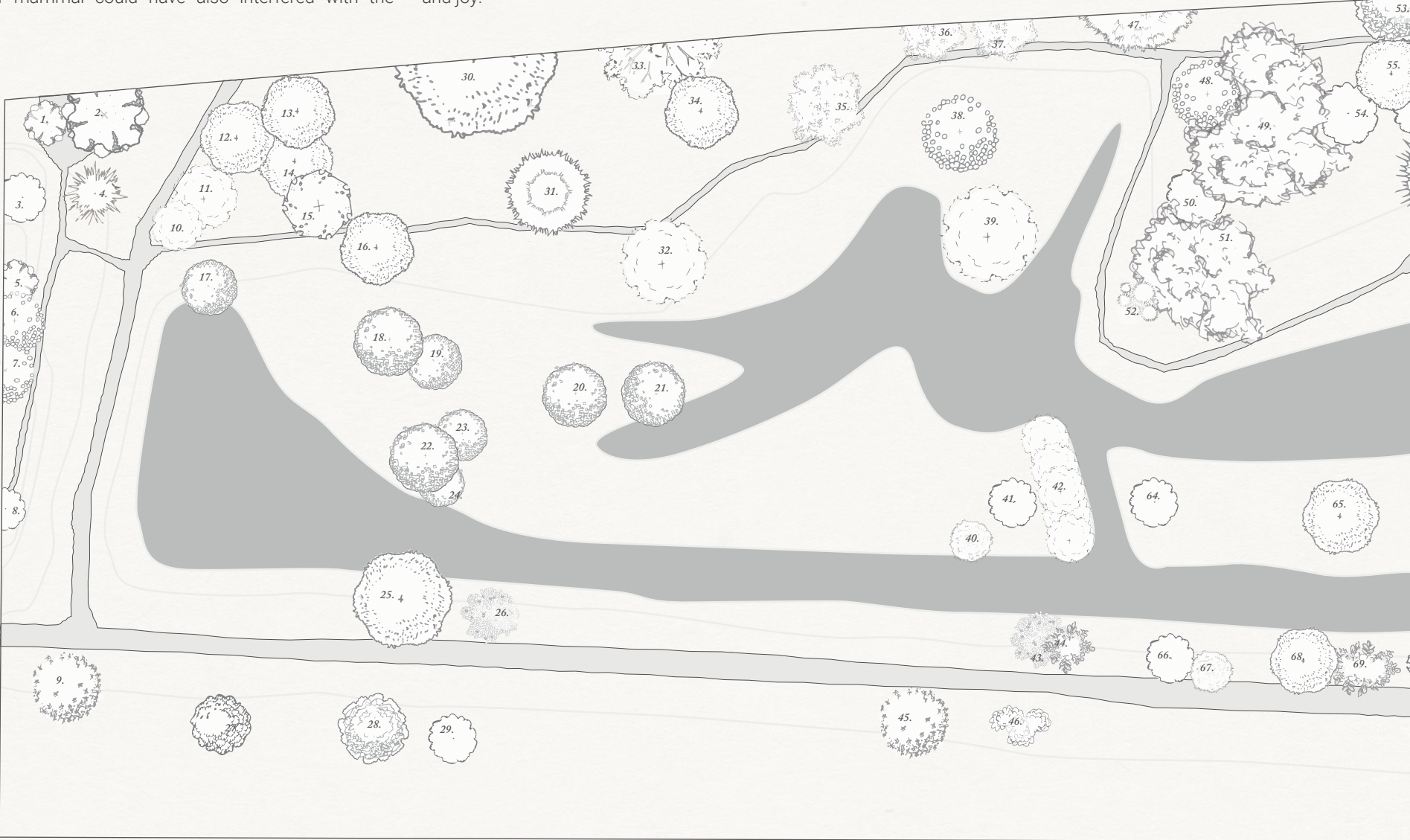
have different characteristics, different species of trees and shrubs can be associated with a specific package of needs and providings. Each individual specimen has, of course, a unique behaviour and life story, but can be characterized and better understood by the notion of the species specificities.



Spread

A tree or shrub needs a fertilized seed to sprout. Some trees can fertilize themselves, others rely on the help of insects, birds or mammals. Seeds are either dispersed in a close range or they can travel far away from the mother tree, carried by the wind or in the bellies of birds and mammals. An awareness of different reproducing techniques can provide explanations and story-lines for where on the map trees have emerged. A special species of mammal could have also interfered with the

whereabouts of trees on the map. The human can take and manipulate seeds to create cultivars of species and can make use of places like the garden centre to acquire these seeds. It is possible for them to travel huge distances with the help of fuelled vehicles, carrying these seeds all around the world to places of their liking. In this endeavour, they are not only driven by basic instincts like the need for food or shade, but also by a desire for aesthetic purpose and joy.



Pioneers

Many of the species present in the area are species that are characteristically found on disturbed, reclaimed land like the Essenburgpark. Because there is little competition in the first few years on these lands, species that have uncomplicated needs and the ability to reproduce excessively thrive. These are called pioneers.

S.07

Ligustrum vulgare

Wild Privet

ESSENBURG PARK

LOCATION: B01:26,43 B02:5,6,22 B04:4,60 B07:6,27

CHARACTERISTICS

NEEDS

- Grows well in full sun but will tolerate lower light levels if nutrients are increased
- Sandy, loamy and clay soils

PROVIDES

- The berries are poisonous to humans but readily eaten by thrushes
- Stays green in winter and thus, provides shelter for birds and small mammals

Max Height: 1.5-4M Max Age: 25-50Y

HISTORY

Wild privet is a sturdy, fast-growing shrub that has good winter hardiness. It is native to northeastern Europe and widely used as a hedge plant. It is common in hedgerows and woodlands, especially in chalk areas.

A|WAKENING

www.a.wakening.nl

@femkeframed

T.01

Acer Campestre

Field Maple

ESSENBURG PARK

LOCATION: B01:13,16,55,63 B02:1,33 B03:18,57 B04:12,53 B05:5 B06:1 B07:48

CHARACTERISTICS

NEEDS

- Sunlight during its seed-bearing years
- Moist, well-drained, slightly acidic, and nutrient rich soil

PROVIDES

- Support of caterpillars, aphids, and their predators
- Pollution fighter

Max Height: 15-25M Max Age: 200-300Y

HISTORY

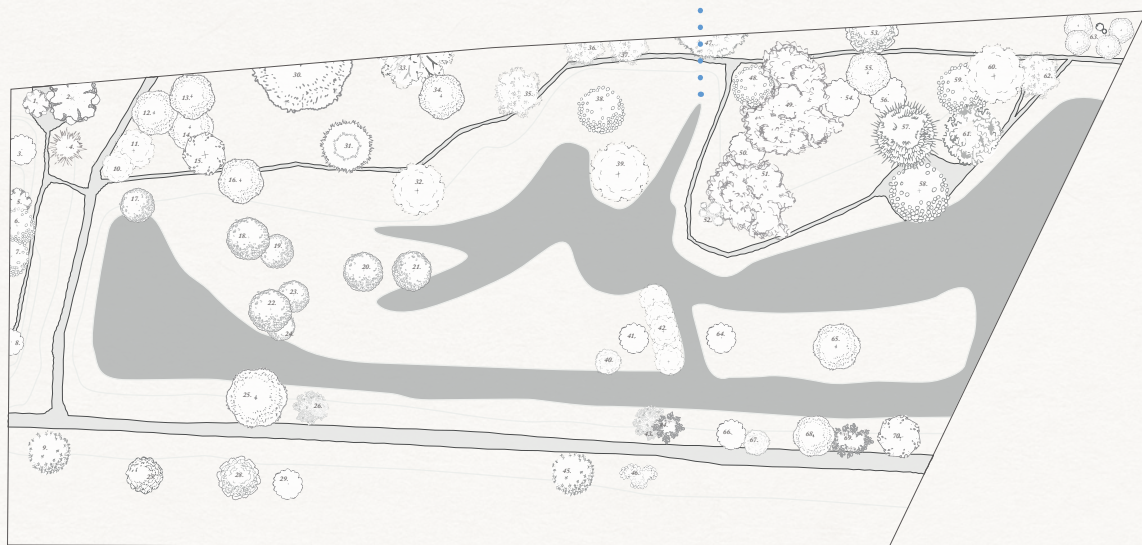
The Field Maple can be found growing in woods, scrub and hedgerows, and on chalk lowland. It is widely planted in gardens and parks due to its compact habit, tolerance of pollution and rich autumn colours.

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## Succession and interference

When the seeds of a tree are dispersed all in close range of the tree, a competition takes place. Not all of them can grow to become large influential trees. In this example of the common maple, the tree can be found in the park in different stages of this competition activity. The common maple first looks more like a bush instead of a tree with many seedlings growing alongside each other. Some of them will grow faster than others. This can be caused by genetic variation, germination speed, better access to nutrients in the soil, what its neighbours are like,

or the luck of not being trembled upon or eaten. Once a few of them grow taller than others, those will have the best access to sunlight, accelerating the selection process. Eventually only as many seedlings will make it to the final stage as there are nutrients available and space between the canopies of other trees to support fully grown specimen. The human sometimes chooses to support one specimen by removing seedlings around it, or it decides to favour the bush appearance by chopping down winners of the competition.





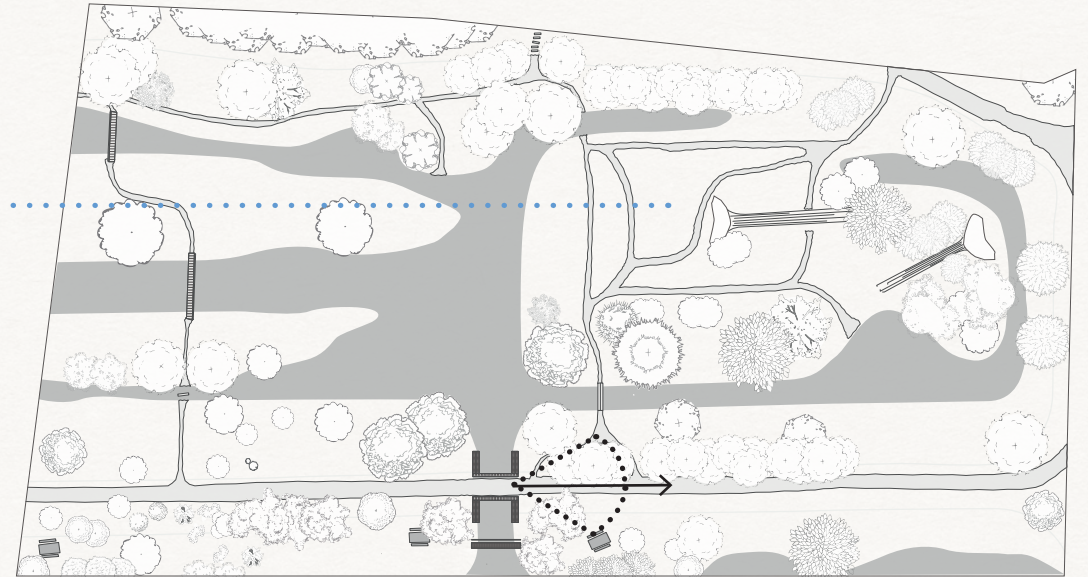
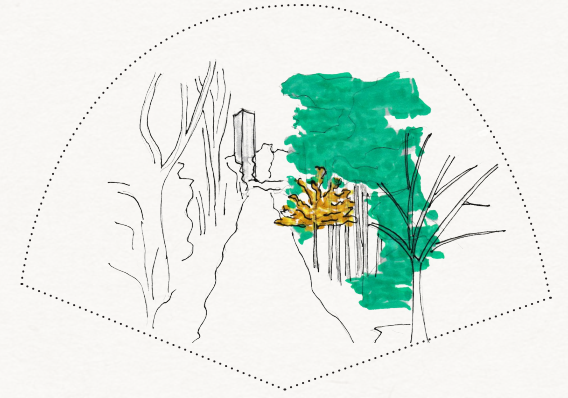
## Seasonal change

The changing of the seasons can make it more difficult to identify species of tree or shrub. Especially during winter, when most trees in the park don't carry any leaves and the leaves on the ground are all

mixed up while slowly decaying. Luckily many trees have seed carriers such as catkins, cones or samaras (commonly known as 'helicopter seeds'), that stay on the tree during winter time.

## Colour

Due to the fact that some species loose their leaves earlier then others or don't even loose their leaves at all in winter, it can happen that a green, a yellow and a leafless tree coexist at the same point in time.







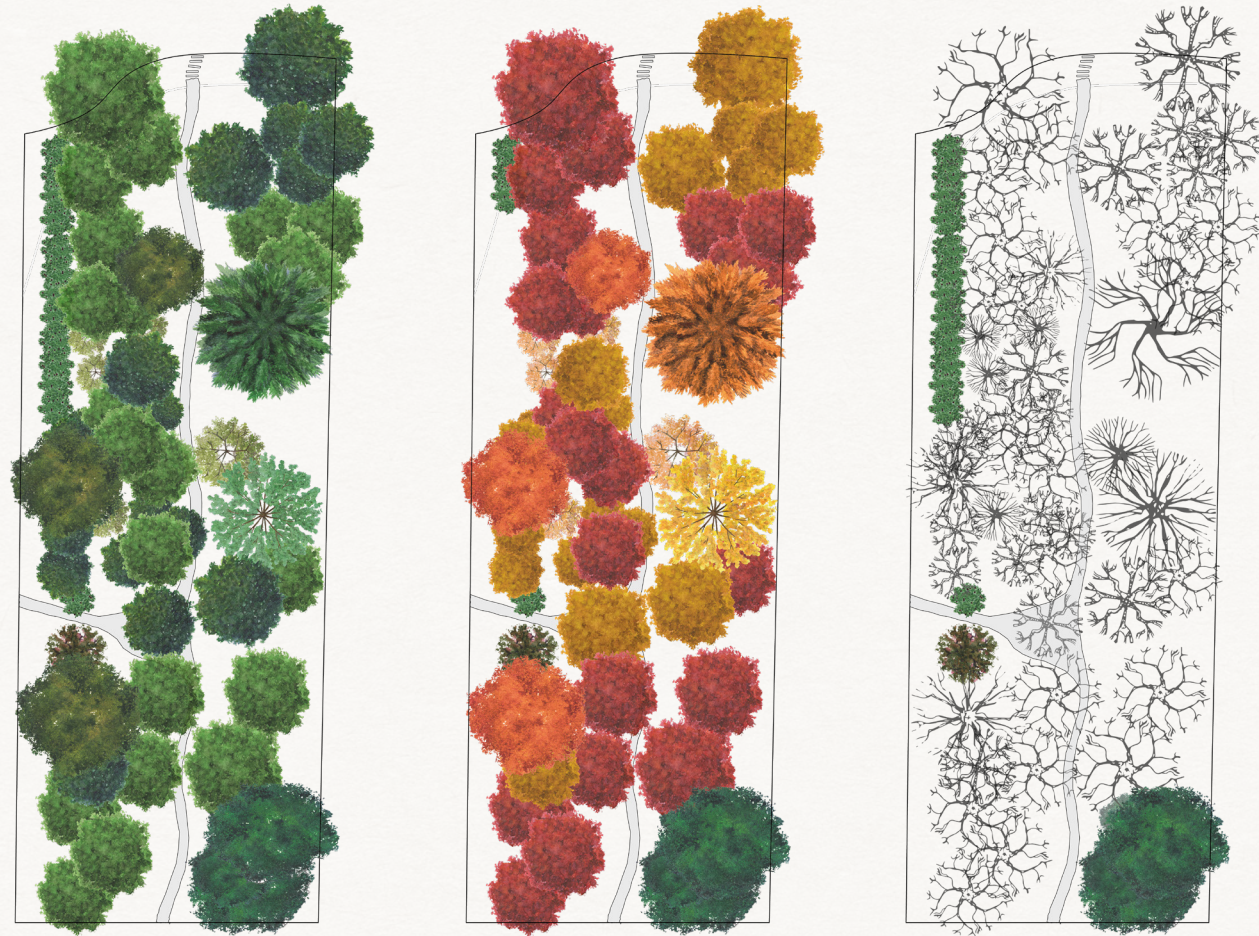
## Ecological influence

How the trees and shrubs react on the changing of the seasons also has an influence on the ecosystem they take part in. Many small mammals and birds enjoy the shelter that trees and shrubs which are evergreen (green throughout winter) provide. Some bushes carry berries where many migrating birds take advantage of during their journey south. In autumn, they nourish the soil through the litter layer they create with their fallen leaves, which gets

consumed by all sorts of bacteria and micro-organisms. In spring, some trees and shrubs flower, providing nectar for insects and in summer some carry fruits, edible for some mammals and birds. The changing of the appearance of trees and shrubs can also have an influence on the mood of certain mammals, particularly the human who is commonly taken by a sense of awe at the sight of golden brown leaves that light up in rays of late autumn sunlight.

## Changes

The same place can give of a totally different 'vibe' when visited in different seasons. Although, not all trees go through the same change. Some will appear more or less the same, no matter which time of year you visit them, due to their evergreen leaves. If you look closely enough, you will however find slight differences in every species throughout different seasons noticeable by characteristics in their reproductive cycle.





# Remarkable activities

By visiting a place often enough in a state of curiosity, it becomes possible to notice more and more activities in the lives of trees and shrubs. Activities that allow our minds to wonder and ask ourselves 'am I witnessing something remarkable or is this just ordinary behaviour?' A question that often becomes obsolete as soon as you research into what you've seen. In fact, the more you know, the less you will find yourself asking that very question. Rather unfortunate actually.

# "Dead trees are also fine."

Erik Wemmers, Essenburgpark

## Parasite

A wild cherry tree roots into the bark of a poplar and feeds on its metabolism.



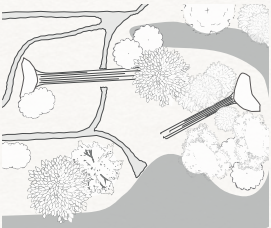
## Buds during the winter

Some trees already form buds during the winter, making it seem like the tree might be confused over changing of the climate.



## Trees that feed

Some trees in the park can grow fruits edible for some birds and mammals and sometimes poisonous for others.



## Fallen trees

When a tree is dead, its roots start to decay causing it to eventually fall over, lifting up whole chunks of soil. This provides all sorts of ecological opportunities for others.





# 04 Fungi



Have you ever found yourself staring at a fallen branch of a tree or an unfolded flower, wondering why you rarely ever witness the exact moment in time such an activity is happening? It is possible that you have actually already stood in front of many unfolding moments of change. Not every living thing moves at the same rate. When a gust of wind breaks off a branch of a tree, this is a sudden event that can be witnessed if you would happen to be on location at the right moment in time. However, many other changes in the appearances of the living things around you happen more gradually. If you are familiar with time lapses, often used in

nature documentaries, you know how all sorts of life can be moving around more than they appear. It just so happens to be at a pace that is not visible to the human eye, but it can be faster than you think. Fungi for example, are creatures that can change at an unimaginable rate. However, trying to watch them move is like watching the sunset, trying to see the actual moving of the sun. What you really perceive is yourself constantly making the realisation that the sun is again lower than it was in your last moment of awareness. What you witness are stages of change. To substantiate this movement, all you really need to do is revisit the activity often enough.





*One day*



*Three days*



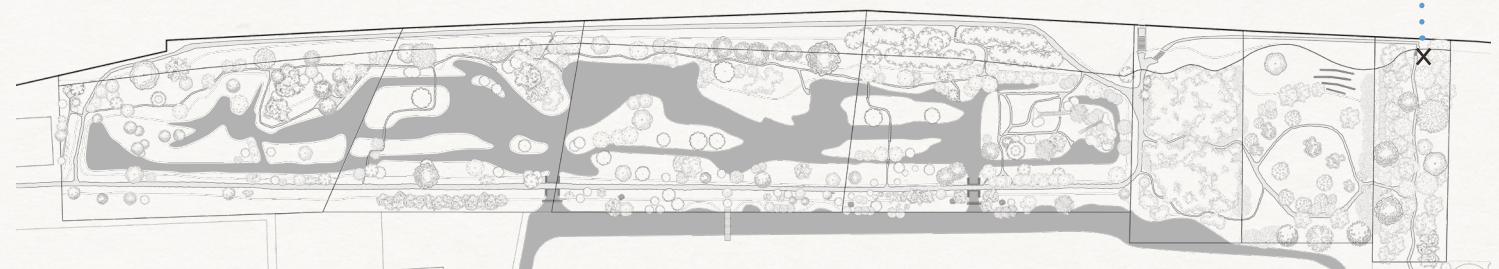
*Four days*



*One month!*

## Mushroomorphoses

In the course of a couple of days, a group of mushrooms can go through its entire life-cycle. This group of common inkcaps was first spotted in a state of closed caps. To determine their pace of change, they were visited on a daily basis. Only a day later their caps were found to be suddenly curled up, like small tabletops. This must have happened overnight. Three days later, little of them was left and on day four, fallen leaves covered most of them. Many species of fungi re-spawn multiple times in a year at the same location, as did these common inkcaps one month later.

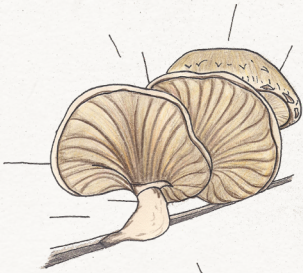




Species of fungi

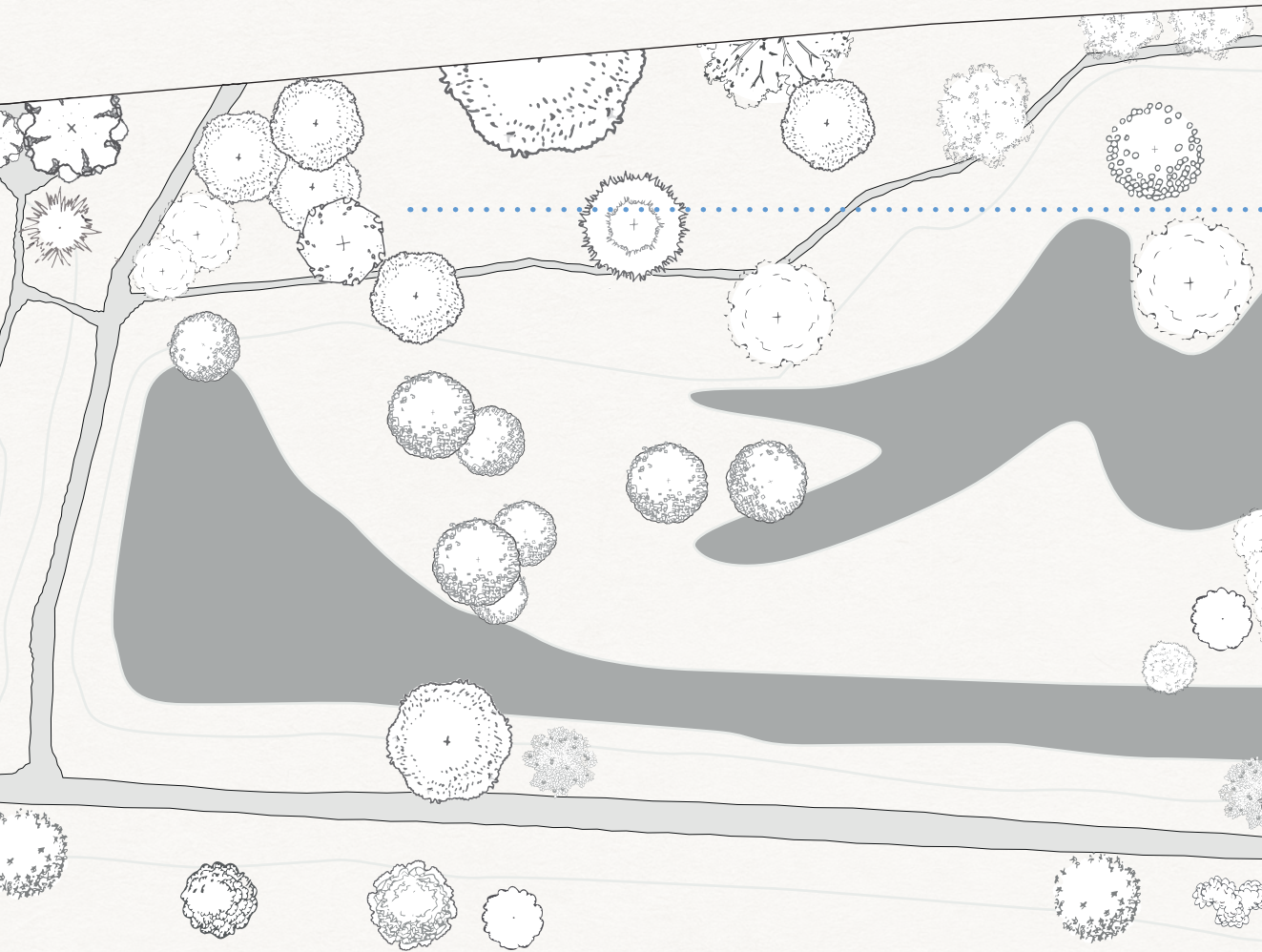
A mushroom is the fruiting body of a fungus, that can be typically found above ground, either on soil, or on its food source, such as bark or logs. They contain the spores that the fungus uses for reproductive purposes. The species can be identified according to their spore-bearing surface under the cap, their gill attachment and the morphology of the cap. Some mushrooms are edible, however it is not advised

to consume any until a high level of identification expertise is reached, as there are many lookalikes out there, sometimes poisonous enough to kill. Mushrooms emerge as a minute fruiting body, referred to as the pin stage. Once such stages are formed, the mushroom can rapidly pull in water from its mycelium and expand, mainly by inflating preformed cells.



Hemipholiota Populnea

A non-poisonous mushroom that grows on wooden logs. It has a white to creamy colour, becoming light brown in age, with scattered scales.



Winter Twiglet

A small orange mushroom that is initially concave, but flattens with age. It is found on the ground, growing on woody debris



Oyster Mushroom

An edible mushroom that can be found growing in shelving clusters on wood, with a smooth, white, oyster or fan-shaped cap.







### **Shapes and sizes**

While in some species of fungi, the individual mushrooms grow to look more or less the same, other species can show a large variety in appearances. Sometimes resulting in quite imaginative or ridiculously looking morphologies.



# 05 Birds



In contrast to plants and fungi, birds move around swiftly. Sometimes even so fast that the human eye can't keep up and loses track. Bird watching can be difficult, especially if you don't know which sound belongs to which bird. Apart from being able to tell apart sounds, it can also help to know about nesting behaviour of specific species or about their preferred source of food. Some species of birds are impossible not to notice as they are high in numbers

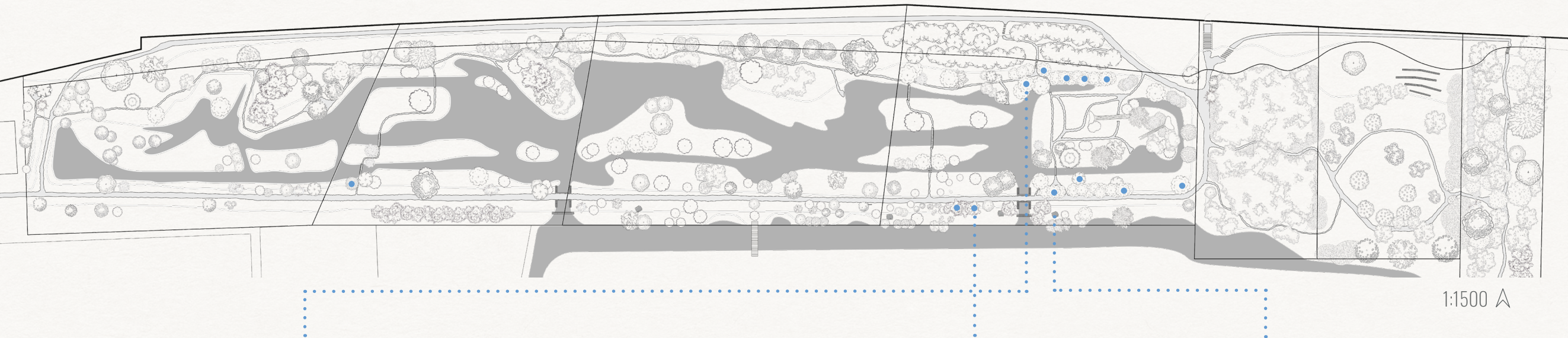
and dare to get close to human life. Other species prefer to hide. Particularly when you are a small bird, it is important to keep out of sight of potential predators. Winter can be hard on some birds, which is why certain species migrate, to find food in days of scarcity. Though, there are also species that thrive from easily accessible berry bushes on their way from northern countries to their winter habitat in the south. These are solely seen in the park during winter.



## Shelter

When fostering vulnerable young birds, there is a need for a safe place to nest. Birds build their nests in trees, shrubs and in all sorts of human build structures. Some birds like to nest underneath roof tiles, in old sheds or underneath bridges. Any place that provides shelter carries a potential. Humans seem to have noticed this behaviour and find joy

in helping birds find a suitable nesting space, by building small houses for them according to their specific needs. These birdhouses can be found in several locations throughout the park, but are mostly located very close together. Birds, however, are territorial animals who aren't that fond of neighbours at all. Let the singing battle begin.



## Attachment

Birdhouses are attached using nails that connect a vertical slat on the back of the house to the bark of a tree. Sometimes, the nails aren't needed, when the shape of a tree somehow allows for a birdhouse to rest in its cavities.

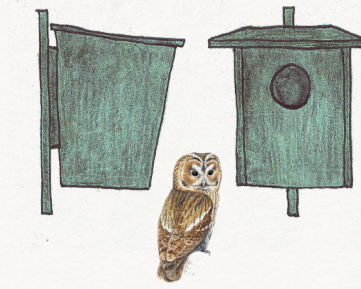


## Nesting boxes

Different species of birds have different nesting preferences. In practise, this has quite the benefit. There is no need to worry that your precious home is suddenly occupied by more dominant, unwanted visitors. Especially when you are small, no other bird species will even fit into your home. Although, there is no guarantee. Some birds are known to peck their way into nesting boxes that were not meant for them.

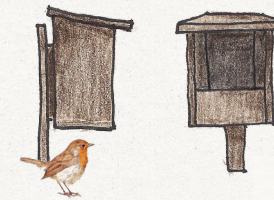
### Symbiosis

Commensalism is a type of symbiotic relationship between two organisms, where one benefits from the other without harming it. Or could this birdhouse on a human object be called mutually beneficial providing the human with a reason to smile?



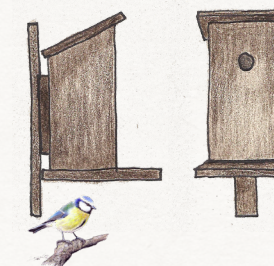
### Tawny owl

A large hole-fronted nesting box, placed high up a large tree with its entrance away from the prevailing wind. This house is still vacant!



### European robin

An open fronted nesting box, situated in a location with natural cover, out of reach of ground predators.



### Blue tit

A hole-fronted nest box, with a small entrance to keep out larger, more dominant species such as the great tit.







## Birdwatching

In the practise of birdwatching, a distinction is made between a sighting and an observation, as an observation can also be just hearing the sound of the bird. Birds can be found flying over, sitting on branches of bushes and trees and near or in the

water. Some visitors of the park like to put their observations on a website ([waarneming.nl](http://waarneming.nl)) where others can verify them. The website can also be used to keep track of what birds have inhabited or visited Essenburgpark.



*Common Chaffinch* - *Fringilla coelebs*  
*Goldfinch* - *Carduelis carduelis*  
*Greenfinch* - *Chloris chloris*  
*Great Tit* - *Parus major*  
*Blue Tit* - *Cyanistes caeruleus*  
*Long-tailed Tit* - *Aegithalos caudatus*  
*Blackbird* - *Turdus merula*  
*Song Thrush* - *Turdus philomelos*  
*Eurasian Wren* - *Troglodytes troglodytes*  
*Fieldfare* - *Turdus pilaris*  
*Redwing* - *Turdus iliacus*  
*Goldfinch* - *Carduelis carduelis*  
*Firecrest* - *Regulus ignicapilla*



*Short-toed Tree Creeper* - *Certhia brachydactyla*  
*Blackcap* - *Sylvia atricapilla*  
*Siskin* - *Spinus spinus*  
*Gray Wagtail* - *Motacilla cinerea*  
*Eurasian reed warbler* - *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
*European Robin* - *Erithacus rubecula*  
*Hedge Sparrow* - *Prunella modularis*  
*Chiffchaff* - *Phylloscopus collybita*  
*Starling* - *Sturnus vulgaris*  
*Magpie* - *Pica pica*



*Eurasian Jay* - *Garrulus glandarius*  
*Common Wood Pigeon* - *Columba palumbus*  
*Carrion Crow* - *Corvus corone*  
*Jackdaw* - *Coloeus monedula*  
*Rose-ringed parakeet* - *Psittacula krameri*  
*Great Spotted Woodpecker* - *Dendrocopos major*  
*Green Woodpecker* - *Picus viridis*  
*Common buzzard* - *Buteo buteo*  
*Common Kestrel* - *Falco tinnunculus*  
*Eurasian Sparrowhawk* - *Accipiter nisus*  
*Great Blue Heron* - *Ardea cinerea*  
*Mallard* - *Anas platyrhynchos*  
*Eurasian Coot* - *Fulica atra*  
*Gadwall* - *Mareca strepera*



*Moorhen* - *Gallinula chloropus*  
*Kingfisher* - *Alcedo atthis*







### **Birds are also food**

Some animals are able to catch a bird for dinner. Large predator birds for example, but also ground animals such as foxes or cats. Most birds are too quick to become prey. The rose-ringed parakeet however, whose bright feathers are scattered here all over the forest floor, are not known to be the sharpest tools in the shed. But who can blame them? This place, where they are called invasive, is far away from where they originated.



## 06 Human



Essenburpark is situated in a densely populated urban area, built by civilization of the human animal. Not only did the human animal dominate these lands, destroyed what was there and cultivate it to suit their own purpose. Only a couple of years ago, some specimen of the human animal reclaimed the land to reshape it and make it grow into a lush green area they

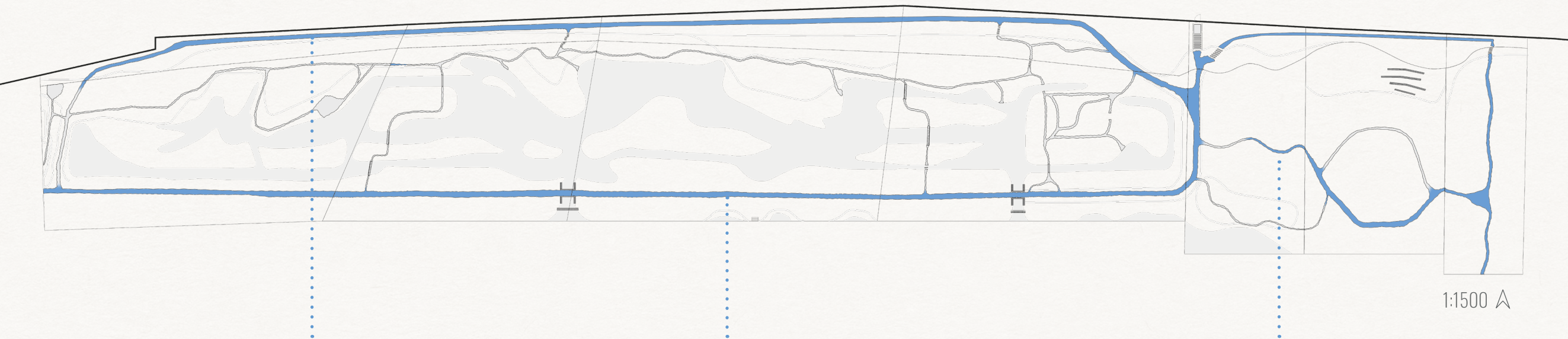
call "city park", shared with other species. Perhaps still serving a somewhat anthropocentric purpose, a desire for a sense of wild nature to disappear into, but nonetheless resulting in a nourishing ecosystem of great biodiversity that does not only improve the living environment of the *anthropos*, but also provides other species with new opportunities to thrive.



## Reliable trails

Since it was the human animal who decided to provide for the need of wilderness, it also becomes his responsibility to make sure wilderness remains passable. It would be a shame if the park would overgrow to an extent where there is no place for the human to enjoy its own endeavours here. Gravel is a suitable material to prevent seeds

from sprouting in the areas designated for human traffic. If they do however make their way into the soil and succeed to peek through the suffocating stone layer above them, a steady amount of visitors can still tremble these newborns enough to nip them in the bud, before they stand a chance at a life in a space where they are not wanted.



### Overgrowth

A lot of maintenance can be needed to prevent some human made trails from overgrowing. Especially in places where the path provides plants with promising patches of sunlight, that are scarce underneath the canopy of the surrounding trees. It can be just too tempting to forget about those garden shears and stick a few leaves out.



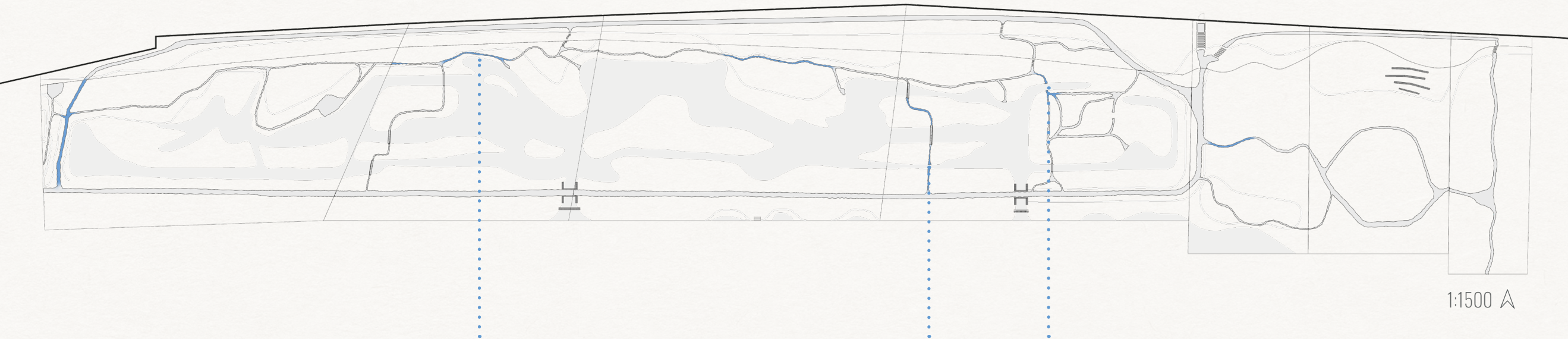
## Challenging trails

Some trails are less reliable and subject to landslides, erosion or flooding. These trails don't benefit from heavy traffic in the way that the more established trails do. To find safe passage it can become necessary to wear appropriate attire, such as rain boots or hiking boots and proceed with

caution. In the case of mud, most grip can be found by stepping on rooted plants in the borders. Most humans do not like to slip and fall into the mud or water and can be so determined to prevent this from happening, they would stay away from challenging trails in times of hazardous precipitation.

**"I don't plan.  
Things always  
develop  
unexpectedly  
anyway."**

Erik Wemmers, Essenburgpark



### Risky business

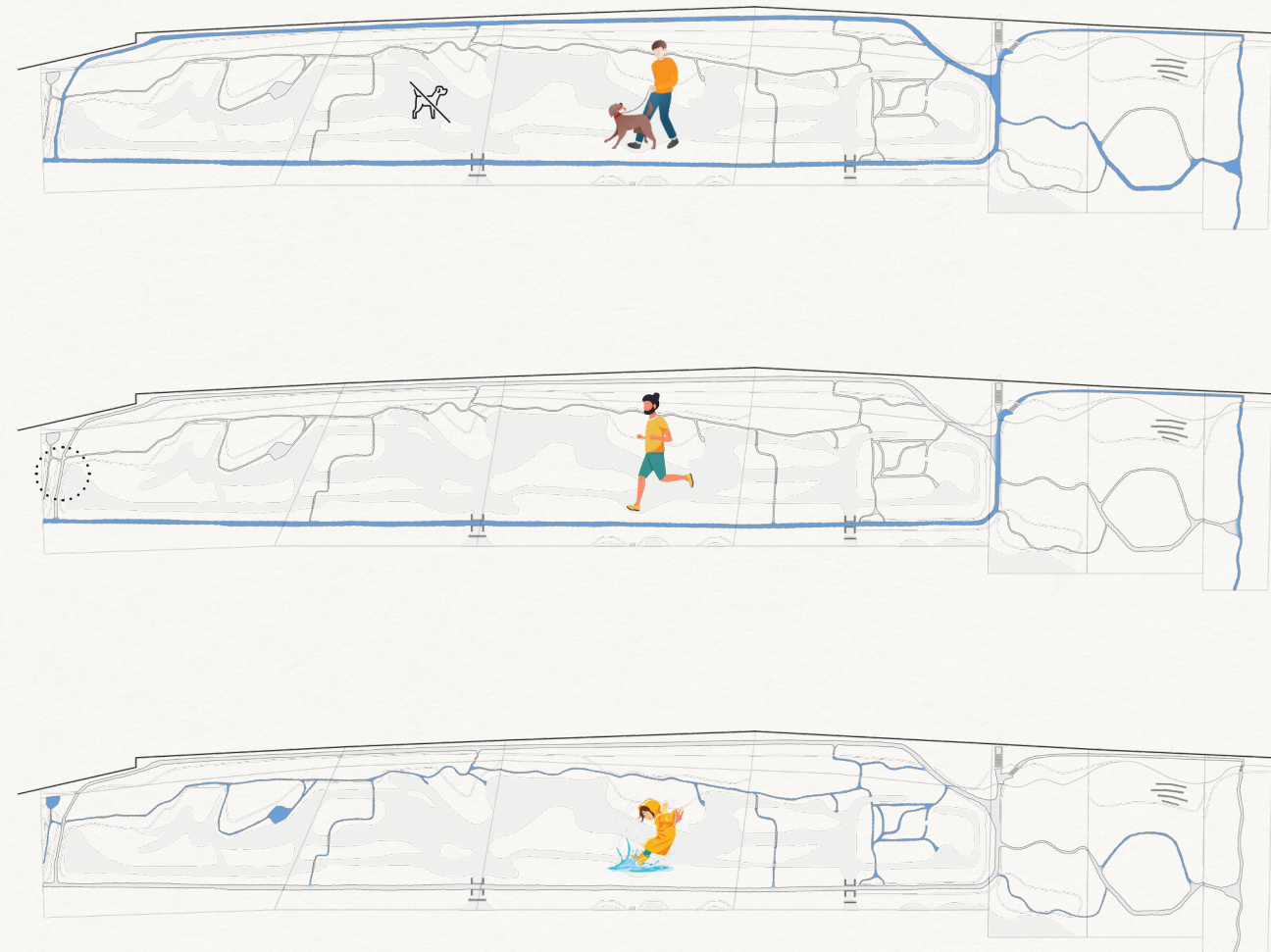
Sometimes logs or stones can provide safe passage, but care should be taken in attempting to use them as they could easily roll over, sink or slip away by the weight of a human being.



## Uses of the trail

Some activities are not suitable for certain trails. People who walk their dogs are not allowed in the inner part of the park. They are therefore found walking several laps in the shape of a sideways figure eight. People who run don't seem to do laps in the park. Supposedly the park is just a segment of a longer track that they are running in the area. They seem to move in both directions along a single

route through the park. Perhaps because at the location of the dotted circle, there almost always is the trouble of mud. Children seem to behave in an opposite manner and enjoy the central part of the park the most. This could be because it carries great potential for a vast amount of imaginable adventures originated in the impermanence of the paths and the perils hidden away in the bushes.



## Icy opportunities

When the surface of the water body of the park becomes frozen, it brings about a new dimension to where and how the human can proceed its way through the park



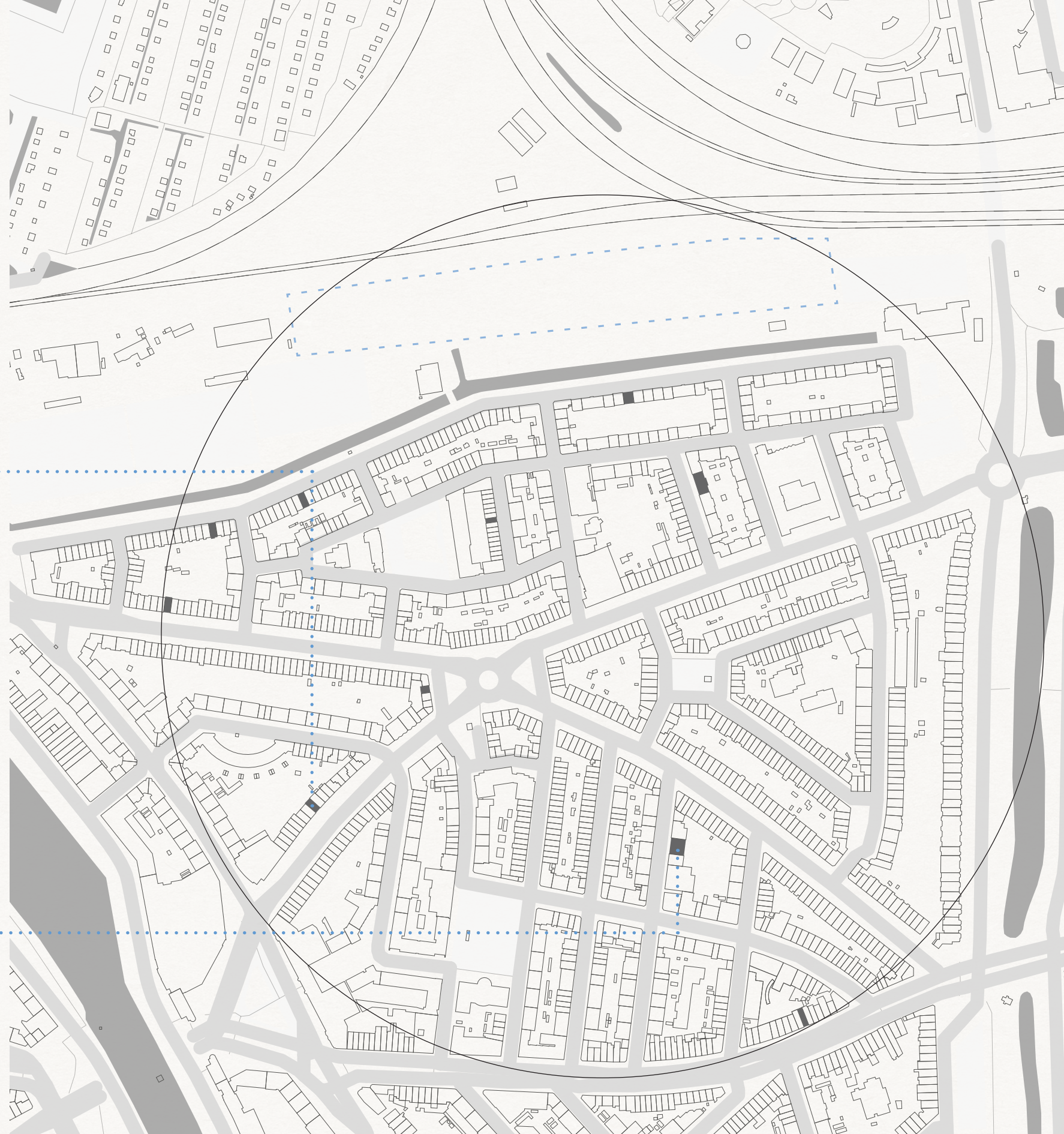
## Dog owners in the area

Dogs are some of the most notable animals in the park, but they always come with a human attachment at the other end of the leash. This map illustrates the ring of influence the park has over the everyday laps that dog owners in the area take. Ten owners of dogs were asked about their addresses. Most of them easily gave away the information on their private habitats as long as it was guaranteed that only their dogs names would be published. Others were more sceptic and refused to mention their house number. For these cases the most central house of the street is highlighted on the map to give an idea of whereabouts they live approximately. Yaya and Oscar had no trouble with celebrity and even had their pictures taken.

*Yaya*



*Oscar*

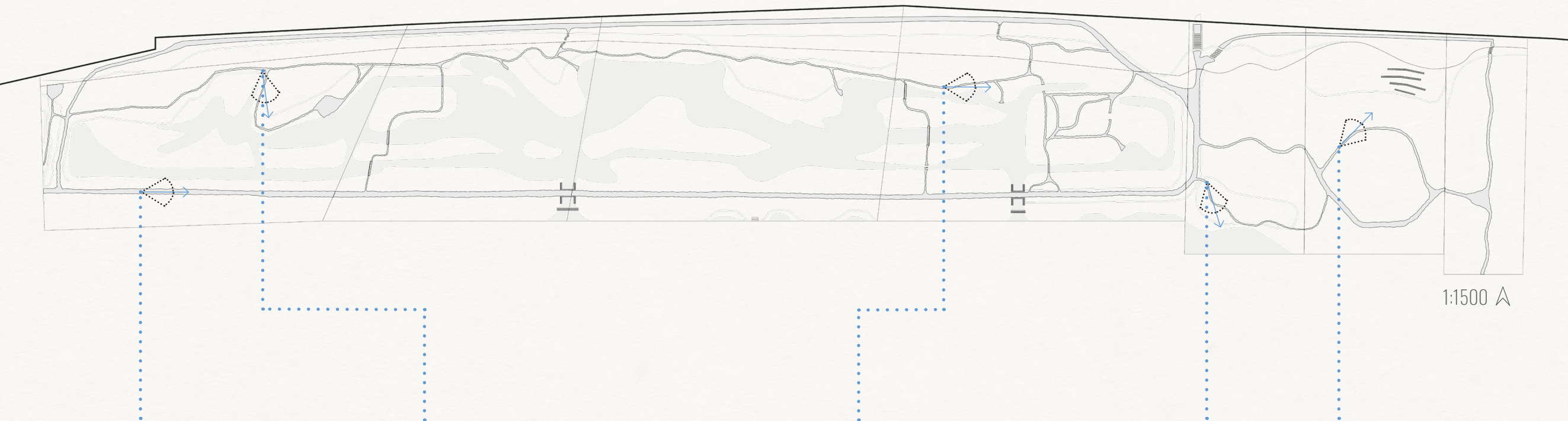




# Succession rate of the trail

Some trails are more established than others. It is therefore possible to speak of a range of permanence, or succession rate. There are two ways humans are able to influence the evolution of a trail along this scale. Humans can construct and maintain the accessibility of a trail. This can be done by one human or a couple and can be carried out with the help of certain man-made tools. The other way that humans can influence trails, is one that only becomes visible over time.

This is when a large amount of individuals travel along the same track over a longer period of time, so that an non-existent trail can come to be. These trails need to remain travelled, or they will eventually overgrow and disappear. To maintain a trail in this manner can become a slippery slope, as a trail can also be too excessively travelled, causing it to erode. Humans are not the only animals capable of executing this process, hence the Dutch term 'elephant path'.



*The formal path*



*The edge path*



*The wild path*

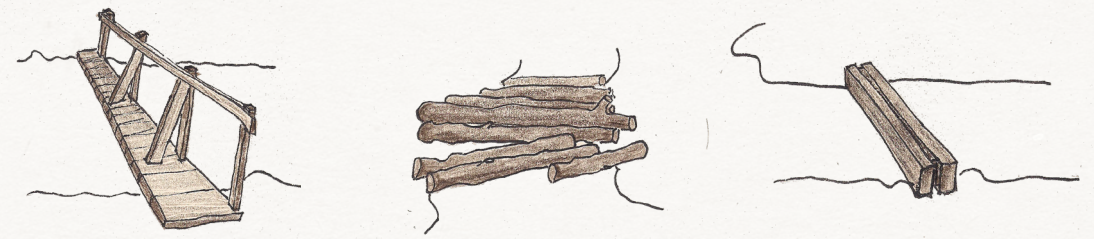


*The invisible path*



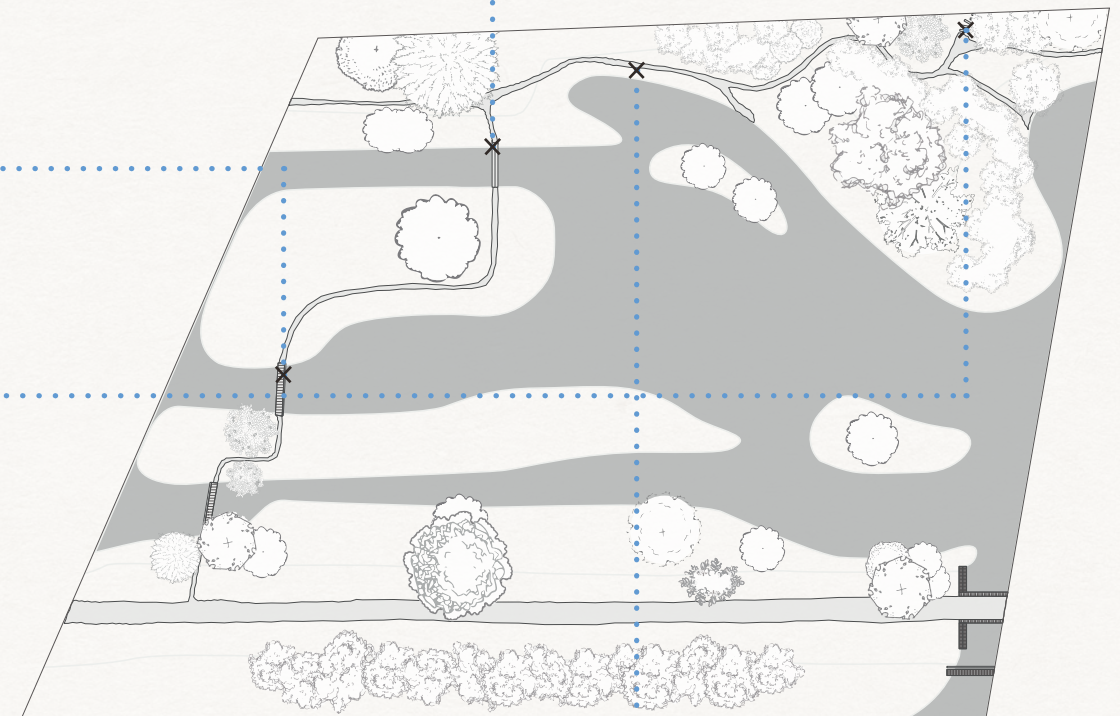
*The path becoming*





### Objects of 'safe' passage

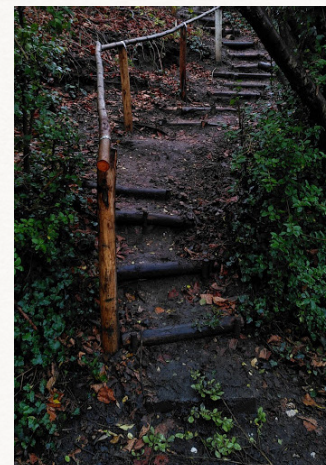
These objects consist out of narrow bridges with simple railings, arrays of consecutively placed logs sunk into the mud and square beams to put your balance to the test.



### Crossings

To overpass the otherwise impassable, humans build objects that can function as a bridge over a hazardous obstacle such as water, mud or a steep hill. However, sometimes these objects are in itself quite hazardous by a lack of secure railings, their

narrowness or by irregularities. To say the least, these objects of 'safe' passage are not very wheelchair accessible, but surely they are effective in filtering out those who are unfit to withstand wild nature, truly pristine in all its perilous dirtiness.

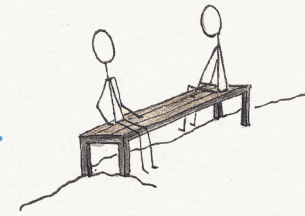




## Places to perch

The human animal has an acquired taste for perching. Some of them like sitting on the grass or on the ground, but most of them prefer a dirt-free backside and desire an object to sit on. There are different types of objects to be found in the park that provide seating opportunities. Each with its own

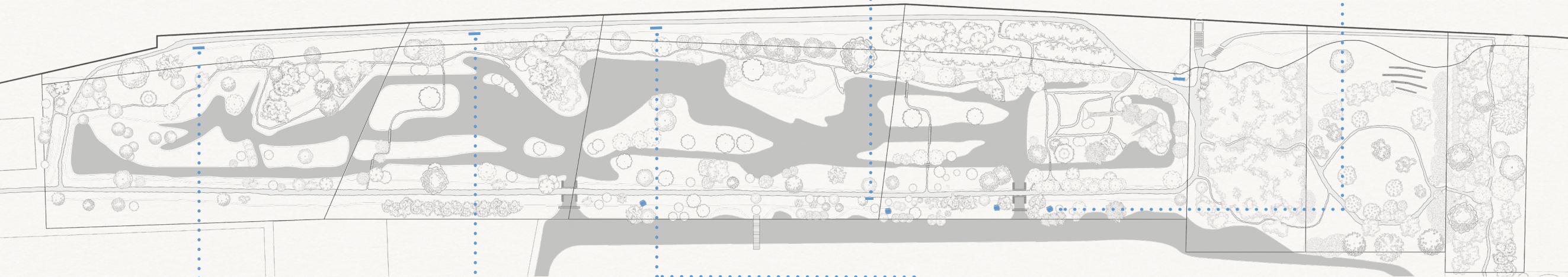
characteristic properties and level of comfort. The solitary human performs different activities while seated. Amongst them are staring into the distance, reading a book or talking on the phone. When there are two or more humans together, they often have all sorts of conversations or eat together while seated.



*The sloped bench for sloped sitting  
(requires arm strength)*



*Two benches connected by a table*



1:1500 A



*The relaxing bench with a view*

### Views in the distance

The benches along the railway embankment can be characterized by different vistas. Of course, the validation of those is a matter of opinion. However, most humans express a preference of the view on the right page over the one on the left page when being asked.



# The Specific

If the majority of humans really cared for other natural existencies, or ecosystems, or an ensured well-being for the next generations of our own kind, wouldn't we be showing more changes in the way we behave towards our environment? This could mean we don't have the power or the right system, the right mode of organising ourselves, in place to make these changes happen. Perhaps it could also mean that this is not valued highly enough amongst us. Or that there is some sort of discrepancy at play between the value we ascribe to the other existencies of nature in our surroundings and the depletion of those for the products we value. How could we get close again and learn to care for the species that need to thrive in order for us to also thrive?

First of all, it is important to note that values are not universal nor can they exist without a subject to perform the activity of giving value. This activity to value something is therefore intrinsically subjective. This can make it difficult to answer the question posed before. How is it possible to make any objective propositions about a process of subjective nature? And is it even possible to understand how others value, how their values are influenced by their surroundings and how all those values accumulate to certain expressions of human or non-human behaviour? Perhaps the only way to be objective about the matter is by not searching for the ultimate truth, but for a provisional truth. One that can be replaced once it becomes redundant. It is than also possible for a multitude of provisional truths to co-exist, by use of conditional statements. If something can be understood a certain way, and this way is correct, than this is a fact. Thus, a researcher, by means of the hypotheses they are inclined to propose, is in itself a research tool. The more transparent a researcher is about how or why they came to certain ideas or provisional truths, the more objective the research becomes. Any researcher is ultimately like a mirror, redirecting a light deriving from many researchers before him or her, in a new angle. Understanding how these mirrors got angled a certain way contributes to the pursuit of objectivity. This mode of speculation can enable to go beyond what science can substantiate.

Humans have an exceptional position within nature, created by our ability to reason. Not only does it allow for us to wonder whether we are still animals or not, it also

makes us able to respond (to have a response-ability<sup>8</sup>) to our instincts, to decide on which things we value and to care for more than merely the survival of our genes<sup>9</sup>. For a less complex life-form than a human, it isn't so difficult to determine what it values and why. Most lifeforms just need whatever keeps them alive and so the availability of these things is what is of value to them (whether they can also experience this sense of value is a different question). Through what influences the things a human values are constructed can be a lot more challenging to grasp. Commercialism is build on the value of identity. We buy the things we would like to associate ourselves with<sup>10</sup>. Through that we buy the respect of others (or so we believe). Another thing that can influence what the human values are things that can bring about joy. Perhaps related to the value of joy, is the value for things that create perspective. This one might become of huge importance in the pursuit of balance with our surroundings. To focus what we value on the things which solicit action<sup>10</sup>, instead of those which are meant to capture our identities in a desperate pursuit of permanence.

It is clear that it is a challenge to get our heads in the same direction if we were to fix the imbalance we now find ourselves in as a species. Some relief however can be found in the fact that humans have evolved to be altruistic beings. We love to help others when we can. The downside? Well, it seems we also have a trait programmed into our genes that makes us suspicious towards others with a different opinion than our own, or others that just don't look like us very much<sup>11</sup>, such as the majority of other species out there. Humans are however capable to overcome their prejudices. This often happens when an individual really connects with what at first seemed foreign to them. This illustrates the following problem. We lack the emphatic capacity to truly grant value to large general concepts such as an ecology, the ocean or the refugees, until we can experience what an individual subject in it might be experiencing. An example of this phenomenon is given by artist Anaïs López who, in her exhibition "the migrant"<sup>12</sup>, depicts the tragedy of what happened to a species of bird through human interference, by telling a story from the viewpoint of a single one of these birds. All of a sudden the events which are depicted are able to evoke an emotion. Lopez is trying here to, in her words,



*Still from the Migrant by Anaïs Lopez*

"capture the image of the city with a personal story and build a bridge between the private and the public sphere." In the process, she brings people to new understandings of things they were before unable to value in this way.

This inability to value things of an incomprehensible scale is what makes it so difficult for humans to 'govern the commons': to act in balance with our surroundings. When there is no sense of place (of locality), no effective social control (no familiarity) and no autonomy, there can be no successful governing of the commons<sup>13</sup>. In other words: only the specific can truly guide us to value our surroundings.

**"I try to capture the image of the city with a personal story and build a bridge between the private and the public sphere."**

Anaïs Lopez

<sup>8</sup> Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Staying With The Trouble*. Duke University Press, 2016

<sup>9</sup> Singer, Peter. *The Expanding Circle*. Princeton Univ. Press, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Massumi, Brian. *99 Theses On The Revaluation Of Value: A Postcapitalist Manifesto*. University Of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Bregman, Rutger. *De Meeste Mensen Deugen*. De Correspondent, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Lopez Anaïs, *The Migrant: A Bird On The Run*. 22 Feb. 2020–3 Jan 2021. Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam.

<sup>13</sup> Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing The Commons*. 1st ed., Cambridge University Press, 2015.



**A\Wakening** is an inquisitive approach to awaken - or to bring life to - the process of creating a living environment for ourselves in a way that allows for other species, that we need to also thrive, to coexist with us. It is a search for how we can reshape our relationship with the natural through a focus on becoming and being part of.

These new paradigm ideas might be unpolished, dream-like and intuition driven, but very involved in the real. As is familiar to visionary thinking, there will often be a gap between what is desirable and what is possible. It is exactly this gap that we need to look for and focus on: to revalue our former decisions and give push to the frame of what is possible.

This booklet was made as a part of a student project in the Explorelab graduation studio at the TU Delft faculty of Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences.

[www.a.wakening.nl](http://www.a.wakening.nl)