

# INTENTIONS FOR THE UNINTENTIONAL

LINDE KEIP

Ik heb ze lief  
de plekken waar het focht  
wanneer je er de bocht  
omgaat

Geef mij maar de achterkant  
van huizen en gebieden  
waar elke groene spriet  
omringd door scheve stenen  
de droge grond uitschiet  
Het onbedoeld gemaakt  
gebied.

Margerite Luitwiler

INTENTIONS FOR THE UNINTENTIONAL  
Urban interstitial spaces as additional type of  
public green space

Wageningen University January 2021  
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## FOREWORD



Growing up in the city of Amsterdam I would often climb over a fence at the back of our garden and start exploring the landscape behind it. I would find the most interesting things there and lived endless adventures. The “wasteland” provided space for these adventures just because here the rules of the built environment did not count.

When I got older my experience with landscape architecture was evolving and I learned about the design of public spaces in the urban context. However, I noticed that it was the unregulated interstitial space that would often catch my attention, more than other urban spaces. Viewing the spontaneous forms and succession of nature within the rigid structure of the built environment still surprises me and brings me joy.

The aesthetics of these places often strikes me because you can feel that the aesthetics emerged by accident, spontaneously. They provide a sight that is different from anything that you would expect to see in a city. Sometimes I can hardly imagine that a man-made design can reach the same quality. Interstitial spaces give me the feeling of freedom of exploring, a feeling I rarely, or very differently, encounter in spaces that have been designed.

As a landscape architect I started asking myself why do the characteristic qualities of the urban interstitial space so often disappear when they come in contact with design? It disappointed me to see how the sites after redevelopment have almost always lost all spontaneity and informality. It seems as if the inherent qualities are never considered to inform the new urban space, instead creating an often duller environment where natural succession is almost always left out and where adventure is hardly triggered. Instead could we use our design competences to create a wider sense of curiosity or enchantment for these everyday spaces? My fascination for urban interstitial spaces in combination with the question above has been the motivation for this thesis. I hope it encourages and inspires other designers to value these spaces and secure a place for urban interstitial spaces as additional type of public green space.





## ABSTRACT

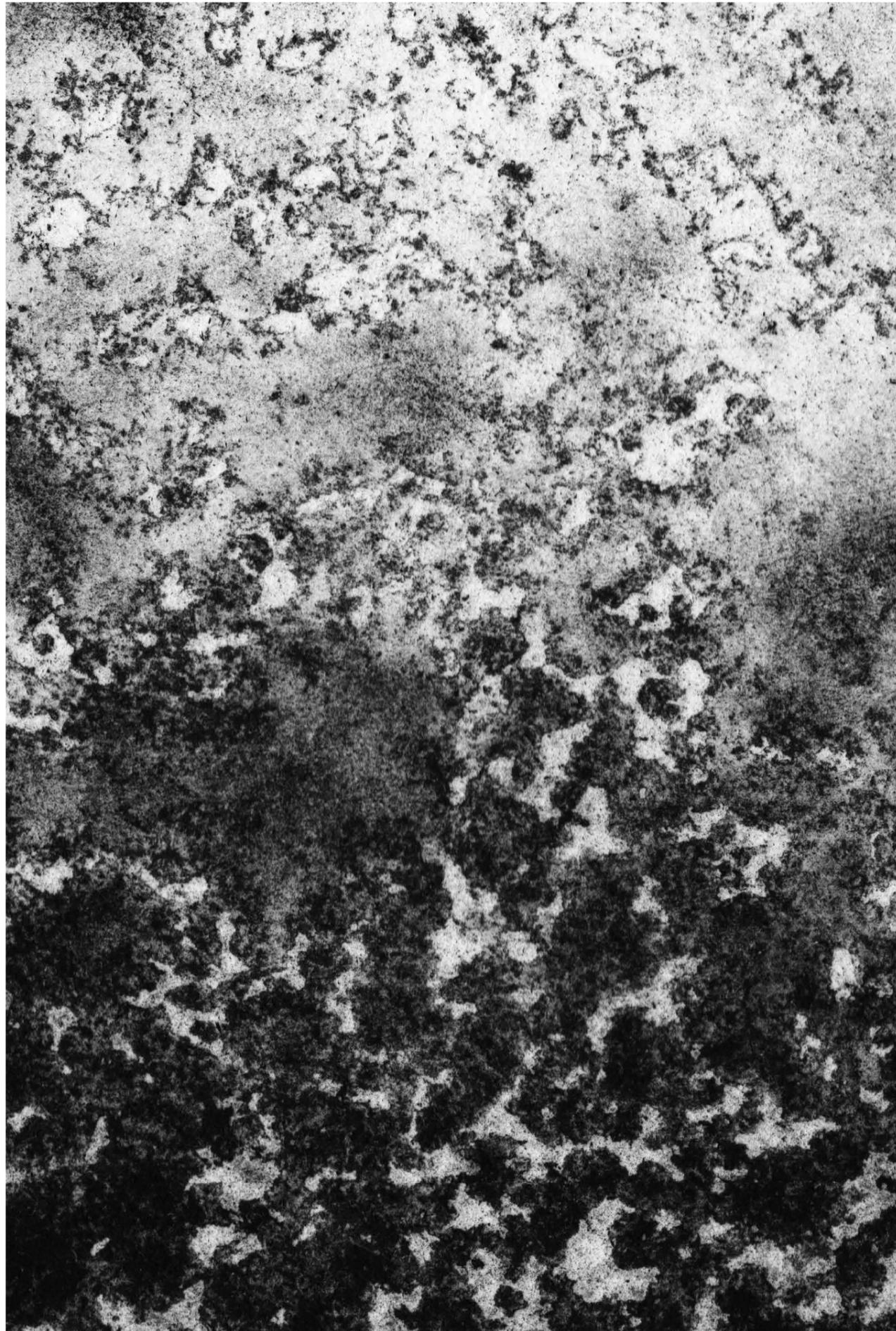
Urban interstitial spaces are part of the development cycle of the city and part of the urban green structure of the city. They are the unregulated interstitial spaces: vacant plots, former industrial area, or unused railway lines. In terms of their physical configuration and the apparent relaxation of rules, the interstitial sites differ from formal green space. They host different uses and users and so help to serve the diverse needs of urban inhabitants. Hence, a strong case can be made for the importance to consider the interstices as additional type of public green space. Unfortunately, current management hinders the publicness of the interstices. The physical access, for instance, may be blocked by fences and piles of dumped trash are not removed. Another problem presents itself when interstitial sites are being redeveloped: the green space is either replaced by buildings, or is formalized, thereby losing the characteristics that could have helped serve the diverse needs of urban users. This raises the question: what design interventions can increase publicness of urban interstitial spaces without formalizing green space? To answer this question, research was conducted in four distinct sites in Leipzig, a regrowing German city with plenty of interstitial space. One specific interstice serves as a case study for in depth-research and subsequent design interventions. The study draws from personal observations and experiences to develop a novel approach to a spatial design in urban interstices, aiming to increase publicness without formalizing the green space.

### **Note to reader:**

Finding a form to present research on these indefinite and uncertain spaces, poses a problem. It seems, paradoxically, that precisely the undefinedness of the interstitial space can be understood to be its defining characteristic.

If I take it as given that the essence of the interstitial space lies in its indeterminacy, then words alone do not suffice in capturing its spirit. Words do well in describing, defining, and analyzing, which is no doubt an important part of my thesis. However, with all respect, words fall short in capturing the essence of something that is essentially undefinable.

In an attempt to approximate a solution to this paradox, I present a parallel story to the written part of my thesis: a selection of images that do that which words alone cannot, and - hopefully - do justice to the indeterminateness of interstitial spaces. With the words on the right pages I present my articulated thoughts, observations and analyses, whereas with the images on the left pages I present parallel associations to my text. Images with which I wish to allow the reader to associate freely.



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# INTRODUCTION

Urban green space is the total amount of green space in a city. Such green spaces are diverse, varying in size, vegetation cover, species richness, environmental quality, facilities, and services (Wolch, Byrne, & Newell, 2014). Within the total urban green space, a distinction can be made between formal urban green space and informal green space. Formal green spaces are the designed and managed spaces like parks and squares, whereas informal green spaces are the unregulated spaces like vacant plots, former industrial area or unused railway lines. The spaces are not designed to have a specific function nor is the vegetation managed, any use of space is informal. When dividing space in formal and informal green space, the dividing line is of course fussy and non-exclusive. There are numerous examples of formal space that is used in an informal manner or, for example, parts of formal parks with a more informal interpretation. The distinction is therefore not binary but better envisioned as a gradient of informality. See fig (number). (Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014)



This thesis focusses mainly on informal urban green space, which will be addressed as urban interstitial spaces. Interstitial spaces are the leftover spaces, not designed to have a specific function nor is the vegetation managed, any use of space is informal. Urban spaces with a history of strong anthropogenic disturbance that is colonized at least partly with spontaneous vegetation (Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014). "Strange places that exist outside the city's effective circuits and productive structures. Mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city." (de Solà-Morales, 1995). They have been described as; 'cracks in the city' (Loukaitou Sideris, 1996), 'le Tiers-Paysage' and 'les délaissés' (Clément, 2004), 'loose space' (Franck & Stevens, 2006), 'ambivalent landscapes' (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007), 'urban wildscapes' and 'urban wastelands,' (Jorgensen & Keenan, 2012), and probably most famously by Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1995) as 'terrain vague'. The term interstice or interstitial space, refers to a state of 'betweenness', between in the sense of; in between the formal space of the urban fabric and temporally in-between assigned functions. The state after the assigned use for a space ends, allowing new uses to replace the programmed ones. Liminal spaces; empty, free and available, characterized by emergence, flux and malleability, still being indeterminate and imprecise.

Formal green space is highly valued and preforms important functions for urban inhabitants

People in the city make use of the urban green spaces for a very wide range of activities, for a large part formal green spaces are vital in fulfilling those needs. Formal urban green spaces are highly valued by urban residents and used on a daily basis for activities concerning social life, health and proximity to nature (Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014). There is a major focus on perceived safety by users, including e.g. members of minorities groups, women and elderly people. Rules exist of how people can behave, and it is made sure that these rules are followed through informal surveillance by other users or formal surveillance managed by the municipality (Madanipour, 2010; Schmidt & Németh, 2010). Generally, users recognize what specific functions are assigned to green spaces, and this influences how they use and value the spaces (Byrne & Sipe, 2010). Cars are on the parking lots; people have lunch at the picnic bench and the dog is on the leash. Usability of the space in the form of benches, paths, lighting, sport facilities and picnic places are highly valued by users. Misuse is forbidden and penalized. Organization and management is covered by the municipality, therefore, traces of trash, dog poop, vandalism and other misuse are generally quickly removed. Furthermore, the capacity of the green space is fit to the expected use, e.g. the paths and water management of the park are able to cope with the amount of rainwater, so people on their way to work will not get muddy feet. All these aspects of formal green space make that they are recognized by urban residents as valuable public green space.

However in recent decades research indicated the pressure on the ability of the formal urban green space system to serve the diverse needs of urban residents. The standard form and imposed behavioral norm make it questionable if formal green space can fulfill the varying needs of urban inhabitants. Shapes in public space are most often generic and easy to reproduce. This results in a homogeneous product, standardized for the average user, with an aesthetic common to western standards, sanitized, orderly and predictable (Schmidt & Németh, 2010). These standardized shapes make that public space becomes increasingly predictable and promote a norm of how to use the space which is insensitive to specific social contexts and needs. Things out of the ordinary preferably get pushed away. Public space in cities is supposed to serve a multitude of uses,

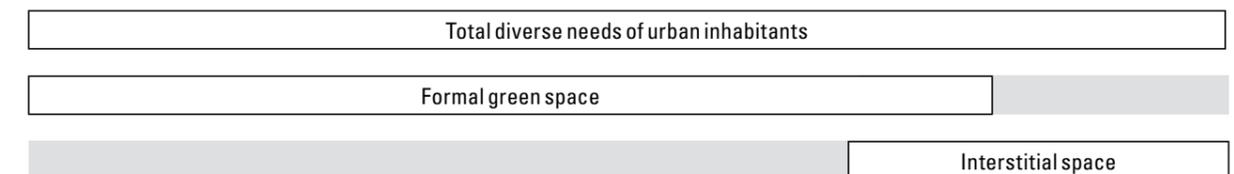


for a multitude of groups but the over-management of public space enforces a norm where more spontaneous or informal activities that are so important to city life do not fit in (Carmona, 2010; Loukaitou Sideris, 1996). The widely employed use restrictions in formal green spaces limit their diversity and recreational potential, and may ultimately fail to satisfy residents' diverse needs (Loukaitou Sideris, 1996; Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014). In this case it's not the goal to define the best public space for not one type of green space is expected to fulfill all the needs of all diverse users (Németh & Schmidt, 2011). But the focus lies on the importance on diversity in green spaces. Formal greenspace together with urban interstitial spaces might come closer to meeting the needs of inhabitants in the dense urban fabric, see fig.

place in the controlled formal environment (Barron & Mariani, 2013; Hofmann, Westermann, Kowarik, & van der Meer, 2012; Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007; Kivell & Hatfield, 2018; Lévesque, 2002).

#### Apparent relaxation of rules

Unlike most other urban public spaces, urban interstices are not prescriptive. This creates the freedom and flexibility they offer to human thought and action. They present welcome opportunities for people to do things that they would not be able to do in any other urban setting. To try out other ways of being, unmediated by the physical, social and cultural demands that adhere to most other urban areas (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007). Consequently these places fulfil a multiplicity



Urban interstices as direction towards solution, Urban researchers have started to study what functions interstitial spaces perform in urban life and how they might be seen as a direction towards a solution (Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014). The following part of this chapter sets out part of the discussion of how urban interstices might perform functions that are not provided by the formal urban green space system to better serve diverse needs of urban residents. It is repeatedly argued by authors that, both from ecological as from social point of view the urban interstices serve interesting purposes in the city. (Anderson & Minor, 2017; Clément, 2004; De Sousa, 2003; Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014; Schmidt & Németh, 2010). Such spaces punctuate the homogenous, staged, controlled public spaces and the everyday, ubiquitous spaces of the contemporary city (Shaw & Hudson, 2009). In this "territory of refuge for diversity" as Gilles Clément describes it, the barren land becomes colonized with pioneer vegetation and activities that cannot find a location elsewhere (Foster, 2014). The interstices hold characteristics that are favorable to increase heterogeneity in public green space which is beneficial for environmental and social development in cities.

of different roles for different people and there are numerous studies that emphasize the cultural richness of ostensibly "empty" spaces (Edensor, 2005; Gandy, 2013; Jorgensen & Keenan, 2012; Shaw & Hudson, 2009).

#### Other experience, allowance of mystery and complexity

Other authors describe how urban interstices can offer a different aesthetic experience. They provide a chance to allow complexity, mystery, and decay in the urban environment and thereby an opportunity for aesthetic encounters that are atypical in urban settings (Foster, 2014; Gandy, 2013; Saito, 1998). The overtaking of human culture by spontaneous nature in a way preserves local histories within their interlocking layers of nature-human interaction (Jorgensen, Dobson, & Heatherington, 2017). Their complexity presents a rich contrast to the sanitized standard of much urban developments, providing a space where people can access a strange slowness away from the pace of the contemporary city (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007; Kamvasinou, 2006). Similarly, Gilles Clément describes how the interstices give a sense of adventure within the well-known standard public space (Clément, 2004).

***"Formal gardens and handsome parks give great joy to the exploring eye and mind, we do not propose to abandon this. We simply propose to extend the system, to carve out new niches, to look for beauty and niches in unaccustomed places."***

(Lynch, 1995)

#### Wilder nature, Human nature relationship

Spontaneous vegetation in the interstices does not conform to any traditional vision of nature. Interstices let city inhabitants encounter a wilder nature with spontaneous growth, variety and a prominent process of succession. It therefore presents opportunities for new types of interaction between humans and nature within the urban context (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007). They provide the opportunity to engage with natural processes and thereby enhance human nature relationship in the city (Thompson, 2002).

In various articles different authors shed light on different advantages of interstitial spaces in the urban fabric. Besides the advantages for urban ecology and ecosystem services, urban interstices can offer room for spontaneous activities and informal uses that would otherwise have trouble finding a



***“Recognizing the values of vacant land not as uninhabited, but rather as terrain with rich possibilities— as land that is already making vital and creative contributions to ecological and social resilience and vibrancy”*** (Foster, 2014).

For these aforementioned reasons it can be interesting to consider interstitial spaces as part of public green space, however, urban interstitial space is perceived ambiguously by urban inhabitants. A re-visioning of interstitial sites as part of the public realm may inspire design and management of public green space. Instead of problematizing such sites as ‘wasted space’ their essential qualities could be used to inform the design and management of green space in the city (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007). But although research indicates that the urban interstitial spaces can play an important role in the life of urban residents. At the same time studies specify problems in reaching urban interstice’s full potential as public green space and how people generally prefer the interstices to be removed (Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014).

Urban interstices are perceived negatively by part of urban residents; people regard them as messy, neglected even dangerous and therefor in need of development (Barron & Mariani, 2013). They represent socio-economic abandonment and dereliction and run contrary to the dominant desired image of the city. Often they are not even absorbed into visual or experiential memories of urban landscapes by residents (Foster, 2014). Most studies show that urban interstices are perceived uninviting, the majority of residents indicate to prefer the interstitial spaces to be removed (Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014; Shaw & Hudson, 2009).

#### Image

The image of the vacant land opposes the general desired image of a prosperous city. The interstices give the impression of neglect by local authorities (manifested in poor maintenance) and by local residents (manifested in trash and vandalism). Public space that is not cared for by anyone gives residents the feeling of being subordinate or less important citizens than in prime areas of the city. (Madanipour, 2004). The traces of misuse represent unacceptable socio-economic deterioration and urban inhabitants prefer not to be associated with this image in their direct living environment.

#### Provoking misuse

The image of a worthless piece of barren land provokes misuse like parking or dumping trash, subsequently the traces of this use invite other people to do equally. In this way the negative behavior is maintained (Lévesque, 2002).

#### Safety

Research on the perceived safety of urban interstices shows that unmanicured areas within cities may evoke negative experiences such as fear or an uncomfortable feeling (Doick, Sellers, Castan-Broto, & Silverthorne, 2009). While some users indicate to enjoy the freedom that a natural environment

offers, the very qualities that make for this freedom can also be perceived as dangerous, threatening, or unsettling as they imply a lack of control (Thompson, 2002). They are often perceived as lawless, disordered places. (Jorgensen, Hitchmough, & Calvert, 2002; Thompson et al., 2004).

The way in which interstitial sites are spatially managed creates this ambiguous perception. This negative perception, among other things, negatively affects the willingness of people to view the sites as public space. It apparently does not give people the stimulus to view the sites as public space. The current way of dealing with interstitial spaces therefor hinders the publicness of the site and thereby the possibility for interstitial spaces to function as additional type of public green space. The concept of publicness is a complex concept and important in this thesis, it will be further explained in the conceptual approach.

#### Research question

What design interventions can increase publicness of urban interstitial spaces without formalizing green space?

#### Objective

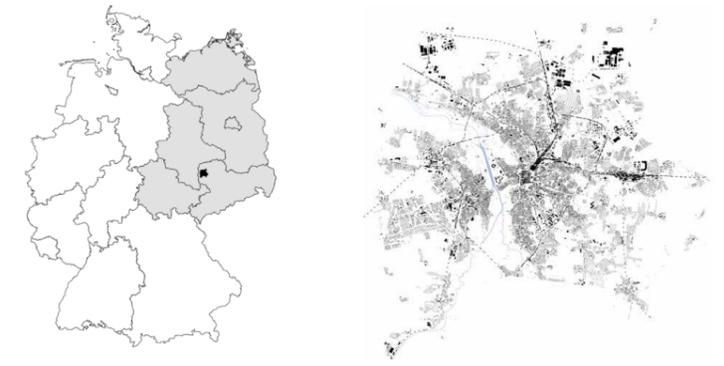
***“A whole repertoire of spaces can be reclaimed as part of the public realm by mobilizing the forces of design.”***

(Loukaitou Sideris, 1996)

In professional practice urban designers are often primarily expected to create first-rate public space. Like Loukaitou-Sideris addresses; The skills of urban designers continue to be employed for the creation of places of ‘buzz’ and high culture (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2012). But what if we would employ our competencies as landscape architects to research how the essential qualities of wasteland could be used to inform design and management of these sites in the city? For designers it is interesting to explore what qualities make for such spaces of freedom and escape and subsequently how their qualities can be preserved in designed environments, considering what remains relevant and valuable (Kamvasinou, 2006, 2011; Loukaitou Sideris, 1996; Lynch, 1995; Thompson, 2002). The intrinsic worth of urban interstices as inspiration for an additional type of urban green space. Design to communicate the value of interstitial spaces, rechanneling of aesthetic expectations, rather than problematizing such sites as ‘Wasted Space’ (Foster, 2014; Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007). This thesis looks for alternatives to the tabula rasa approach to developing urban interstitial spaces. Like Foster writes: Not to reconfigure urban interstices completely, but rather to facilitate the conditions for it to thrive, communicate its value as a critical dimension of urban sustainability, and help illuminate a different aesthetic (Foster, 2014).

***“Unpretentious, leftover spaces offer the perfect status quo to inspire designers.”*** Adriaan Geuze in (Ivers, 2018)

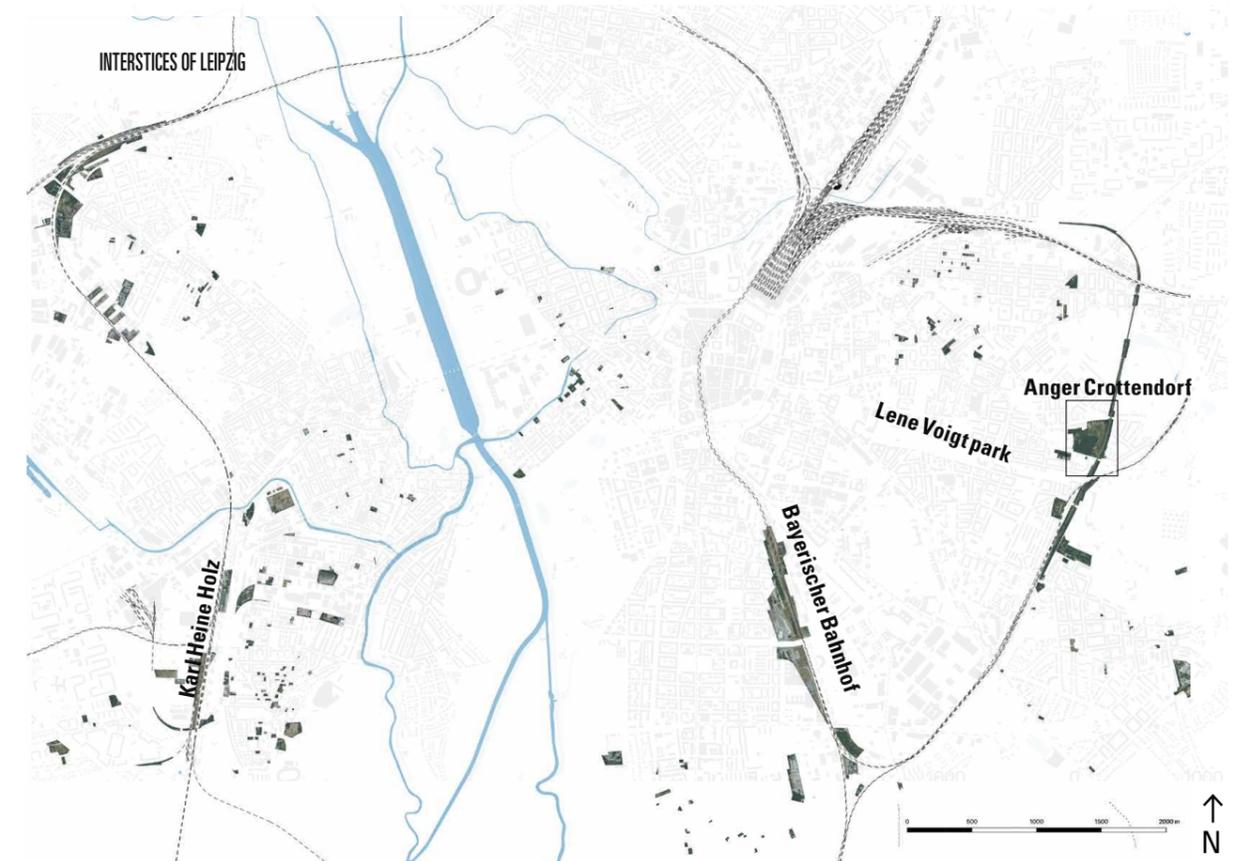
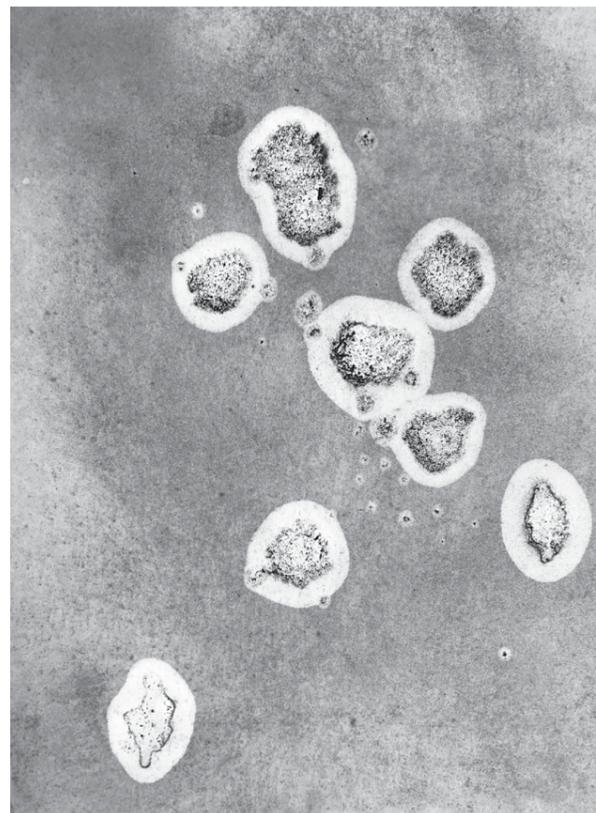
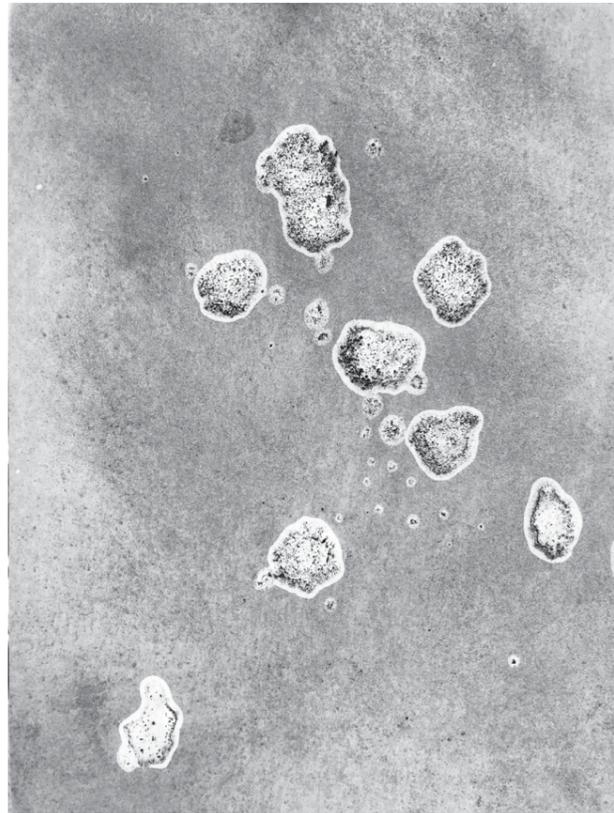
## 1.2 LEIPZIG THE REGROWING CITY



Location for the research is the city of Leipzig, in Saxony Germany. The city has been one of the extreme examples of shrinking cities in Europe at the end of the last century but times have changed and the population of Leipzig has been regrowing in the last decade. The urban morphology of Leipzig can quite clearly be related to certain time periods in the history of the city.

**Gründerzeit** is an economically very prosperous period in the history of Germany from the second half of the 19th century till around the beginning of the 20th century. The period knows important industrial developments, large scale construction of train infrastructure and a recognizable architectural style. Around that time in Leipzig large city expansions emerged around the medieval city center. Up till now the Gründerzeit neighborhoods determine the majority of the urban morphology. The large recognizable 5 story high building blocks with wide avenues are key characteristics, together with the old train station and industrial terrains within the city. The **DDR** period brought other ideas on style and architecture

and a lack of interest in sustaining the older inner city. Instead of renovating the building blocks in the center the government invested in the construction of new neighborhoods at the edge of the city, the so called "plattenbau", leaving the historic inner city in a bad state. After '**die Wende**' there were far-reaching economic and population changes in a short time in the region of Leipzig. Around 16.000 inhabitants headed westward after unification and around 80% of the industrial sector concerning brown coal and chemical production closed down (Oswalt, 2005, p. 636). This resulted in a large amount of vacant land, buildings and abandoned industrial areas. In this period the national funding 'Stadumbau Ost' was initiated. The funding was meant to subsidize the demolition of the big amount of vacant buildings in Eastern Germany, which resulted in the open gaps within the typical 1900'th building blocks and the occurring greenspace (Banzhaf, Arndt, & Ladiges, 2018). Reaching the most extreme vacancy rate around the beginning of the 21st century.



Map 1: Interstitial spaces in Leipzig and location of the four research sites. Data on interstices, received from Prof. Dr D. Haase, Humboldt Universität Berlin

Later Leipzig could benefit from its function as regional center and the city is 'regrowing' since the **last decade**. This post-shrinkage regrowth has become a prominent pathway of other European cities (Haase, Wolff, & Rink, 2018). There is a crucial, qualitative distinction between regrowing cities and continuously growing cities: Regrowth follows a longer phase of shrinkage and thus builds on the legacies of shrinkage, i.e., housing vacancies, abandoned land, large-scale brownfield sites, tight (public) budgets, low interest in investment, etc. At the same time, the "positive legacies" of shrinkage, e.g., more green and open spaces, less density through abandonment and demolition, offer many generous opportunities for a more sustainable shaping of the new growth (Haase et al., 2018, p. 199). The fact that Leipzig is a regrowing city with a large repertoire of interstitial space makes it an interesting location for this research.

**Interstices of Leipzig.** There are many different types of interstitial spaces in Leipzig, also in the way urban inhabitants have started to make use of them. Some sites have been barren for 30 years, some are redeveloped, some fulfill a temporal function, some are treated with care, others have developed into carparks or trash dumps. Based on the urban morphology and emergence of the sites it is possible to make a general distinction between two types. There are the smaller interstices that exist in the within 19th century building blocks and the bigger interstitial sites that have an industrial or transport history. The relatively bigger interstitial spaces connected to the railway infrastructure have shown to be used in a more diverse way by urban inhabitants than the smaller interstices in the building blocks. Since this research focusses on human behavior on urban interstitial spaces, these relatively bigger interstices are selected as research sites in Leipzig.



### 1.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

#### Problemstatement

Urban interstitial spaces are part of the development cycle of the city and thereby part of the urban green structure of the city. In the physical configuration and the apparent relaxation of rules the interstitial sites differ from the formal green space. Research shows that urban inhabitants make use of the interstitial spaces for different activities than the formal green spaces (Hofmann et al., 2012; Kivell & Hatfield, 2018; Lévesque, 2002). Together with the formal green space they thereby help to serve the diverse needs of urban inhabitants (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007; Rupprecht & Byrne, 2014). In turn this makes it interesting to consider the interstices as public green space. However, when you consider interstitial spaces as public space, two problems occur. On the one hand the way in which the interstices are currently managed hinders the publicness of the sites, e.g. in some cases fences block the physical access and dumped trash is not removed. On the other hand, examples of interstitial spaces that are redeveloped show formalization of the green space, thereby losing the informal quality that hosted the diverse activity.

#### Objective and reseach design

The objective is to develop design interventions to increase publicness of urban interstitial spaces without formalizing the green space.

To reach this objective the research is dividend in two parts, **the first part is environment behavior research** and contains two sub research questions. In this part 4 sites in Leipzig are selected as research locations. The sites are or have a history of being an interstitial site. They are comparable in size and morphology but differ from each other in level of formality. The first srq provides knowledge on what design interventions facilitate publicness in formal green spaces. The second srq provides knowledge on how people behave in interstitial spaces and what traces their behavior makes. the results of these two sub research questions are combined in the scales of informality. **The second part** of the research is an **autoethnographical description** of my experiences, both informed by the physical appearance as by social encounters, on one specific interstitial site in Leipzig. The result is a deeper understanding of the qualities and constraint of the interstice when considering it as additional type of public green space. Alongside the two research parts is a **parallel image story** to the written part of the research. A selection of images that are informed by the study of interstitial spaces. In turn the associative images approximate to do justice to the indeterminateness of interstitial spaces, something that is paradoxically hard to reach in words alone. The results of the two research parts and the parallel image associations inform the design strategy and subsequent design for one specific interstitial site in Leipzig.

#### Research questions

- MRQ: What design interventions can increase publicness of urban interstitial spaces without formalizing green space?
- SRQ1: What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?
- SRQ2: What are traces of human activity in interstitial spaces?
- SRQ3: What are, according to my perception, the qualities and constraints of one specific interstitial site when considering it as additional type of public green space?

#### Worldview and Research for design

This research fits within the pragmatist worldview, which arises out of actions, real-world situations and consequences. In this worldview the research is rather focused on 'problem solving' and therefore multiple approaches for collecting and analyzing data can be used to understand the problem. It is agreed that a research always occurs in social, historical, political and other contexts (Creswell, 2014). The two parts of the research are research for design, the outcomes of the research informs the design process (Lenzholzer, Duchhart, & van den Brink, 2017).

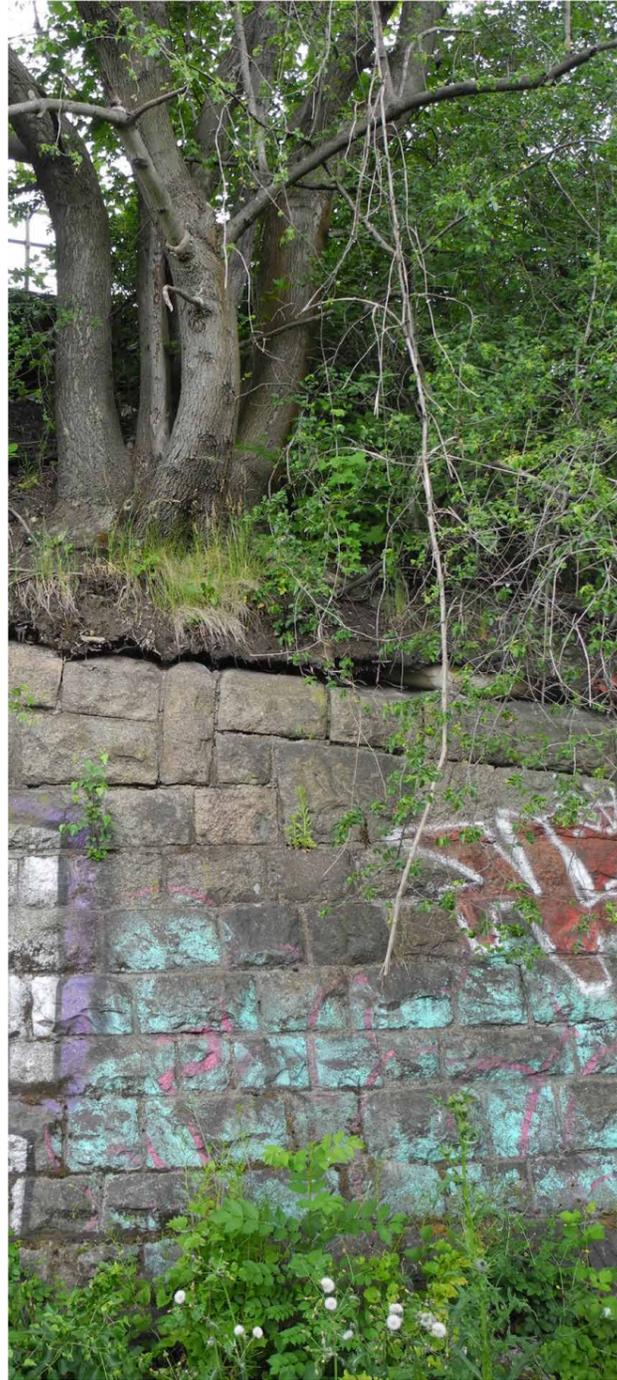
#### Methods

##### Environment behavior research

Traces, observations and interviews  
John Zeisel's method for environment behavior research contains three different stages to gain knowledge on the way spatial characteristics influence people's behavior. The first one is systematically looking at physical surroundings to find reflections of previous activity. The so-called traces may have been unconsciously left behind or conscious changes people have made in their surroundings. Observations of activity is a systematical observation of human behavior in relation to the biophysical layout of the sites. Noting; age, gender, type and duration of activity and relation to the physical appearance of the site. The third stage, informal interviews with users of the green space, aims to gain more in depth information on how people perceive the selected sites and the reasons why they are using, or not using, the space (Zeisel, 1984).

##### Autoetnography

Continuous/stop motion walk – autoethographical description of experiences on site  
Seamon (2000) defines the first-person phenomenological method, in which the researcher becomes closely involved with the phenomenon he or she is studying. In order to get a deeper understanding of the specific characteristics and qualities of one specific interstitial site, I use my own personal experience of the interstice as a basis for examining the specific qualities and constraints. In this research my experiences are both informed by the physical context and social encounters on the site. Through a continuous stop motion walk, I document my experiences of the physical context systematically (Schultz & van Etteger, 2016). Ethnographical notes of social encounters I had on the site document the social component of the environment.



**What design interventions can increase publicness of urban interstitial spaces without formalizing green space?**

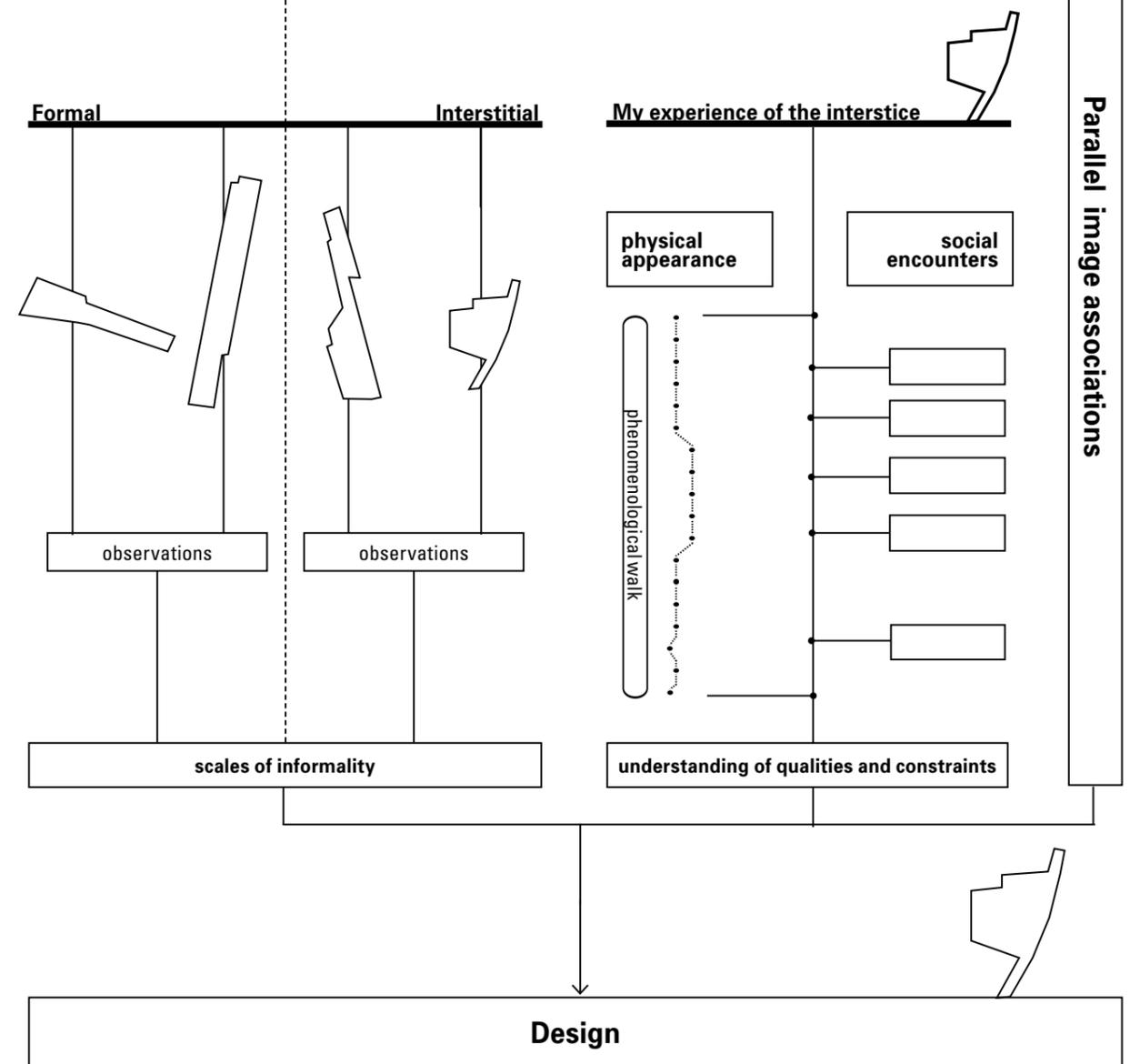
part 1: Environment behavior research

What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?

What are traces of human activity in interstitial spaces?

part 2: Autoethnography

What are, according to my perception, the qualities and constraints of one specific interstitial site when considering it as additional type of public green space?





# CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

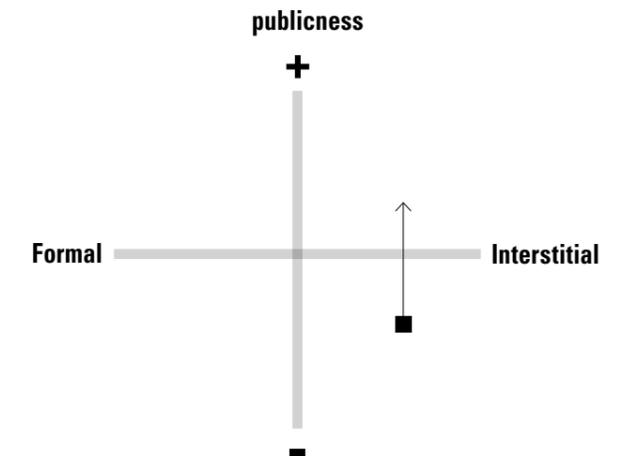
Since the aim of this thesis is to scrutinize what design interventions may increase the publicness of interstitial spaces, a crucial step is to unpack the concept of publicness. The following part briefly outlines the current, complex, theoretical discussion on publicness in public spaces. It then views the concept of publicness in relation to the aforementioned distinct ideas of formal green space and urban interstitial space. Ultimately, from the wide theory on publicness the notions of accessibility and inclusiveness are distilled as concepts to benchmark the publicness of interstices against.

### Publicness:

The word public in public space, in the most practical sense, does not stir much confusion: key development actors – politicians, developers and designers - use it on a daily basis. In a mono-dimensional way, loosely based on considerations of ownership, the word is seemingly used as synonymous to ‘not private’. On the other hand, beyond the simple public/private dichotomy, a wide group of researchers and theorists, coming from many different academic disciplines, are coming up with many different profound models and theorized definitions of publicness. Each discipline ‘comes-to’ public space differently, viewing it through a different lens and with particular interests and concerns to the fore (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010). All in all, this renders the conceptual meaning of the word public both rich and highly complex, and moves it beyond simple considerations of ownership:

*Much of the public space literature and research holds that if people think it is a public place, it is a public place, regardless of whether public is understood in terms of rights, physical setting, ownership, etc. In this view, ‘publicness’ is in the eye of the beholder, requiring us to always ask ‘to whom’ a place might be more (or less) public. (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010)*

What is public for one person might not be public the other. For this simple reason, many authors emphasise that there are ‘multiple publics’. As a consequence, without trying to confuse anyone, the publicness of any place must thus necessarily be assessed in terms of it being ‘more public for more publics’. Or, in simpler terms, the definition of ‘public’ is redefined in different situations (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010).



### Publicness in relation to formal green space

In good design of public spaces there is an apparent focus on accessibility, both physical and social, safety, social inclusion, usability and maintenance (Madanipour, 2003). Subsequently, the ‘success’ of formal green spaces is often measured by the number of visitors and the diversity of visitors and activities. Thus aiming for vibrant public space. Similarly, Franck and Paxson (1989) claim that “the greater diversity of people and activities allowed and manifested in a space, the greater its publicness.” The goal is to function for as many people as possible and with a relatively wide range of diversity. Although, this might work well as evaluation for publicness in formal green spaces, this assumption does not seem to take into account those spaces that provide opportunities for quiet respite, contemplation or similar essentially human behaviors (Németh & Schmidt, 2011).

### Publicness in relation to Interstitial space,

So, what about publicness in relation to urban interstices? First of all, and unfortunately, not much extensive research has gone into publicness specifically related to interstitial spaces. Secondly, there seems a consensus that publicness in relation to interstitial space must not mean vibrant with a maximum number of visitors, although even this might depend on the situation and who you are asking.

From my interpretation publicness in relation to interstitial space is about perception of publicness, like Varna & Tiesdell (2010) have explained “...if people think it is public space, it is public space”. So, publicness in the sense of understanding that the interstice is a type of public green space, not seeing it as barren land awaiting further development but valuing



it as green space in the city. It does therefore not mean that interstitial spaces should have higher visitor numbers or be accessible to all existing user groups, including cappuccino mothers with baby carriages and grandparents with rollators, but create a sense of willingness of urban inhabitants to accept or see interstitial spaces as public space.

It is clear that no public space can fulfil the needs of everybody, and as noted earlier, publicly accessible spaces that might appear more public to some might feel less public to others (Langstraat & Van Melik, 2013). Hence this thesis looks into interstitial space as addition to formal green spaces. So, not trying to create a type of green space that is public for everyone but increasing the diversity of public green spaces and thus the inclusivity of the entire green structure of the city.

#### Dimensions of publicness

In order to research the publicness of formal and interstitial green spaces tangible ideas to operationalize the concept of publicness are needed. Different authors present publicness as a multi-dimensional concept, each of them identifying and discussing, overlapping and additional dimensions of publicness (Langstraat & Van Melik, 2013; Varna & Tiesdell, 2010). To make this thesis feasible I needed to make choices as to which dimensions are most applicable when researching publicness of urban interstices. In different articles the authors developed a model to assess publicness. Between the models the dimensions have a high degree of commonality. Varna & Tiesdell (2010) motivate the dimensions: ownership; control; civility; physical configuration; and animation. Similarly Langstraat & van Melik (2013) distill the following dimensions: ownership, management, accessibility and inclusivity.

**Ownership – ownership**

**Management – control**

**Accessibility - physical configuration**

**Inclusivity – animation (and civility)**

For this research the dimensions accessibility and inclusiveness are selected to determine publicness. To begin with, Ownership and management are without a doubt important dimensions, but in the case of designing for interstitial spaces, they are slightly harder to work with. Interstitial spaces can be owned (and not managed), by other parties than the municipality which then directly closes down many directions for solutions. What kind of ownership constructions are possible and workable, might be interesting for a follow-up research, but is in this more design related thesis less relevant. A second argument is that, like Németh & Schmidt (2011) indicate, the ownership and management axes assess a slightly different part of publicness, namely the potential for publicness, while the other dimensions measure how a space is used and perceived, which can more accurately determine actual publicness.

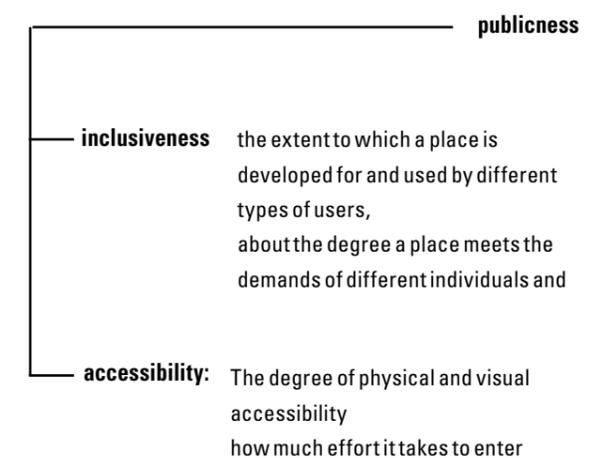
#### Accessibility and inclusiveness

Accessibility and inclusiveness

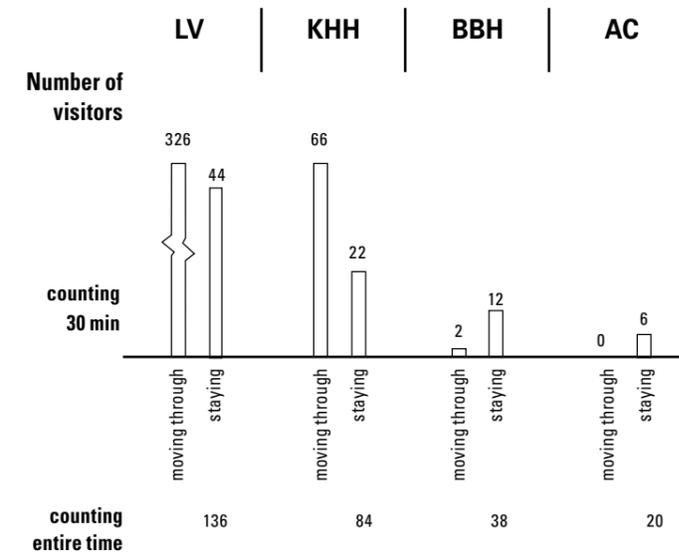
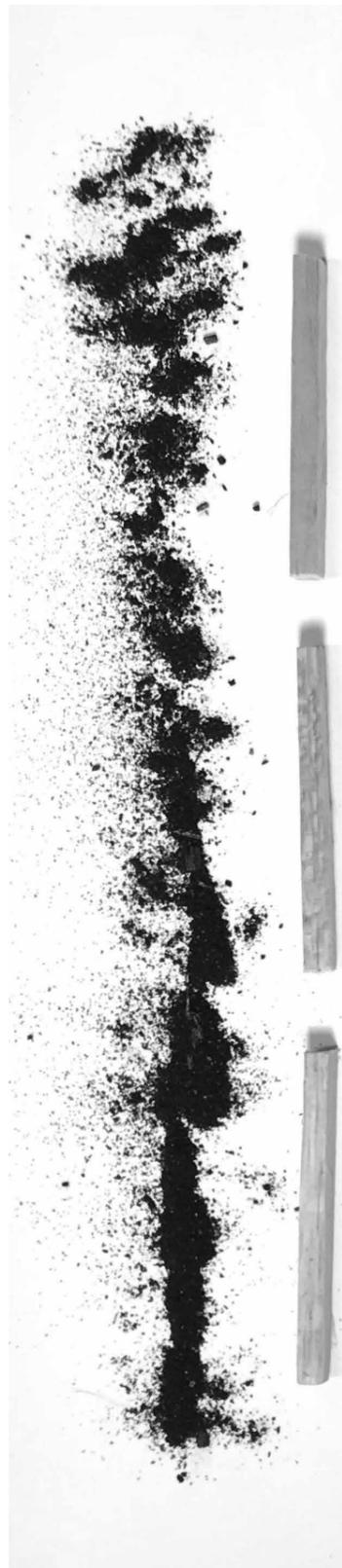
Accessibility affects whether the public can enter the place and how much effort it takes to do so. The degree of physical and visual accessibility.

Inclusiveness : the extent to which a place is developed for and used by different types of users, about the degree a place meets the demands of different individuals and groups. It relates to what Varna and Tiesdell (2010) have called 'animation': meeting human needs in public space and whether it is actively used by different individuals and groups.

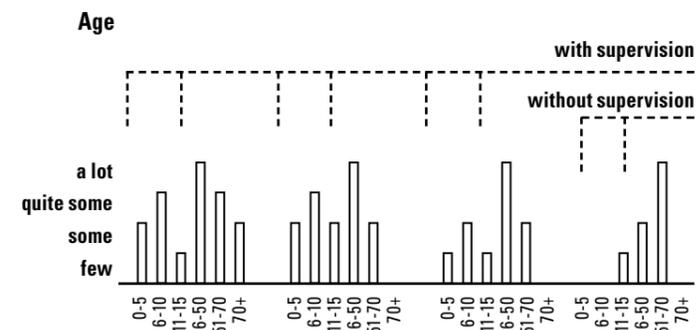
In practice, one might look at factors such as seating and lighting elements, cultivation of a positive and welcoming ambience, a key quality here is that the place appears to be cared-for (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010).



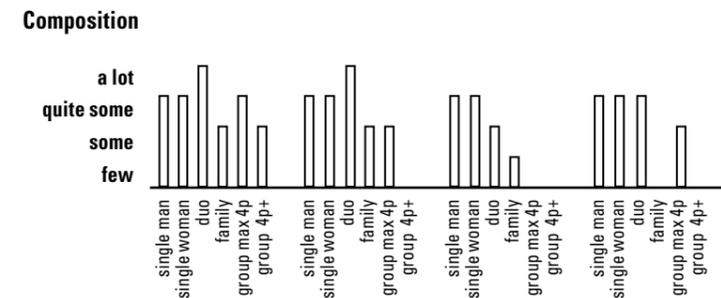
## DIAGNOSING PUBLICNESS



**Table 1:** Number of visitors after 30 minutes of observation, difference in people staying or moving through. Due to the size of the research sites it was impossible to observe the entire site during the complete time of the visit. For the counting I have chosen one location on each site with a maximum overview, visitor numbers can therefore only be interpreted as an approximate indication. The value counting entire time is the total amount of visitors during the entire observation time, excluding the people only moving through, this number is used for the data in table 2 and 3.



**Table 2:** This scheme is a result of noting the estimated age of the users during the entire time of my stay. It concerns only the users that are staying on the site, excluding the ones that are only moving through. \*Because the difference in amount of visitors I have chosen to value the composition compared to the total amount of visitors on each specific site.



**Table 3:** This scheme is a result of noting the visitor composition of the users during the entire time of my stay. It concerns only the users that are staying on the site, excluding the ones that are only moving through. \*Because the difference in amount of visitors I have chosen to value site the composition compared to the total amount of visitors on each specific site.

This thesis hypothesizes that the urban interstitial spaces are an addition to formal green spaces in serving the diverse needs of urban inhabitants but that the current way of managing the interstices hinders their publicness. To be able to confirm or disconfirm this hypothesis I observed the different types of visitors and the type of activities on four different research locations. The sites differ from each other in level of formality. Noting the number of visitors, their age, gender, group composition and activities. The observations of the different sites has been done on different weekdays in June between 10 am and 3 pm. All days were predominantly sunny and temperatures ranged between 23 and 26 degrees Celsius.

**Number of visitors, table 1:** It is clear that there are substantially more visitors in the more formal green spaces. In the counting I have made a distinction between people who stay in the green space and people who are only moving through. LV and KHH contain paved pedestrian and bicycle paths that are connected to the surrounding urban infrastructure, these green spaces are therefore part of people's daily routes through the city. This is not the case in BBH and AC, these do not have paved paths and seem to function as a destination rather than a route to get from one place to another.

**Age, table 2:** LV has the widest range of age groups whereas AC has the smallest range. Most obvious is the absence of elderly people in AC. Young children are present on all sites but only in AC they visit without parental supervision. No parents with their children have visited AC during the time of observation.

**Group composition, table 3:** All sites have comparable ratio of male and female users. LV has the widest range of group composition and is relatively often visited by bigger groups of friends. AC is not visited by families. No bigger groups of friends visit the more informal greenspaces.

**Activities, table 4,** see next page: There are overlapping activities but the majority of activities is own to either the more formal or informal green spaces.





## PART1: ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIOR RESEARCH

**The conclusion of the previous chapter gives rise to two questions. On the one hand what facilitates publicness in formal green spaces? And on the other, what behavior takes place in interstitial spaces and how does that influence the spatial forms? This chapter looks into those sub research questions through environment behavior research. In the aforementioned four sites in Leipzig, that range from a formal park to a completely interstitial space, human behavior is observed in relation to the spatial context, see appendix part 1. Ultimately the 'scales of informality', provide a form to combine the results of the two questions, see next page for scheme.**

The previous chapter stated that: There are less visitors and less diverse user groups in the interstitial spaces as compared to the formal green spaces, which implies a lower level of publicness. However, very importantly, it also stated that the activities and people that appeared in the interstices did not occur in formal green space. Thereby proving that the interstices indeed form an addition to formal green space for urban inhabitants. This statement in turn results in two sub research questions:

### **What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?**

Observing how people behave in formal public space, what interventions facilitate accessibility and inclusiveness, makes it possible to learn from practical examples what works (and does not work) in facilitating publicness.

### **What are traces of human activity in interstitial spaces?**

To lay a foundation, whereupon the inspiration for the design interventions can be drawn, it is important to learn what people actually do on the interstitial sites and how spatial characteristics provide for these activities.

### **Categories**

To in order to be more specific in the research, the observations are specified in different categories: edges and entrances, routing, program and activities, alterations to the site and leftovers.

**Edges and entrances:** This category concerns the meeting edge, the first and often only thing people perceive of the site. People passing by do not necessarily have to go in but

the edge of the green space will influence their perception of the space and thereby influence their behavior.

**Routing:** The way people move through. Once on the site, what directions do people choose and what spatial characteristics make them change that direction?

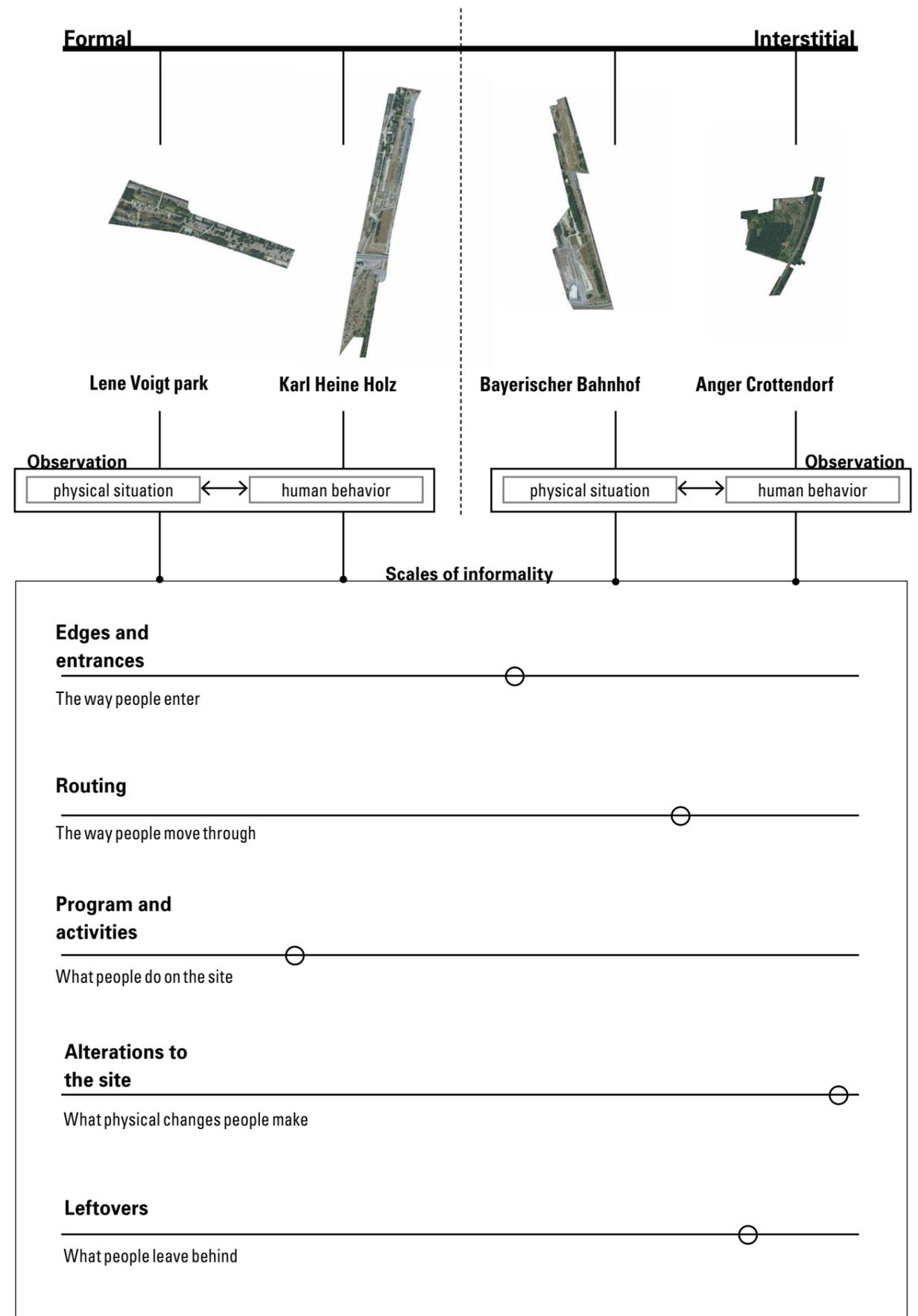
**Program and activities:** What do people do on the site, where and why there? In what way do the spatial characteristics influence the activities on the green spaces?

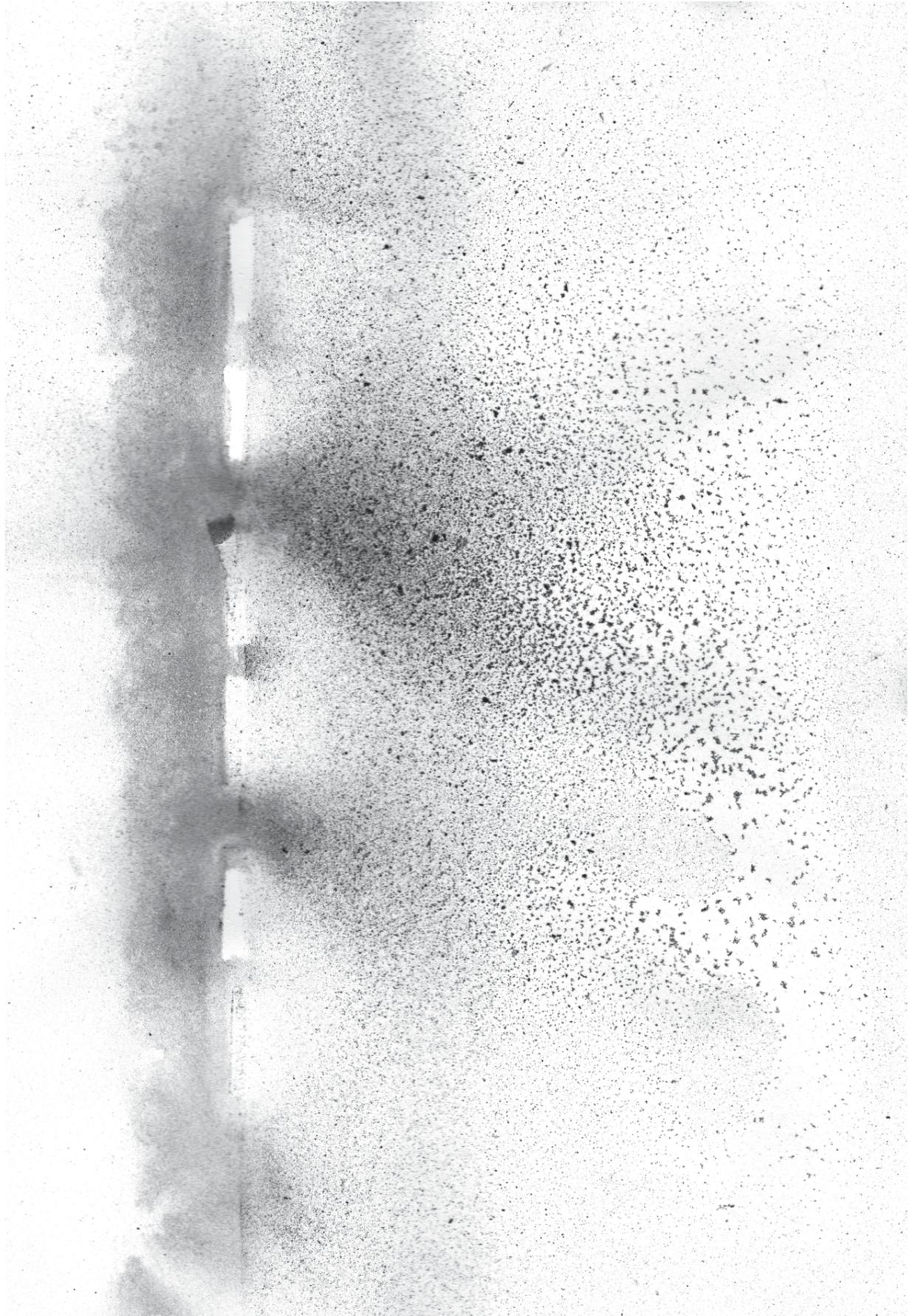
**Alterations to the site:** Users of urban green spaces alter the space for different purposes. What triggers the alterations, what forms do they have and till what level are people allowed to alter the space?

**Leftovers:** When people make use of space they leave trash behind, sometimes they even use the space solely for dumping trash. Where do people leave trash and what spatial appearance is a trigger to do so?

### **Scales of informality**

After we have established what design interventions facilitate publicness in formal green spaces, and – similarly – learned more as to how people behave in interstitial spaces informed by the spatial characteristics. The results in the different categories are combined and presented in the scales of informality. The scales range from the most formal appearance to the most interstitial appearance of that specific category. Dividing the categories in such a way, in combination with the scales of informality give the opportunity to, for example, choose a more formal solution in the one category while leaving the other category completely informal. This provides a flexibility in the approach that is essential in finding design interventions for interstitial spaces.





**sub rq 1** What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?



Accessibility

- Visual permeability through edge or entrance
- Entrances linked to surrounding network without obstructions



Inclusiveness

- Avoiding 'worthless' image of the edges
- Hierarchy in entrances for diverse users
- Seating elements are located at the entrances to sustain social life around the entrance

**SUB RQ 2** What are traces of human activity in informal green spaces?



Edges that have a worthless image, with cheap broken fences and tacky advertising are more likely to be used as a location for fly-tipping.

People enter preferably where there is the highest visibility and lowest amount of obstacles; this often means: at the location former entrances, at a strip with low cut grass, next to denser vegetation or fences.



People do not enter where there is an indestructible barrier (fence or wall) or small obstacle (e.g. elevation difference) in combination with an easier option to enter within ±50m.

**SUB RQ 1** : What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?



Accessibility



Inclusiveness

- Main routes are well connected to surrounding network
- Materiality, width and lighting make paths accessible at all times for wide range of users
- Smooth hard surface of the paths without elevation differences make main route accessible for all users. E.g. pedestrians, rollator, baby carriage, cyclists, skaters

- Hierarchy in path system, in materiality, width and level of formality, allows diverse users
- Combination of staying (seating elements) and moving through (routing) creates inclusive atmosphere

**SUB RQ 2**: What are traces of human activity in informal green spaces?



In these specific cases interstitial sites are more frequently a destination to take a walk than a part of the route to get from one place to the other.

General part of the routes are erosions of frequent walking over grass or other vegetation. They are narrow gravel paths, created at pedestrian speed which influences the shape of the corners. There are no straight corners between paths, two paths join each other in a triangle.

When two people encounter each other on the path, one has to step aside to let the other pass, in densely vegetated parts the two people see each other only at the last moment.

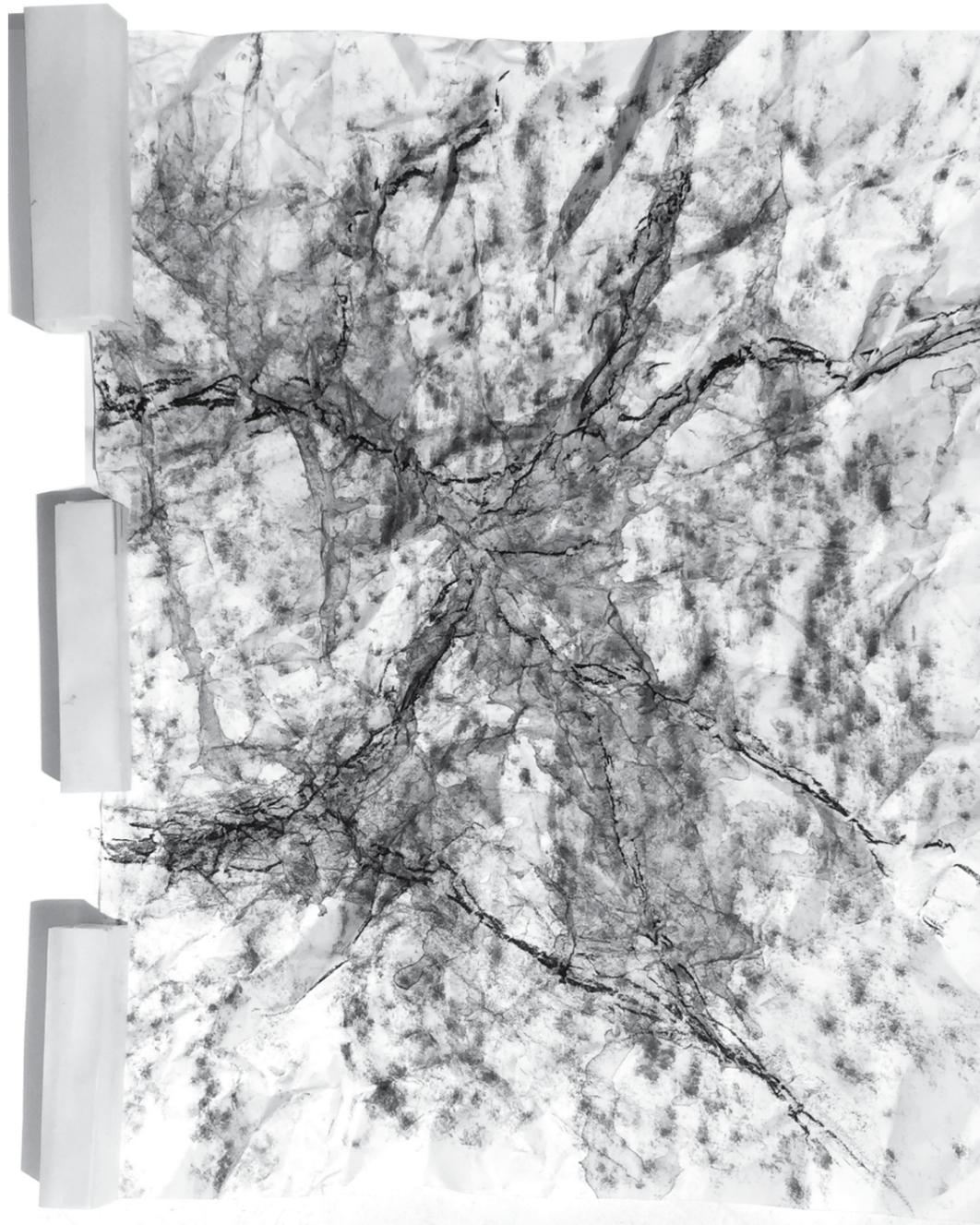


People generally take the easiest way, reasons to change direction can be:

- wet ground or a puddle
- elevation differences
- shrubs or group of trees
- single tree
- seeing a "landmark"
- If there is the possibility people preferably walk on leftover paving

Paths can be "fixed", adorned with found objects like bricks or pieces of wood, this is mostly done close to other constructions, like shelters, treehouses or gates.

Steep elevation differences are bridged where the slope is relatively shallow and the trees on the slope provide enough grip, functioning as steps and handles.



**SUB RQ 1: What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?**



Accessibility

-Differences between visual and physical access that fits the specific program



Inclusiveness

-Diversity in spaces, in size, open and enclosedness and formality of the program hosts diverse activities

-Making it possible to observe other people doing activities creates an inclusive atmosphere

**SUB RQ 2: What are traces of human activity in informal green spaces?**



The official rules in the interstice are not enforced, (e.g. the fences and the 'betreten verboten' sign are present but everyone can enter and no one will tell you to get off the interstice). This apparent relaxation of rules makes some activities possible that cannot find a place in formal public space. Walking the dog off the leash, 'destructive play' without parental supervision, making a fire, organizing afterparties but also the more negative fly-tipping and destruction of something someone else has created.

Other activities that differ from formal greenspaces can be linked to the indeterminacy of the site. This results in different activities that often make use of the environment and the feeling of freedom to change it: e.g. collecting materials from the site to construct shelters in the forest, picking flowers and berries on the field, making a drawing with brick or chalk found on the site, breaking or burning found objects.



Other activities on the site are linked to the perceived calmness and "untouchedness" of the interstice, visitors indicate specially to visit the site to be alone for a moment and to enjoy the sight of plant succession without human interference.

Besides coming to the site alone, people indicate to encounter likeminded people in the interstices, although coming to the site without anyone else they do not feel alone and even a higher chance of meeting other people that have a similar interest.

It is noticeable that the activities mostly concern moving through or standing still, not so many include sitting or lying down. Except in the constructed camps and shelters or other objects that present themselves as perfect seating elements by accident, like the abandoned train stop and viewpoint.



SUB RQ 1 : What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?



Accessibility



Inclusiveness

- Alterations that serve other users are allowed

- Alterations that have a negative influence on the inclusivity are removed or repaired, like burning or destroying elements of the green space

SUB RQ2: What are traces of human activity in informal green spaces?



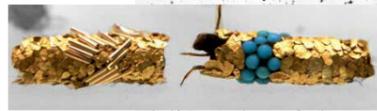
Alterations are found in different forms: shelter, tipi, camp, treehouse, gate, indication of a path

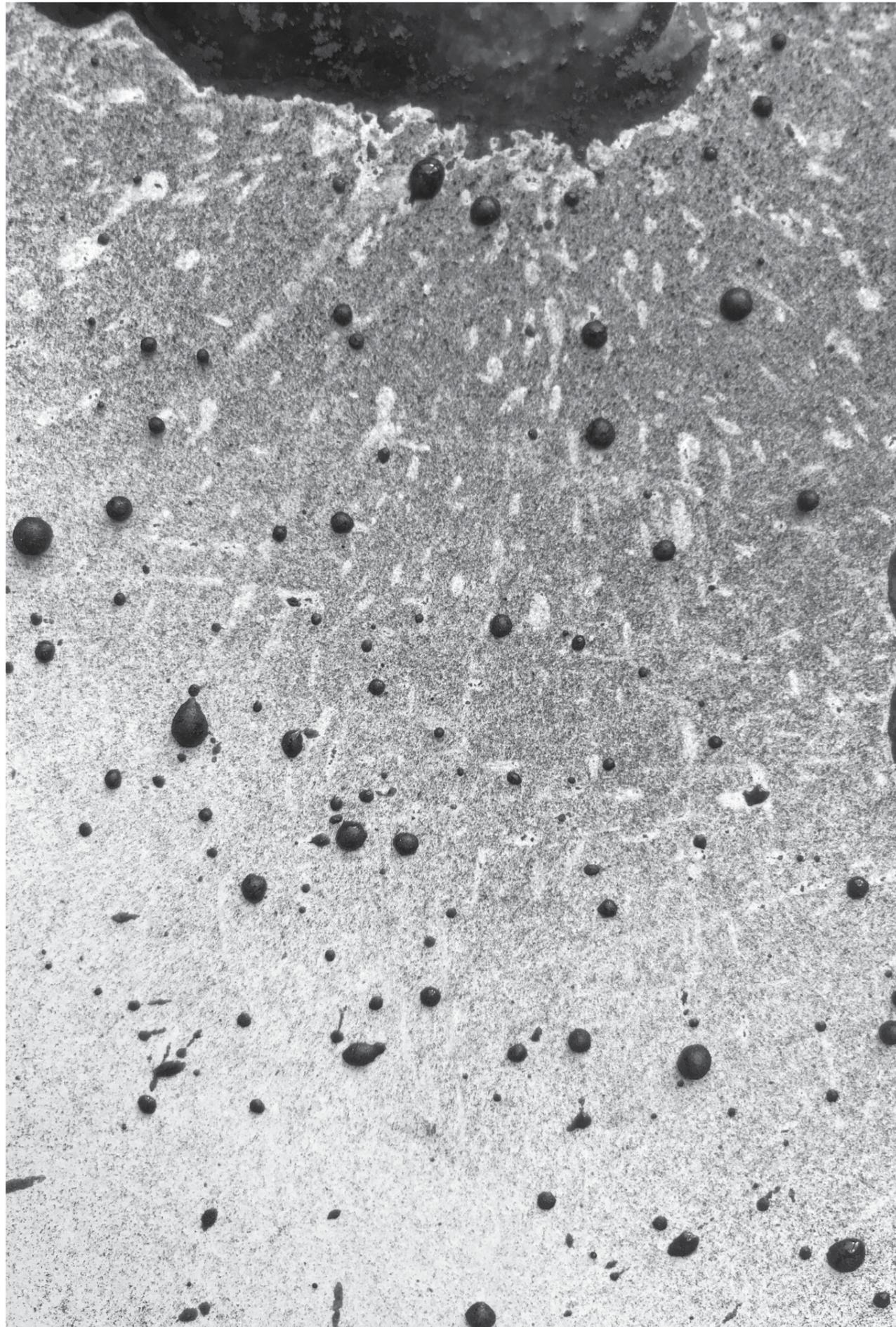
Alterations are found in dense higher forest-like vegetation structures, less often in open fields. More specifically they are mostly located at transition areas: the camp and treehouse at the edge of the forest, the shelters at the slopes of the pits making use of the slope for the construction, and the gate at the entrance of the building.

Constructions are not "owned" by one group but can be used and altered by anyone. Use and altering of the constructions is mostly seasonal, in spring and summer the constructions can change daily but in winter times be abandoned for more than a month.



For all constructions available materials are used: trees, stones, pallets, fences, but also trash or other objects are not found on the site itself. The materiality influences the inclusiveness of the construction, e.g. an abandoned construction in wintertime can either look like a pile of trash (use of external materials) or blend in with the environment (site's own materials).





**SUB RQ 1 : What facilitates publicness in formal green spaces?**



Accessibility

-Trash bins are accessible in the entire park



Inclusiveness

-Trash bins are emptied daily  
-Other trash is regularly removed

**SUB RQ2: What are traces of human activity in informal green spaces?**



**Flytipping**

Coming by to dump large amounts of trash from outside the interstice, often large objects. The piles of trash get dumped on the site within 30m from the public edge, where the act of dumping can be done secretly (behind thick bushes) and easily accessible (no elevation difference or other obstructions from the public road). On those spots the trash accumulates, people dump trash on top of trash that others have placed there.

Trash does **not** get dumped:  
Where it is harder or impossible to come or where you are very visible from the street.



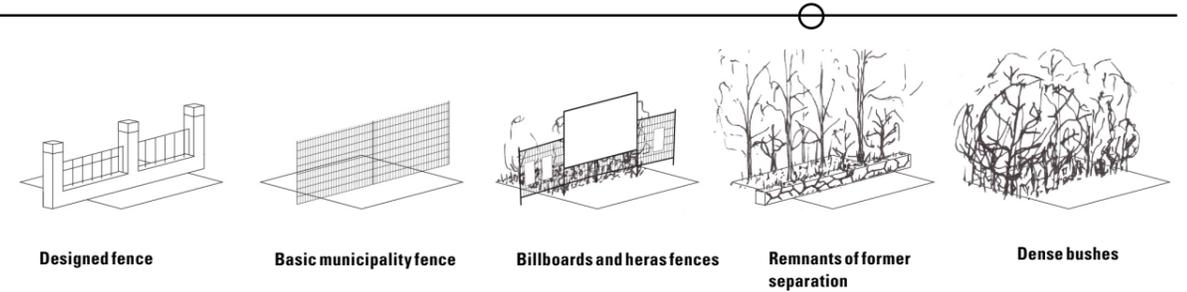
**Other trash:**

Other type of trash is the smaller leftovers of activities on the interstice itself, objects like e.g. empty glass bottles and other food packaging. Some people feel engaged with the interstice, they seek opportunities to collect smaller trash, e.g. in a shopping cart or a trash bag or organize cleaning sessions. Thereby organizing trash collection in an informal way.

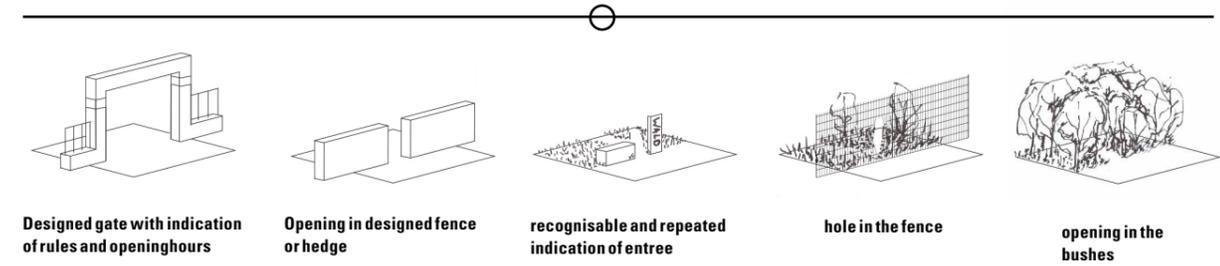


## SCALES OF INFORMALITY

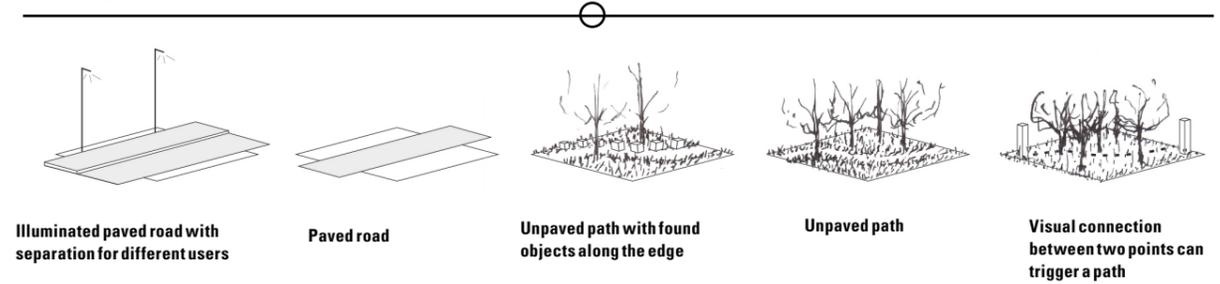
### Edges



### Entrees



### Routing



to build  
 to destroy  
 to hide  
 to discover  
 to smash  
 to burn  
 to break  
 to drop  
 to dump  
 to scatter  
 to collect  
 to change  
 to cut  
 to reconnect  
 to split  
 to open

to remove  
 to release  
 to observe  
 to cover  
 to clean  
 to bend  
 to block  
 to arrange  
 to scatter  
 to stack  
 to dig  
 to attach  
 to entangle  
 to pile up  
 to organize  
 to enclose

to trample  
 to pick  
 to fix  
 to move  
 to combine  
 to trash  
 to encircle  
 to replace  
 to expose  
 to indicate  
 to wear out  
 to place  
 to avoid

### Program and activities



Enclosed programmed spaces with indication of rules and opening hours



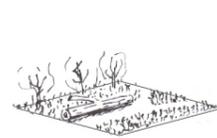
Spaces designed for specific program without indication of rules



Spaces for a wide variety of activities



Adjustments to existing physical situation to encourage ready present activity



Activities informed by existing physical situation

### Alterations to the site



Every alteration to the site gets removed



"Inappropriate" alterations to the site get removed



Steering of alterations by providing base for construction

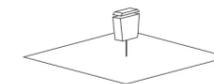


Steering of alterations by providing materials

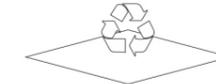


No intervening

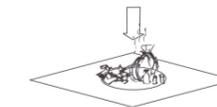
### Leftovers



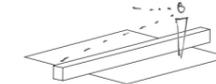
Installing trashbins



Regular municipal cleaning service



Create incentives to collect trash



Spatial changes to discourage flytipping



No measures to prevent flytipping



## PART2: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ANGER CROTTENDORF

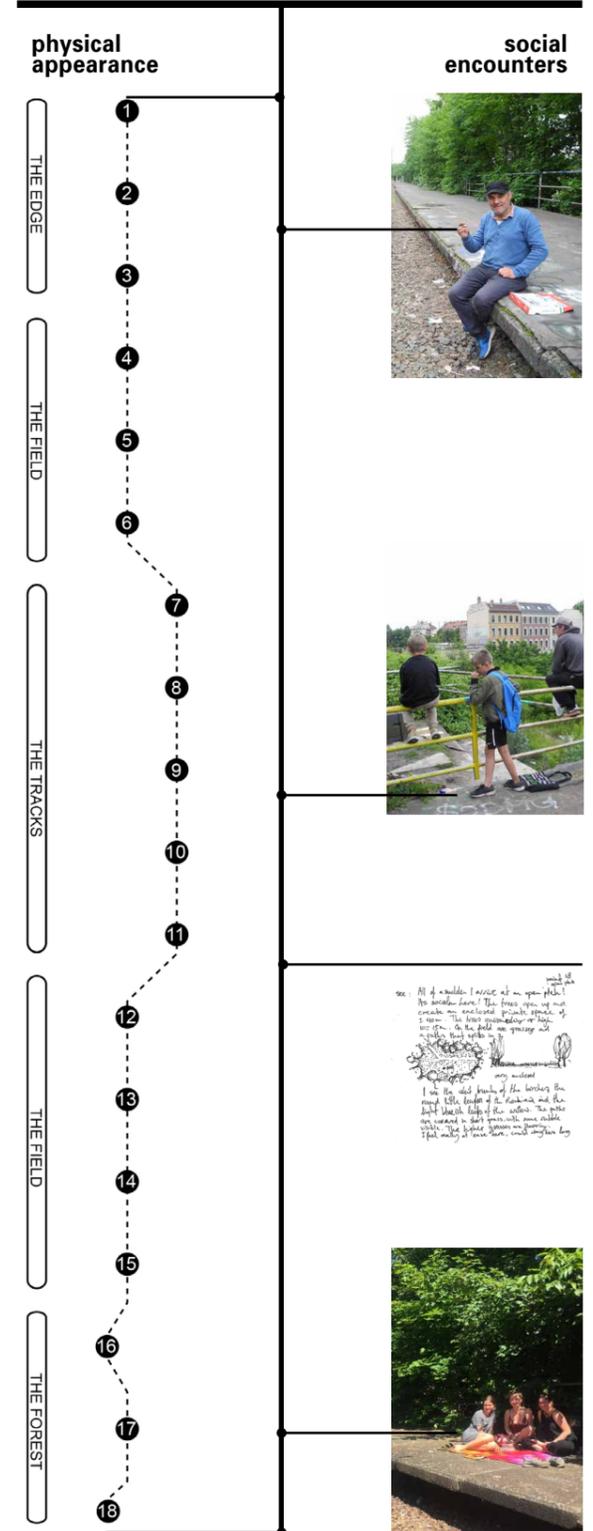
Second part of the research focusses on one specific interstitial site in Leipzig, Anger Crottendorf. It answers the sub research question: **What are, according to my perception, the qualities and constraints of one specific interstitial site when considering it as additional type of public green space?** This chapter contains an autoethnographical description of my experiences on site, influenced both by the physical context, through a continuous stop-motion walk, and social encounters. **More extensive descriptions can be found in the appendix part2. The Result is a deeper understanding of the functioning of the site and a conception of qualities and constraints to function as public green space.**

When applying autoethnography as a method it is very important to be aware of who I am, what my background is and how that influences my experience. I am a 27-year-old white woman that grew up in Amsterdam. I have the means to always have a roof above my head and never have to live in shortage of anything essential. I feel the freedom to do as I wish in the city where I live, I was never part of a minority group and nothing bad has ever been done to me by another person, I generally feel safe in the city. This is my final year of studying landscape architecture at Wageningen UR and for the last years I have been increasingly fascinated by urban interstitial spaces.

I have visited Leipzig twice in the last year, once in February and a second time in June. My relation to the interstitial site in Anger Crottendorf has changed greatly since that first time. In this description of my experiences on site in February and June of 2020 I elaborate on those moments of realization. I am aware that in the time that I have taken to research the site I have only seen several facets of the site. Despite the short period of observation I have the feeling that my observations are valuable insight into the nature of the sight. The interstice in Anger Crottendorf has been relatively untouched for the last 25 years, in this time the vegetation has had the time to overtake the various surfaces and the different social activities developed freely. The complexity of the site let me discover new things even on the last research day. The next pages are a synthesis of my experiences on the interstice, a through a continuous stop motion walk and autoethnographical notes on social encounters on site in June 2020, for more extensive documentation see appendix part 2.



My experience of Anger Crottendorf

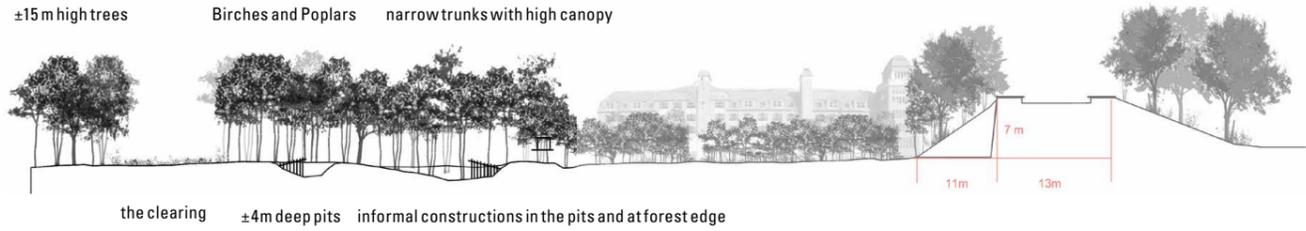


"My sister built a wooden construction here, something to sit on. She would visit after her workday, to escape stress and reality for a bit. She spend a lot of time here, we were hanging out together. A month later someone had destroyed it, there was nothing left. Idiots."

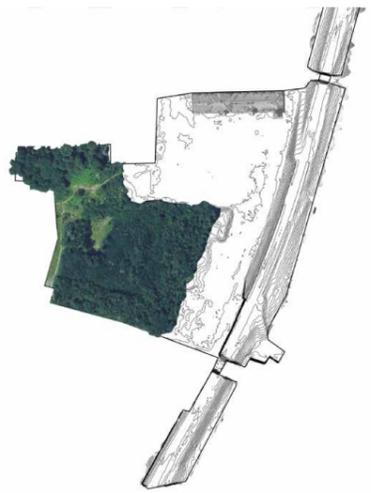
"Once we came here when it was raining, it felt like a jungle!"



"Everytime its different than the time before"



THE FOREST

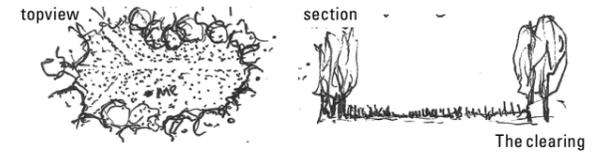


The forest is a part of the interstice with dense Birch and Poplar trees with narrow trunks with a 10 to 15m high canopy. The soil is uneven with multiple wide pits up to 4 m deep. Where the forest meets the public edge are remnants of an old natural stone wall of about 60 cm high that is overgrown with plants and the white trunks of the Birch trees. This layer of natural succession over the historical remnants adds to the historical narrative of the site. The forest is the part of the interstice where all the informal alterations are located.



The south edge with the natural stone wall and white Birch trunks

Physical description: The narrow tree trunks are standing close together, the high canopy lets the light enter in a beautiful way. There is a clearing in the forest. The meadow with low grasses (a rare feature on the interstice) surround by trees, creates a calm and enclosed space where it's easy to forget that you are in the middle of a city.



On some places the soil is very uneven with wide pits up to 4m deep. It was only on the fifth research day that I realized that the material of the soil was not just natural stones and sand, what I had assumed up till now, but actual piles of rubble! Suddenly I saw blocks of brick, sandstone and metal, all overgrown with mosses. They were the remains of the buildings that had been

destroyed in 1994 and left here to be overgrown by mosses and trees. That is why the soil is so uneven in the forest, with the weird deep pits, and that is also why the trees are so high here as compared to the field. It is not as easy to cut the vegetation on these uneven piles of rubble, that is why they had left this part of the interstice alone and the forest had the time to develop here. A beautiful way of different layers in time overlapping each other, For me this increased the kind of mystical atmosphere that the place has.

The forest is the location of most of the informal constructions. People have built multiple simple shelters and a more elaborate camp including a treehouse, a fireplace and a vegetable garden, making use of the secludedness between the trees and the available materials. The camp and shelters are all located at transitions, all the shelters are build at the slope of the pits, making use of the elevation difference for the roof construction, and the camp is located at the forest edge, together with the treehouse making it possible to oversee the field.



"Once we came here when it was raining, it felt like a jungle!"

Human activity: People come to the forest for taking a walk and hanging out at the camp or shelters. The camp at the forest edge is a popular hangout, I have seen different groups of friends hanging out, listening to music or preparing dinner at one of the fireplaces, while other people pass by to check out what is going on. From interviews I heard that the place also used for afterparties after the clubs have closed. This camp is the construction that changes most regularly. The shelters serve a different kind of activity, they are more secluded and deeper into the forest. These smaller simpler constructions are often used by people that come alone, they are taking a rest or sometimes do meditation.

Key experience: It was in the forest that I saw a man crying. About 10m away from me a man around his 30 sat down at a tree trunk, he had not seen me. He was in deep thoughts and after a few minutes I saw that he had started crying. This man had come to the interstice to cry because this place fitted to that emotion, it was calm and secluded, and different from other public space. See social encounter day 5 appendix part II: Boy crying in the woods.

In sitting down at the concrete slabs because they seem made for it. The slabs stick out over what is holding them, it seems like they are floating. Also the surface is not even which makes it look like they are waves coming under.



"you are higher than the trees, around sunset it is really nice up there."



"I came to read a book but there is a lot of trash so now I am going home to get a garbage bag. I do that mostly when I am hungover, then I feel the urge to clean."



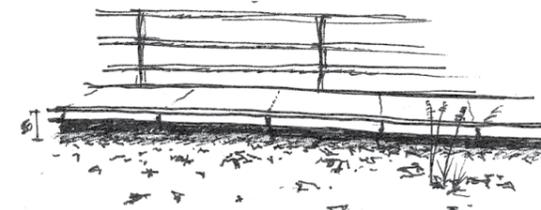
## THE TRACKS



The abandoned train tracks pass the interstice in North-South direction. the tracks are about 7 m higher than the surroundings, the slopes are grown with high trees that create a kind of corridor. Where the tracks pass the interstice is an abandoned train stop. A concrete construction that seems to hover over the ballast stones. it is often used by groups of friends to hang out and enjoy the view over the field.

### Physical description:

The tracks with concrete sleepers: The elevated train tracks run in a North-South direction on the eastside of the site. They are neighbored by steep slopes with big trees growing on it. The rails have been removed, what remains are the concrete sleepers on the ballast stones. The concrete sleepers have a perfect stepping stone distance but where they are removed the ballast stones are very hard to walk in, very easy to twist your angle.

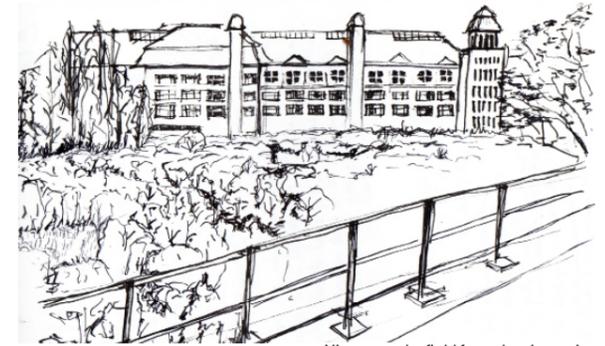


The concrete slabs seem to hover over the rusty ballast stones

The abandoned train stop: The concrete slabs of the former platforms pass for about 200m on both sides of the ballast stones. The concrete slabs seem to hover 50cm above the ballast stones and provide the perfect seating element. People sit here to enjoy the sun or in the evening to meet with friends. Traces of use are aa; empty pizza boxes and glass bottles. On both sides of the linear concrete train stop the trees grow very high, up to 15m, which make this space feel like a corridor. I would like to have a view over the field, but the trees are blocking the view.

The viewpoint: The southern part bridges over the busy road, this is the location of the former entrance of the train stop. At this part the slope is reduced to a 9-meter-high wall which

means that there are no trees to block the view. The southern end of the train stop forms a small plateau with a view over the entire field, this is what I start calling the viewpoint. Almost every time I have visited the site there where people at this location. The place seems designed to watch the sunset. The plateau orientates to the west, you are looking over the dense green sea of trees on the field and the sun sets behind the high trees of the forest. The abandoned factory building is on your right hand, it towers impressively over the site, with the scattered windows and trees growing out of the roof, it appears sublime to me.

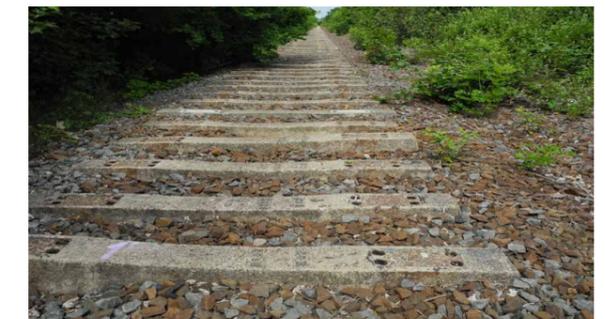


View over the field from the viewpoint

The connection to the field: The field and the tracks are not well connected, the steep slopes are a barrier to get up. There is, apart from climbing the 7m high wall, only one path that connects the tracks with the field. Almost at the north end of the site is a desire-path that runs up the slope, still steep but a little shorter at this point. There are two small trees that are clearly part of the way to get up.

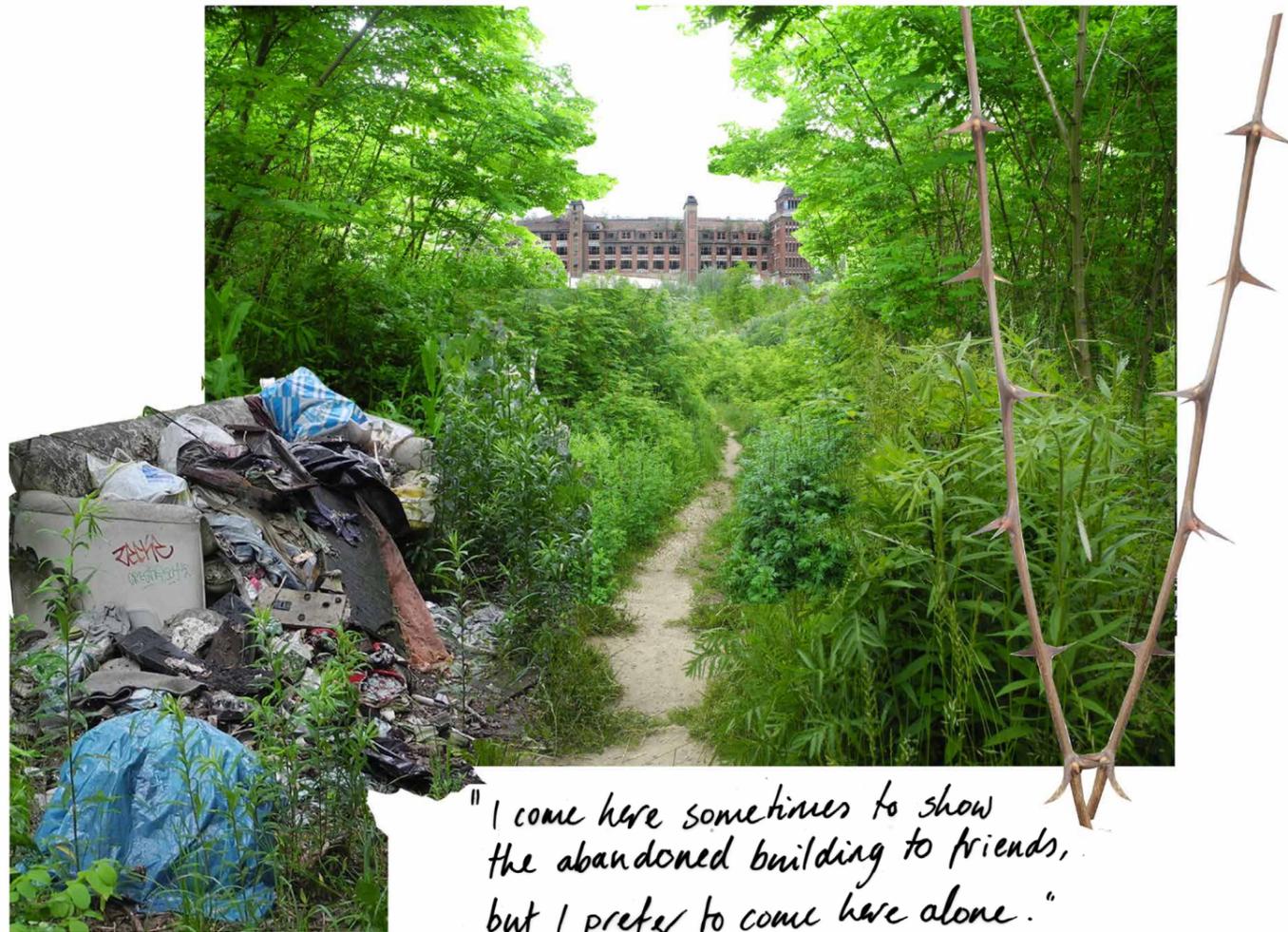
### Human activities:

The viewpoint is one of the most popular hangouts together with the building and the camp at the forest edge. Small groups of friends gather there to enjoy the view and the sunset, while talking and sometimes listening to music. Because the viewpoint is on top of the 7 m high wall it is also a popular place for younger kids to play, to throw objects all the way down. At the bottom it is a big mess. People that are walking over the tracks are often alone or in a duo, some of them indicated to enjoy the feeling of being completely alone when walking further over the tracks. Key experience: see social encounter day 4 appendix part II: The beehive and destructive play.



Concrete sleepers as stepping stones, on the tracks you can be all alone

"Once I came here alone at night, I was curious what it was like. There were voices coming from everywhere, I couldn't locate where they were coming from and I didn't know what kind of people they were. I was very afraid. I would do it again though."



"I come here sometimes to show the abandoned building to friends, but I prefer to come here alone."

## THE FIELD



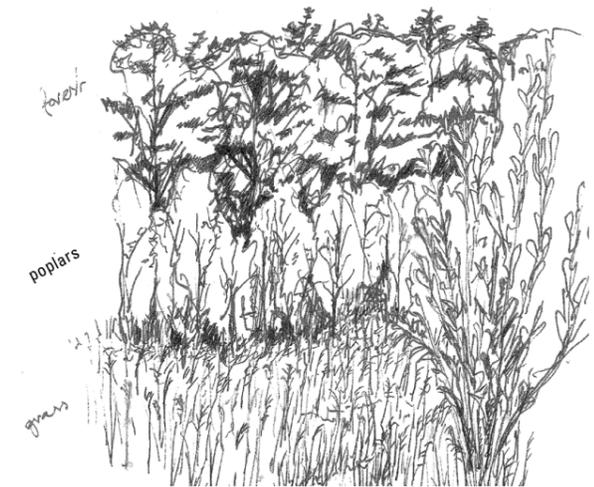
The field is the relatively flat area between the forest and the tracks, it contains the abandoned factory building that is a very popular place for people to visit. The field is vegetated with some grasses and very young and thin Black locust and Poplar trees, the big thorns of the Black locust make big parts of the field impassable. Along the public edges are a few piles of trash, people come by to dump their trash on the site.

### Physical description:

The abandoned building: The former function of the interstice was an industrial area from the beginning of the 20th century, that function closed down in 1994, since then the impressive factory building has been empty. All the glass windows are broken and on top of the roof grow some narrow Birch trees. The building is very high, it towers above the field and is clearly the most outspoken landmark of the interstice.

The field itself is overgrown with the invasive species, Black locust and Poplar trees. The young 4m high trunks of the Black locust have long thorns which make it impossible to walk anywhere else than on the established desire-paths. In winter and early spring the field is brownish red and you are able to almost oversee the entire field, whereas in summer the dense leaves block every view, this gives a very big difference in experience between the seasons. The vegetation on the field is entirely removed between once every 5 and 10 years, the trees do not get the chance to grow higher or other plants can take over.

Traces of Fly tipping: Along the public edges are traces of fly-tipping. People come by to dump large amounts of trash; sofa's, washing machines, buggies, suitcases, clothes etc. Preferably on the parts that are covered from view from the street but easily accessible, they go onto the site up to 30m from the public edge. Other users indicate that the trash on the site is the biggest nuisance.



View from the field direction of the forest

### Human activities:

Visiting the building is one of the most popular activities. People go there to make graffiti pieces or to enjoy the view over the city. The tower of the building has a balcony, in June I have seen people up there every day.

The field is not used for many activities, it is mostly used for moving through or for walking the dog. The paths are very narrow, if you have to pass another person one has to step aside.



Difference between the seasons





## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

### Qualities of Anger Crottendorf as additional type of public green space

**This conclusion is a synthesis of the findings from my perception of the physical appearance ,through continuous stop-motion walk, and social encounters on the interstice in Anger Crottendorf. It results in an indication of the qualities and constraints of the interstice when considering it as additional type of public green space. Meaning the qualities the interstice holds that are different from formal green space and therefor a valuable addition. And the constraints it poses when valuing the publicness of the site.**

#### **The site's complexity:**

This interstitial space in Anger Crottendorf has a complexity that makes it possible to spend so lots of time on it and every time reveal new aspects. The new layer of natural succession and decay over the layers of the former functions of the site creates an historic narrative. The trees and mosses growing on remains of the former industrial site exhibit the materials and processes in constant interaction, and make it possible to discover the narrative of the site step by step. E.g. I discovered on the last day that the forest was growing on the remains of the former buildings of the site and that the mystical stones where actually pieces of brick, overgrown with moss. Or the old natural stone wall at the south edge with the white Birch trunks growing out is a beautiful sight combining the history and the developing interstice.

#### **The indeterminacy:**

There is no plan for the site, there are no rules of how you should behave, no imposed purpose of the space. The interstice is undetermined. It means that every single person that comes here can discover the site by him or herself, they can see the site as they want/whish/need, the space can take on any form or purpose. It gives the freedom to come and take materials from the site, to alter the site, to own the site, to take on a level of responsibility towards it. As a result there are many different uses, with extreme differences in level of engagement with the site.

#### **A place to release stress – a safespace**

On the site I encounter people that regularly visit the site after a busy day or stressful period at work. Many indicate that the calmness and the untouched vegetation helps to release stress and escape reality for a bit. Different people have different ways of doing so, some just take a walk, some meditate in one of the shelters in the forest and others start building a new construction to hang out. The interstice is less stressful for them than other public spaces. Which are often busy and focused on see and be seen while these people actually seek

the calmness and seclusion that the interstice offers.

#### **A place to be alone**

This aspect is related to the previous one but is not the same thing. People on the site describe that they come to the site alone, not per se to release stress but just because sometimes you want to be alone without other people watching you. People often seek solitude when they come here and specify that other parks are too busy and exposed. The interstice can provide a place you can go to when you; just want to be alone for a bit, to read a book, smoke something, when you feel the need to cry or need a place to sleep where no one will find you.

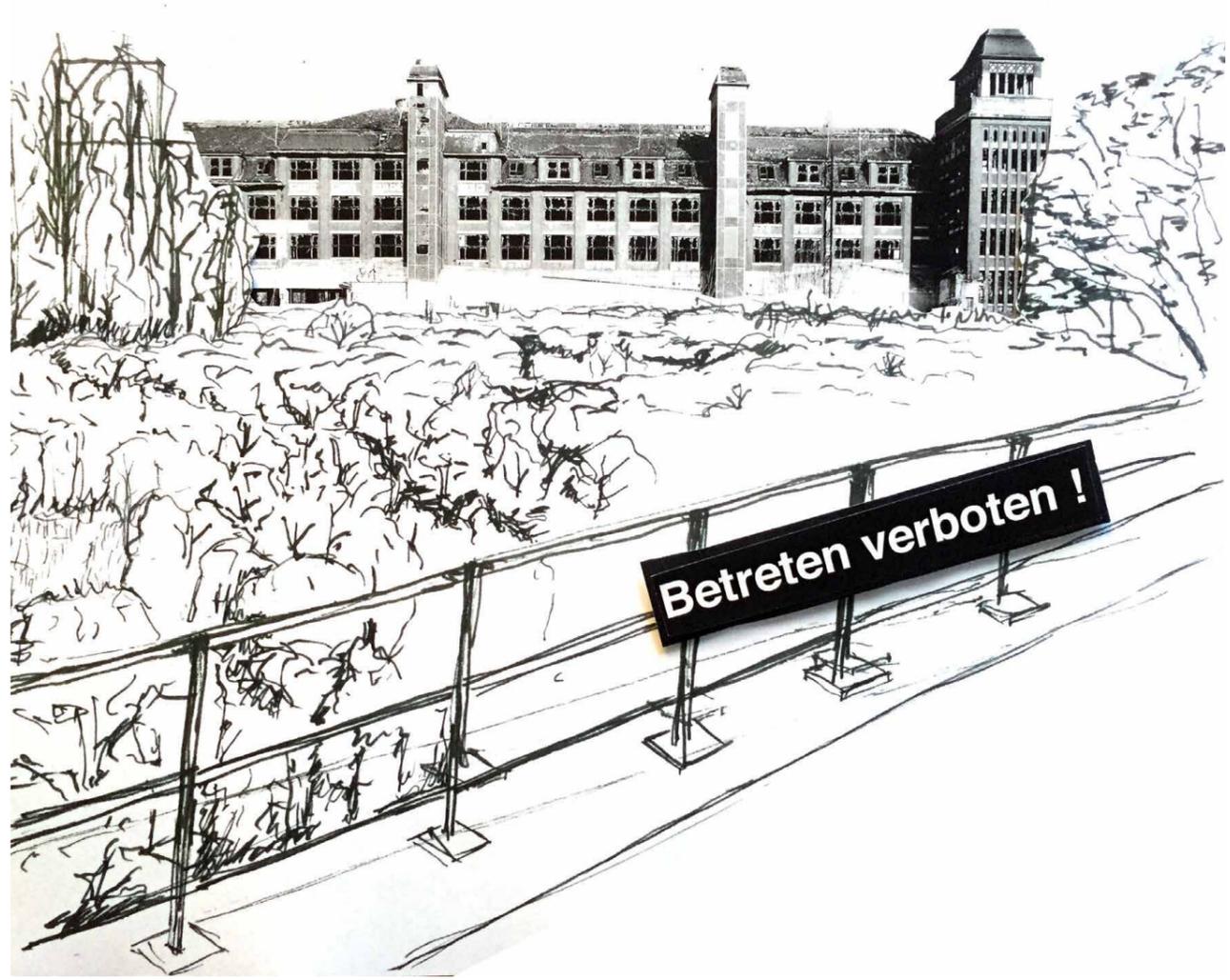
#### **A place to encounter likeminded people**

The fact that people come to the interstice alone does not mean that they do not want to meet others. People I have spoken to indicate to come here to be alone but also to see what other people are doing on the site. The camp at the forest edge for example is a place where everyone passes by to check out what is going on. People come to the interstice to do "their own thing", everyone for their own reasons, this connects them in a way. For that reason they might be more open for conversation, they have more things in common.

#### **A place that you can alter as you wish for you own use**

At the interstice people feel the freedom to alter the site for their own use. Finding chalk or red brick can be an incentive to make a drawing, or when wood is needed for a den, some small trees on the interstice can be the resource. Over time different users give input, the alterations become a kind of collective construction with transformative capacity on the interstice.

**ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**      **Constraints of Anger Crottendorf as additional type of public green space**



Accessibility

Inclusiveness

**Edges and entrances**

- Dense vegetation blocks visual and physical access
- Narrow entrances without visual access onto the site
- Fences block physical access at certain points

- “Worthless” image through placing of cheap fencing and billboards
- Traces of fly-tipping along the edges create unwelcoming image

**Routing**

- Routes not connected to surrounding network
- Field: Routes do not provide access to all parts of the field
- Elevation difference and vegetation hinder accessibility between abandoned tracks and the field
- Train tracks: On the parts where the concrete sleepers are removed the ballast stones are very hard to walk on

- Field: Dense thorny vegetation and narrow paths allow one user at a time, makes it hard to pass each other
- Train stop: walking and sitting are conflicting activities

**Program and activities**

- Field: Dens monotonous vegetation structure hosts no other activity than moving through

**Alterations to the site**

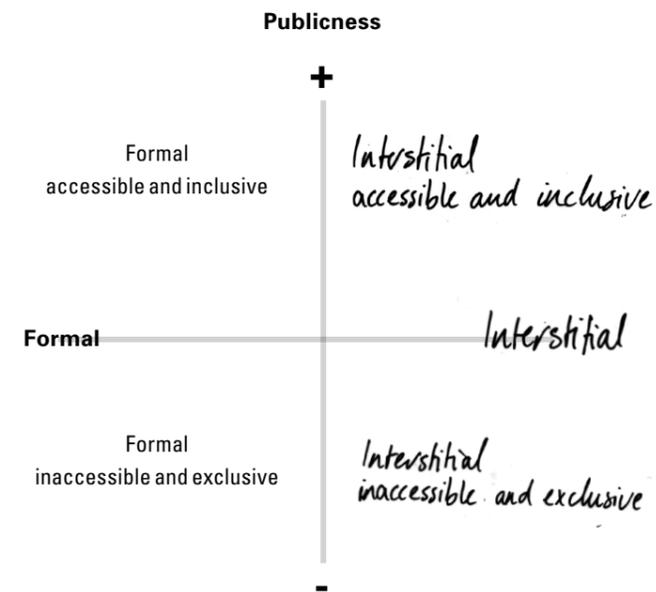
- Materiality of constructions gives worthless image, offseason
- Constructions get destroyed

**Leftovers**

- Traces of fly-tipping create unwelcoming image
- Trash like scattered glass or other sharp objects conflicts with other users like dog owners



The research studies accessibility and inclusiveness as the dimensions of publicness in relation to formal and interstitial space. Following the conceptual approach, chapter 2, there are four directions. The space can either be: inaccessible, exclusive and formal, inaccessible exclusive and interstitial or accessible inclusive and formal or accessible, inclusive and interstitial, see scheme below for less confusion. In this chapter they are projected upon the interstitial site in Anger Crottendorf to oversee the alternatives for development, see next page. This chapter briefly explores the four models, which are evaluated to additional type of public green space. The actual design of the preferred model is elaborated in the next chapter.



### Formal, accessible and inclusive

The models show, see next page, that increasing publicness in combination with formalizing the green space might probably increase the visitor numbers and the diverse user groups. However the site would transform in a type of green space that is already so widely present in the city. (even in the same street as Anger Crottendorf is a formal park with grass meadows, high trees and curvy paths). It would thereby lose the characteristics that host the current activities, that precisely do not occur in the more formal green spaces.

### Interstitial, inaccessible and exclusive

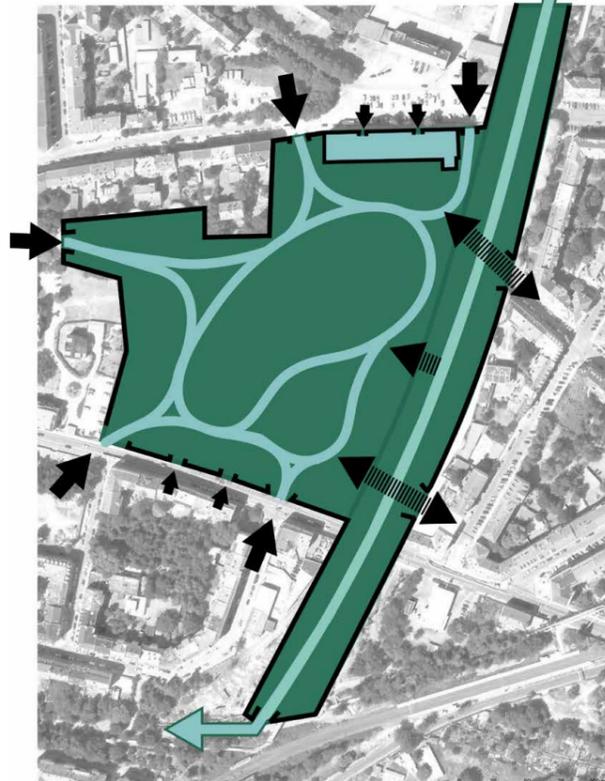
When the site would develop in a direction that is less public, while remaining an interstitial space this would mean that the site hosts even less people. This in turn can be very suitable for the few people that are making use of the site for example to be alone or to hide and additionally for the non-human users of the interstice. But meaning that the site hosts less people means also that an increasing amount of urban inhabitants will not perceive the site as available green space. This in turn puts a higher pressure on other green spaces in the city. Besides that, the "worthless" image of the interstice aggravates and the fly-tipping intensifies, less people will appreciate the type of green space and formal development becomes a logic solution.

### Preferred model:

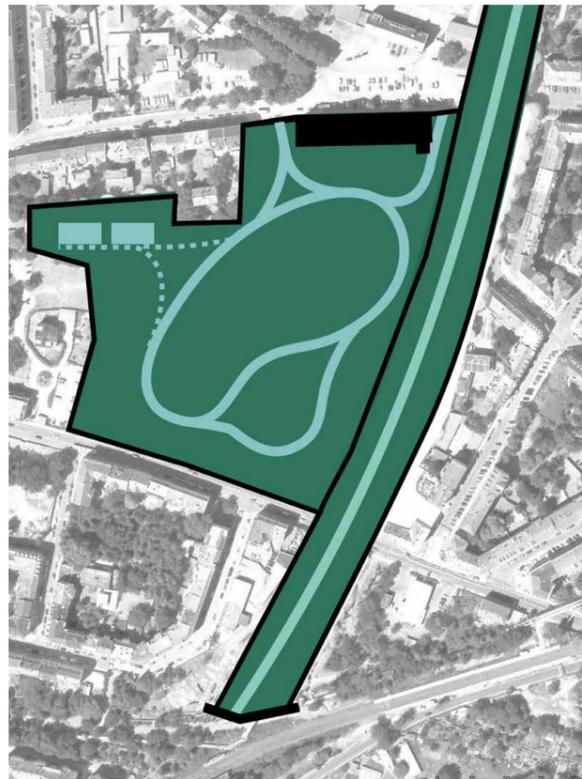
#### Interstitial, accessible and inclusive

This is a delicate model. The spatial characteristics of the interstice are different from the available formal urban green space therefore the site hosts different users than other existing parks. The increased accessibility will mean that more people will perceive and value the interstitial site, that in turn means that some activities that are currently on the site will move elsewhere, no matter how much this is tried to be avoided in the approach. Another point of attention is that by incorporating the interstice into the public realm the responsibilities for the municipality will change. Because the responsibilities are not defined by rules and regulations this makes it harder to pinpoint them. Ultimately and most importantly, by increasing publicness of the interstitial site the interstice brings its distinct spatial characteristics into the public realm, this increases the overall inclusivity of the public green structure in the city. For that reason the interstitial, accessible and inclusive model is the preferred one.

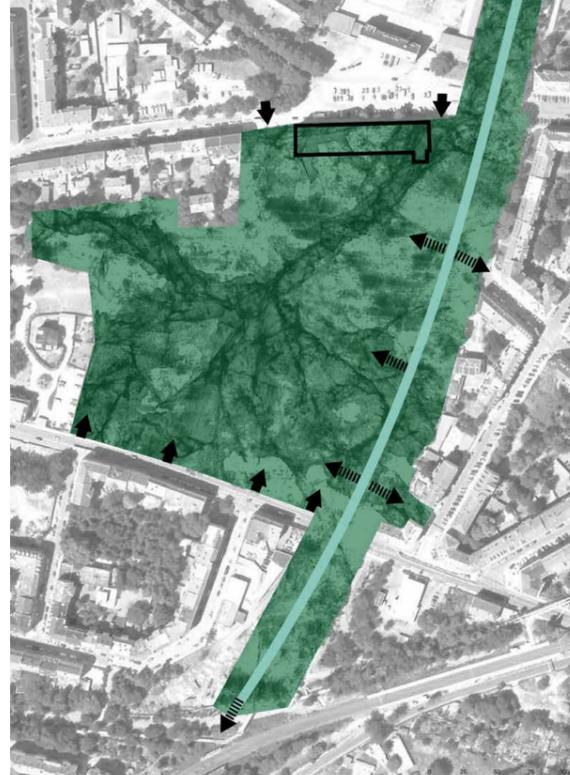
accessible and inclusive formal



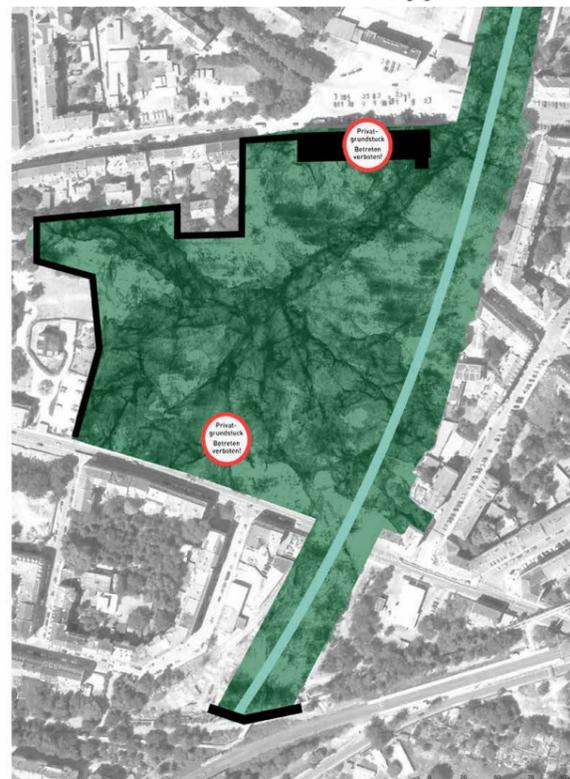
inaccessible and exclusive formal



Interstitial accessible and inclusive



Interstitial inaccessible and exclusive



publicness

+

Advantage:

- Big number and high variety of users
- Highly valued by urban inhabitants
- Responsibilities for the municipality are defined by rules and regulations

Disadvantage:

- Big investment for the municipality
- The spatial characteristics will be similar to the other available formal green space thereby less fit to serve the more diverse needs of users, e.g. to be alone or to build a treehouse is impossible

Advantage:

- Spatial characteristics are different from the available formal urban green space therefore the site hosts different users than other existing parks.
- More people will perceive and value the interstitial site
- Formal development will no longer be an option

Disadvantage:

- Harder to pinpoint responsibilities for the municipality or users
- The increased accessibility will also mean that some activities will move elsewhere

Formal

Interstitial

Advantage:

- No costs for the municipality, renovation will be done by a private party

Disadvantage:

- The greenspace is only accessible for a select amount of people, losing it's function for urban inhabitants
- All functions of the current green space will be lost

Advantage:

- No costs for de municipality
- No responsibilities for the municipality
- The site is very suitable for the few people that are still making use of the site; e.g. to be alone or to hide.
- Less human activity leaves more quiet habitat for non human users of urban green space.

Disadvantage:

- Very few people make use of the site which puts more pressure on other green spaces
- Lot of people will not even perceive the green space in the street scene
- The site will not be perceived as valuable urban green space, which makes formal development a logic solution.
- The worthless image increases, fly tipping worsens

# DESIGN APPROACH



This chapter continues with the preferred model as concluded in the last chapter. It further combines the outcomes of the three sub research questions into a design approach to increase publicness without formalizing the interstitial space in Anger Crottendorf. Per category it indicates locations for possible interventions and subsequently applies design alternatives.

**What to change?**  
As a result of the autoethnographical description of my experiences on site, we now know what is hindering publicness in Anger Crottendorf.

Secondly from the outcome of srq 1 we know physical interventions that facilitate publicness in formal green spaces.

**How to change it without formalizing?**  
Here are three alternatives presented as informed by the scales of informality.

**Do**  
The reasoning and motivation for the design choices is informed by research part 2.

## What to change?

**Know**  
Physical appearance hindering publicness in Anger Crottendorf

↑  
result of srq 3, part II autoethnography

**Know**  
Physical interventions facilitating publicness in formal green spaces

↑  
result of srq 1, part I environment behavior observations

## How to change it without formalizing?

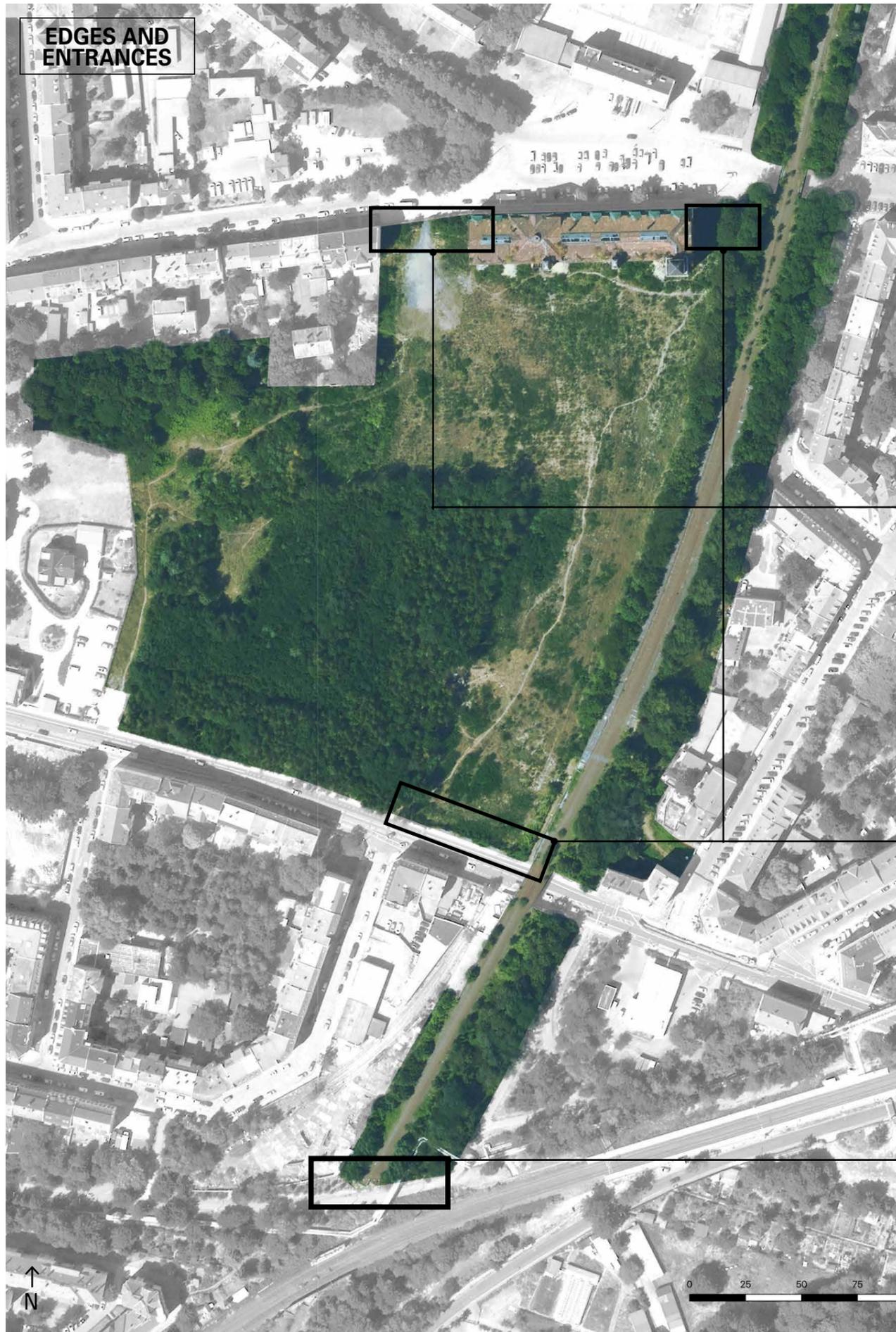
**Alternatives**  
Inspired by traces of human behavior in formal and interstitial spaces

↑  
informed by scales of informality, result of srq 1 and 2, part I

**Do**  
Design for Anger Crottendorf

↑  
informed by srq 3, part II autoethnography

**EDGES AND ENTRANCES**



**What to change?**

**Know**

- "Worthless" image through placing of cheap fencing and billboards

- Traces of fly-tipping along the edges create unwelcoming image

- Dense vegetation blocks visual and physical access

- Narrow entrances without visual access onto the site

- Fences block physical access at certain points

**Know**

- Edges are cared for to avoid 'worthless' image

- Edges are cared for to avoid 'worthless' image

- Visual permeability through edge or entrance

- Entrances linked to surroundings without obstructions

**How to change it in an informal manner?**

**Alternatives**

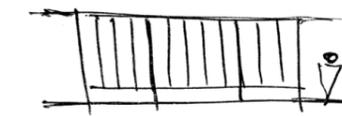
- Remove all fences  
- Give different function to billboards

- Increase visibility from the public road  
- decrease accessibility

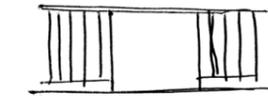
- Remove all vegetation  
- Create openings that will trigger paths

- Remove the fences  
- Cut openings in the fence  
- Bend the fence

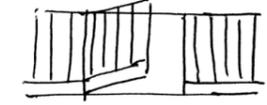
**Entrance:**



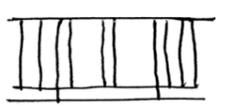
Current



Remove entire fence



open the gate ajar



few bars removed

There is an old fence located next to the abandoned building, it is a different type than the Heras fences. It is sturdy, 3 meters high, indestructible and completely blocks the accessibility. Alternatives are to remove the entire fence, to open it ajar or

to remove a few of the bars. By opening the fence it also makes it easier accessible for fly-tippers to dump their trash. By removing a few bars, the incentive is created to discover the site while it remains a small barrier to enter.

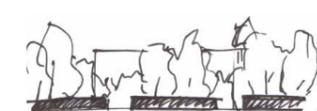
**Edge:**



Current



remove vegetation and place barrier



mow partly barrier with openings



remove fences

Currently the south edge of the field is densely overgrown with young invasive trees, they block any view onto the site. Along the sidewalk are some uneven placed Heras fences and billboards that give the feeling that the area behind it is not

accessible and above all, worthless. A small barrier with small openings prevents fly-tipping while simultaneously creating a trigger to enter onto the site. The paths will increase the visibility onto the site.

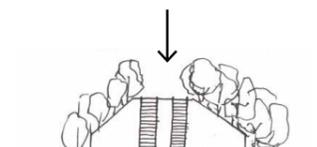
**Entrance:**



Current



bicycle ramp



ladders rail reference



gate on top no other connection

Current southern point of the tracks ends above a 7m high wall next to the bicycle road to Lene Voigt. On top of the wall is a fence, to enforce the inaccessibility. Connecting the bicycle path to the elevated tracks would open up the interstice and formalize the site. Both other interventions trigger a sense of

curiosity of what is up there. The ladders are no easy way up but have a slightly higher level of accessibility than the third alternative. This is preferred because the tracks are such a special feature and this is a part of the site that can handle interventions that increase intensity of use slightly.

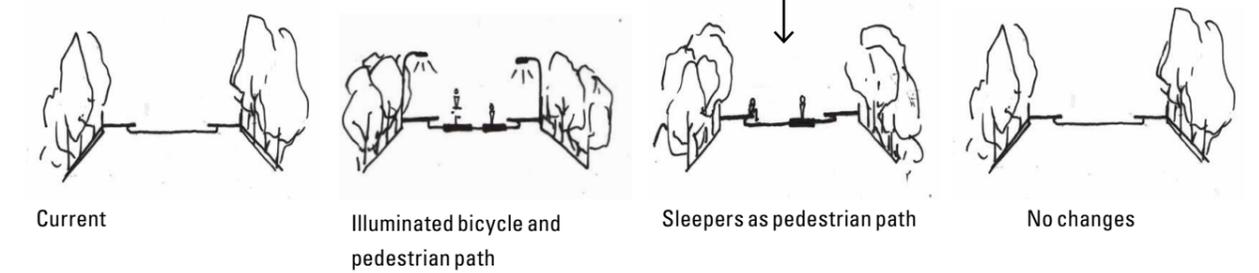


**What to change?**

| Know   | Know  | How to change it in an informal manner?<br>Alternatives   |
|--|---|---|
| - Routes not connected to surrounding network  | - Main routes linked to surrounding network                         | Link route to surrounding network via:<br>- Visual connection                                   |
| - Elevation difference and vegetation hinder accessibility between abandoned tracks and the field  | - Paths connect entire site   | - Create opening in the fence<br>- Give indication of the way up<br>- Build stairs              |
| - Train tracks: On the parts where the concrete sleepers are removed the ballast stones are inaccessible for cyclists and very hard to walk on | - Materiality and width make paths accessible at all times          | - Make paths accessible for diverse users<br>- replace concrete sleepers where they are removed |
| - Train stop: walking and sitting are conflicting activities   | - Combining staying and moving through creates inclusive atmosphere | - Replace concrete sleepers where they are removed  |

**The abandoned trainstop:**

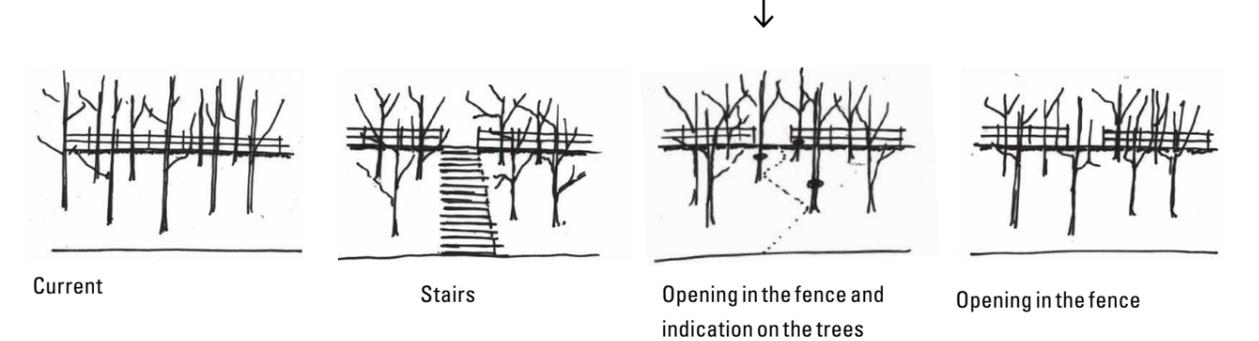
**-The tracks**



The train tracks are out of use. For a large part the concrete sleeper are still in place, informally functioning as walking route. On the parts where the sleepers are removed the ballast stones are really hard to walk on and discourage to walk any further. The alternative to install a bicycle and pedestrian path would increase the inclusivity of the site but it would also

largely formalize the character of the tracks. Doing nothing is an option. But here lies an opportunity to increase accessibility of the tracks in a way that fits the atmosphere of the interstice. Putting the concrete sleepers back in place as stepping stones stays close to the history and atmosphere of the site and creates an unusual walking route.

**-The elevation difference**



There is only one location where the field and the abandoned train stop are connected with a path. The steep slope and the fence along the train stop are clearly a hinder for people to get up. Installing a stairs would just define the way up, which would be an intervention far from the indeterminacy of the interstice.

Merely opening up the fence might trigger people's attention but would probably not change their behavior because the slope is still too steep. By placing handles on the trees as indication, the route to go up is hinted while not completely defined. People are free to find their way.



**PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES**

**What to change?**

**Know**

-Field: Dens monotonous vegetation structure hosts no other activity than moving through

**Know**

-Diversity in spaces hosts diverse activities

-Changing visual and physical access that fits the program

**How to change it in an informal manner?**

**Alternatives**

-Diverse maintenance scheme  
 -Organisation of events that creates: treplings, cuttings, diggings, burnings e.g. drive in cinema, easter fires, treasure hunt, music festival  
 -Place structures that trigger activity: football goals, basketbal net, base fo building a shelter

-Viewpoint: Chance to expand the viewpoint with access and seating element.

-Combining staying and moving through creates inclusive atmosphere

-Do nothing  
 -Stairs to the viewpoint  
 -Elaborate on existing structure

**the field:**

1x5yr complete mowing of the field

diverse maintenance scheme  
 irregular mowing  
 use of sheep

create events that provoke:  
 treplings  
 burnings  
 diggings  
 cuttings

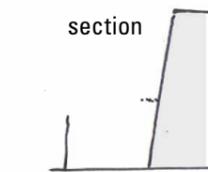
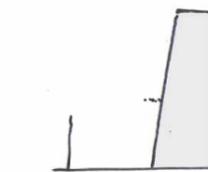
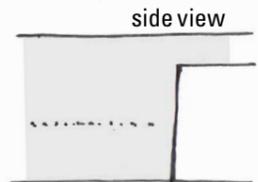
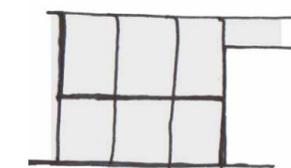
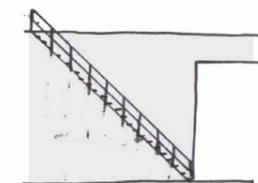
Do nothig



Currently the field is vegetated with the invasive young Black locust and Poplar trees, the vegetation is probably completely cut once every 5 or 10 years. It is very dense and mostly used for moving through. As an alternative a diverse maintenance scheme could be implied with an irregular mowing scheme or /and use of sheep for maintenance. Although this measure might have a desired effect it does stay close enough to its

informal indeterminate character. In this particular case it is chose to do nothing. On the one hand because the vegetation on the field is currently on one stage of ecological succession, by not intervening we can see whether the next stage might bring a situation that fits the use of the interstice. By choosing the most informal option in this case it leaves room for slightly more formal interventions in other locations.

**Viewpoint:**



Current

Stairs to viewpoint

Construction attached to existing structure

No intervention

The location of the former entrance to the train stop is currently a much used entree to the interstice. Although right underneath the former train stop and viewpoint it is impossible, apart from climbing the wall, to get up from here. Halfway up the wall are remnants of the former construction. A stairway straight up would open up to the viewpoint directly and thereby ruining the atmosphere that location has, the

value of discovering it by yourself. Not intervening would be an option, but this location seems fit for an intervention, it is close to the edge and not as delicate an atmosphere as e.g. the forest. Besides, the current physical situation seems to already propose its own construction. The horizontal plateau provides the opportunity for people to oversee the vegetation on the field without intervening with the view of the viewpoint



**What to change?**

**Know**

-Materiality of constructions gives worthless image, offseason

**Know**

- Allow alterations that serve other users

**How to change it in an informal manner?**

**Alternatives**

- No intervening
- Provide materials
- Provide base for construction

**The field:**



current

Steering of alterations by providing base for construction



Steering of alterations by providing materials



No intervening

On the field are currently no informal constructions to be found. There would be a possibility to trigger this kind of alterations to the site. However users of the site appear very well aware of where to construct and why. Intervening in this process would be completely out of place.

**The forest:**



current



Steering of alterations by providing base for construction



Steering of alterations by providing materials



No intervening

The forest is the location on the interstice where all the informal constructions are located. Also here would be a possibility to influence the alterations. For example by providing a base for construction or providing building materials that would be

more favorable for any reason. However, again users of the site appear very well aware of where to construct and why. Intervening in this process would disturb the nature of this process, an intervention that does not fit this interstice.

**LEFTOVERS**



**What to change?**

**Know**

- Traces of fly-tipping create unwelcoming image
- Trash like scattered glass or other sharp objects conflicts with other users like dog owners

**Know**

- Trash is removed daily

**How to change it in an informal manner?**

**Alternatives**

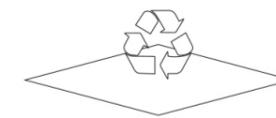
- Spatial changes to discourage flytipping
- Create incentives to collect trash

**Tracks:**

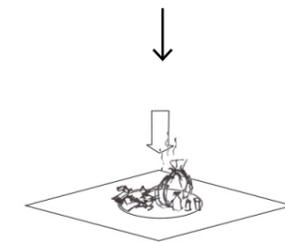


current

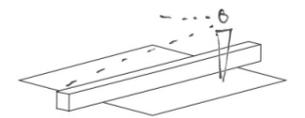
No measures to taken to collect the trash



Regular municipal cleaning service



Create incentives to collect trash



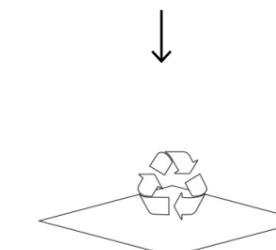
Spatial changes to discourage flytipping

**Edge:**

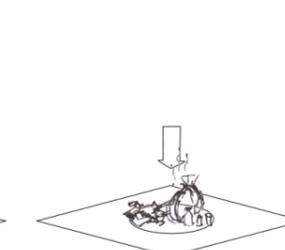


current

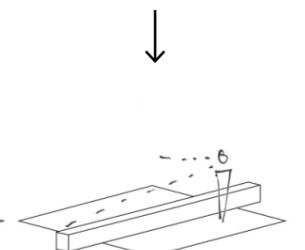
No measures to prevent flytipping



Regular municipal cleaning service



Create incentives to collect trash

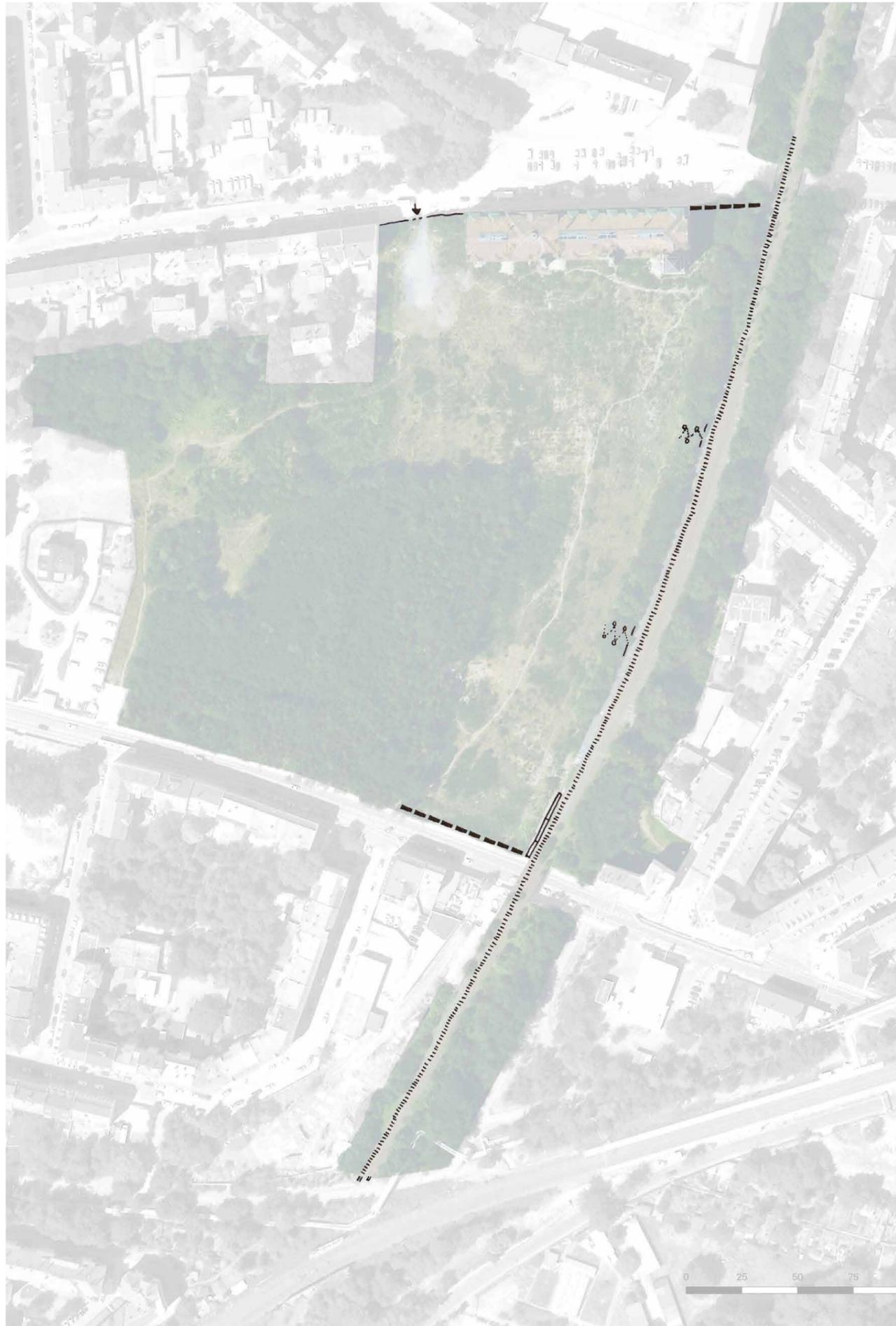


Spatial changes to discourage flytipping

Along the public edges the problem of fly-tipping is very urgent, people dump large amount of trash and it accumulates. The piles of trash communicate a worthless image and almost all users of the site complain about the trash as being the biggest nuisance. The locations where the trash gets dumped are easily accessible, but not too visible from the public road. So

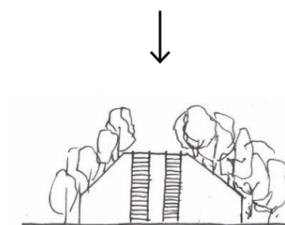
that the act of dumping can be done secretly. By increasing visibility onto the site along the edge, in combination with placing small barriers can discourage fly-tipping. However the magnitude of the current problem asks for a structural removing of trash.





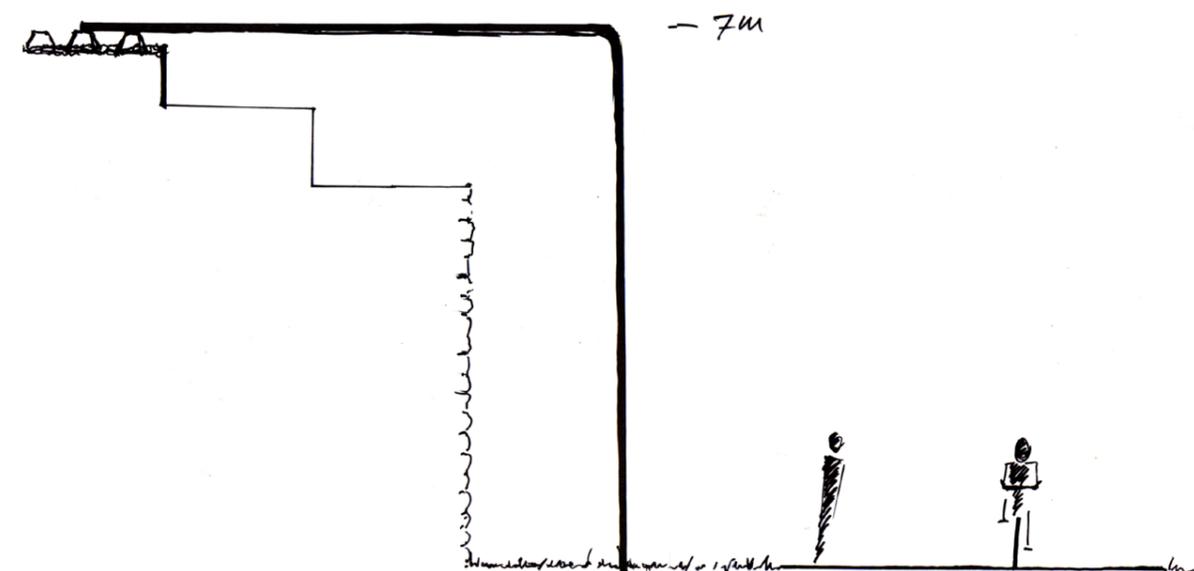
## DESIGN

**Entrance: Southside  
link to Lene Voigt Park**

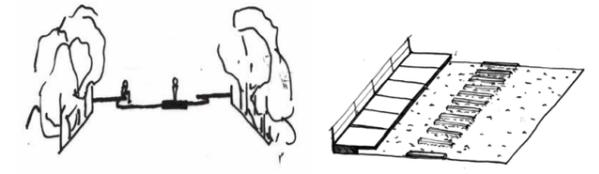


ladders  
rail reference

This is the end of the elevated train tracks at the south edge. Directly next to the end of the tracks is the bicycle lane that connects to Lene Voigt park. Currently the edge is defined by a 7 m high wall with a fence on top of it. The newly proposed intervention shows a way to enter the interstice but does certainly provide the easiest way to get there. Thereby it will trigger curiosity for what is up there but not everyone is willing to take the hurdle, thereby preventing too many people to come in. The shape of the ladders is a reference to the former function of the tracks



**Route: the tracks**

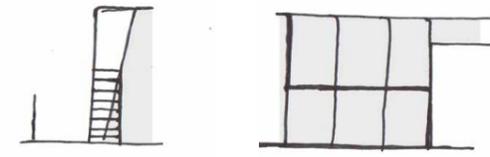


**The route on the tracks:**

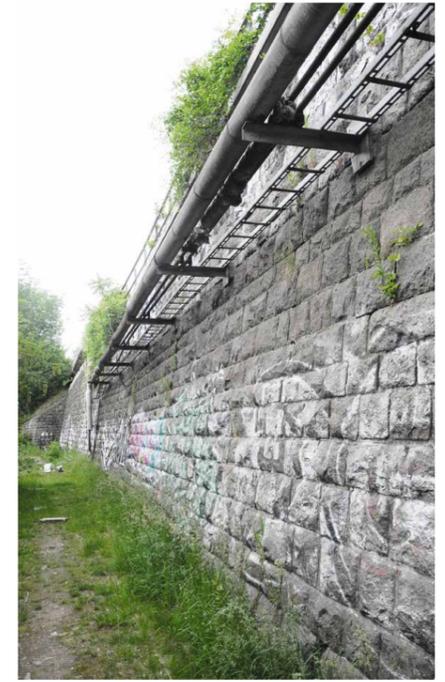
This intervention solely replaces the concrete sleepers on the parts of the tracks that have been removed. The current ballast stones are very hard to walk on and actually discourage to walk further. For their original function to carry the rails the concrete sleepers are positioned at stepping stone distance, a convenient application that emerged by accident. The sight of the ongoing route over the tracks, almost to the horizon, triggers the eagerness to go see what is there.



### Former entrance to the trainstop



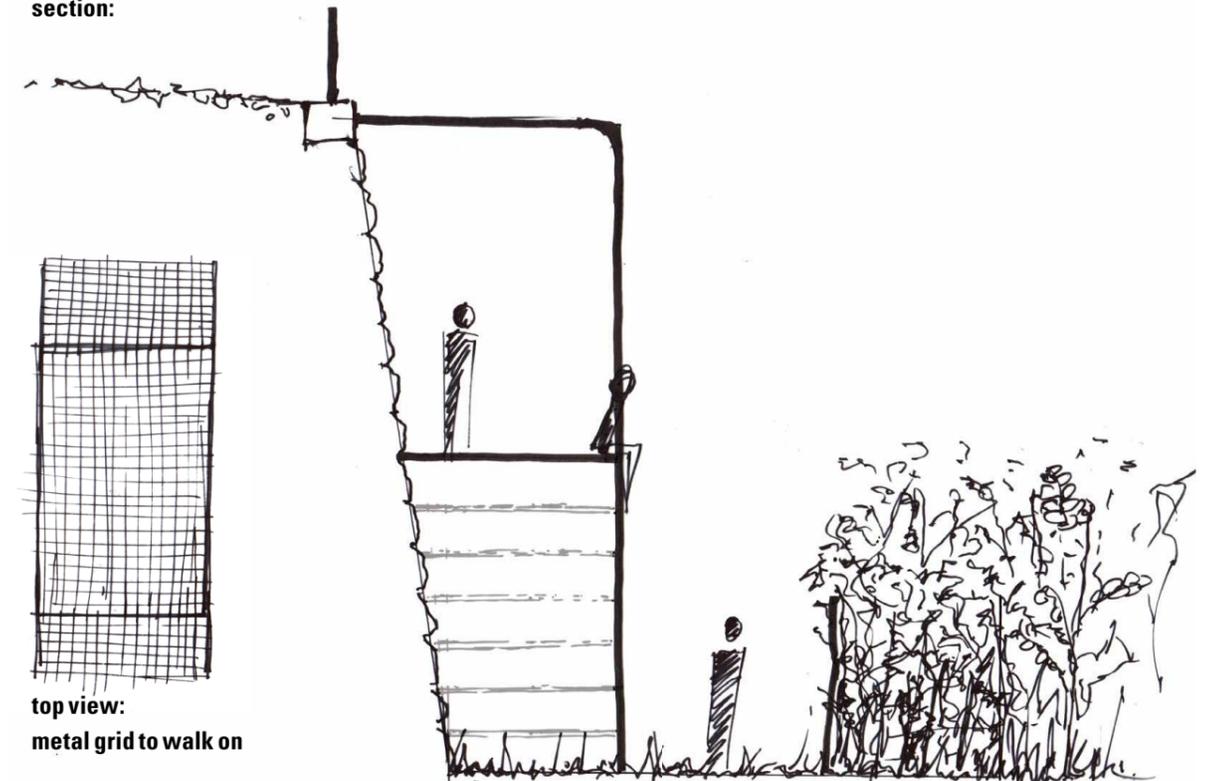
The new construction adds to the ready existing construction on the wall. It creates a possibility to get up to the tracks and simultaneously it is functions as an extension of the popular viewpoint, but on a different level. Users can sit on the construction and are able to see over the vegetation of the field but they do not interfere with the viewpoint on top. Creates a lively atmosphere around the entrance, increases social control which might discourage fly tipping. It is an open frame, if wanted people can elaborate the construction with their own initiatives.



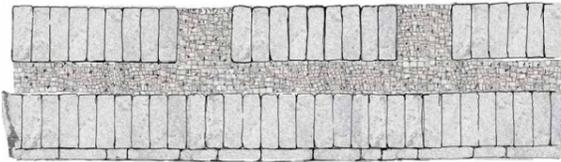
The current situation



section:

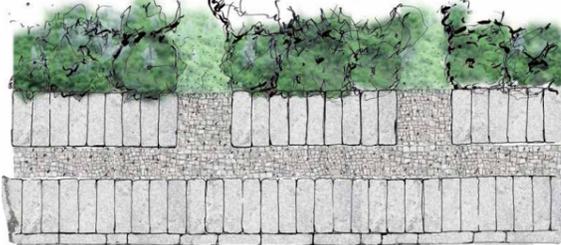


**Step 0**



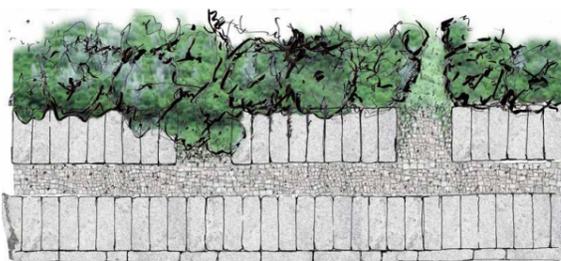
**Intervention:** Extension of the typical sidewalk granite slabs in the direction of the interstice.

**Step 1: t=0 years**

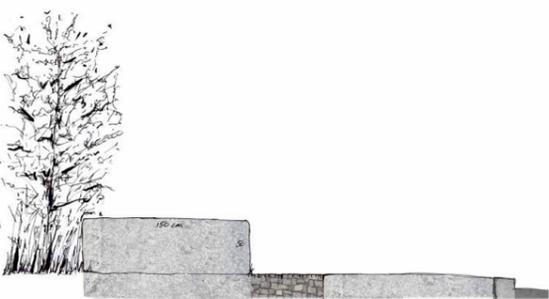


**Mowing of the vegetation in the openings between the elevated granite slabs. Mown straight into the interstice till the closest clearing is reached.**

**Step 2: t=5 years**



**Counting on two processes:** First, people will use some of the openings as entrances, thereby keeping them free from new trees. Secondly, vegetation will successionaly overtake the paving. Both processes make the extension of the sidewalk a transition zone between the sidewalk and the interstice.



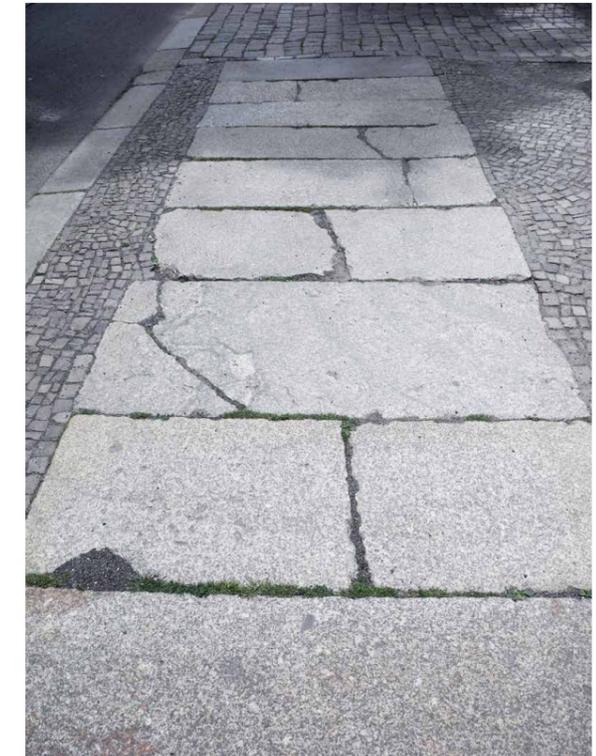
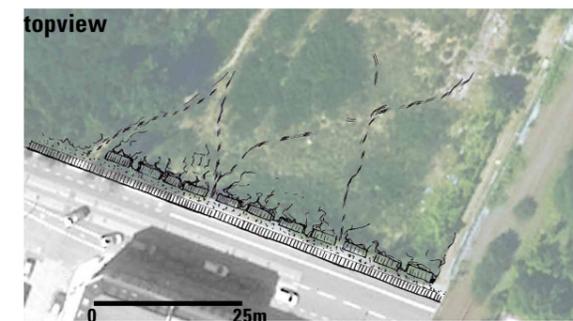
the granite slabs that are placed at the edge of the interstice are 50cm higher than the sidewalk. Thereby providing an element to sit on and, when standing on it apossibility to oversee the field and take a look at the abandoned factory building.

**South edge**



**Current situation at the edge**

**Multiple smaller openings,**  
As a first measure the vegetation in the openings will be mown up to the closest clearing to give all of them a similar chance at becoming an entrance.

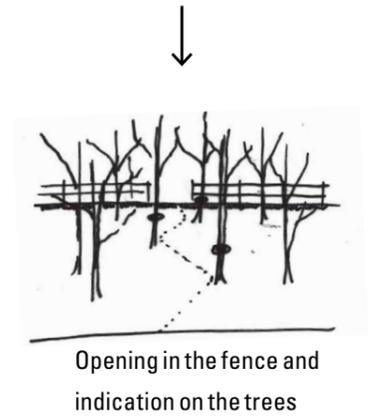
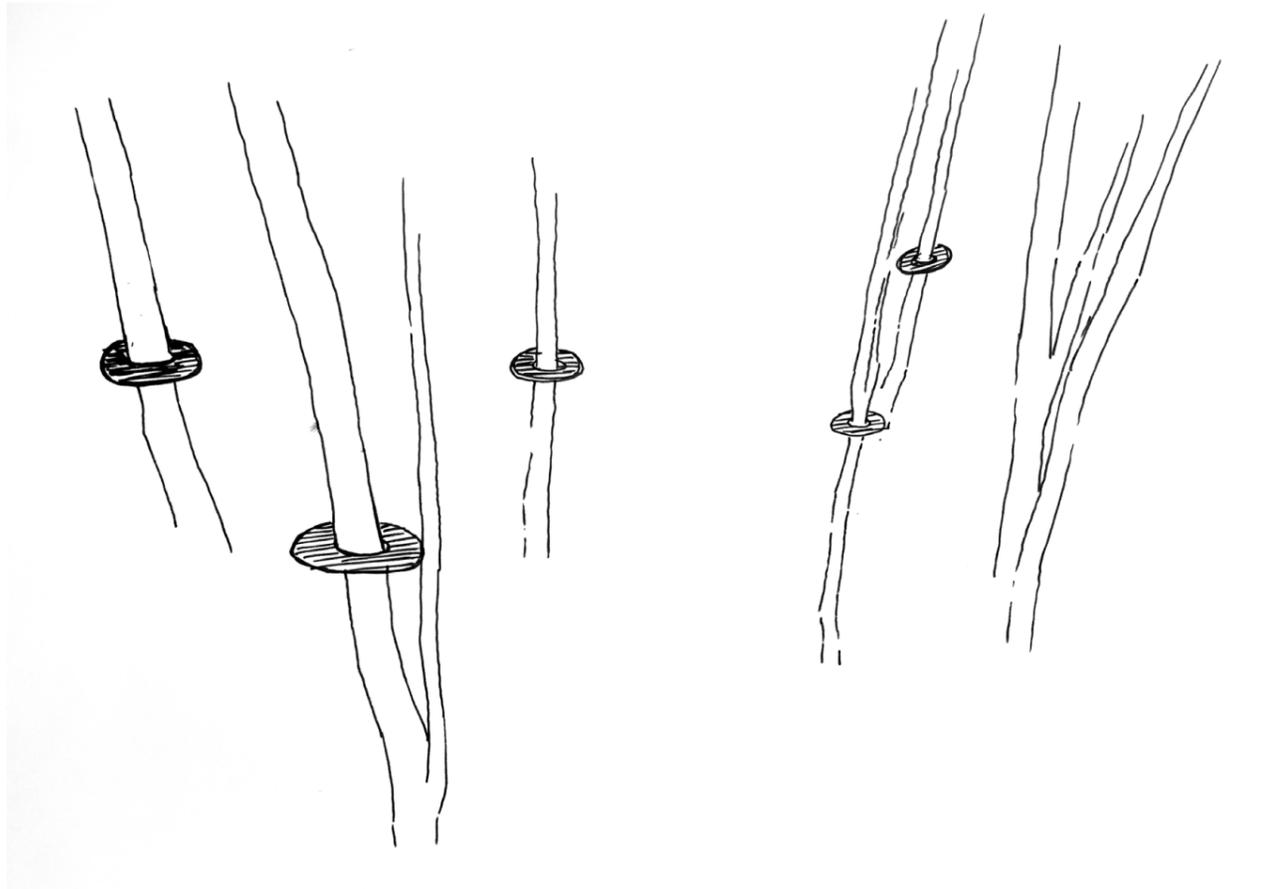


In the entire city of Leipzig the typical granite slabs can be found as material on the sidewalk. Next to the big stones is a mosaik of smaller stones that fills up any remaining distance between the curb stones or the buildings. The stones have a dimension of 150x50. Sometimes they break, then the cracks get filled up with the smaller mozaik or grass starts growing inbetween.

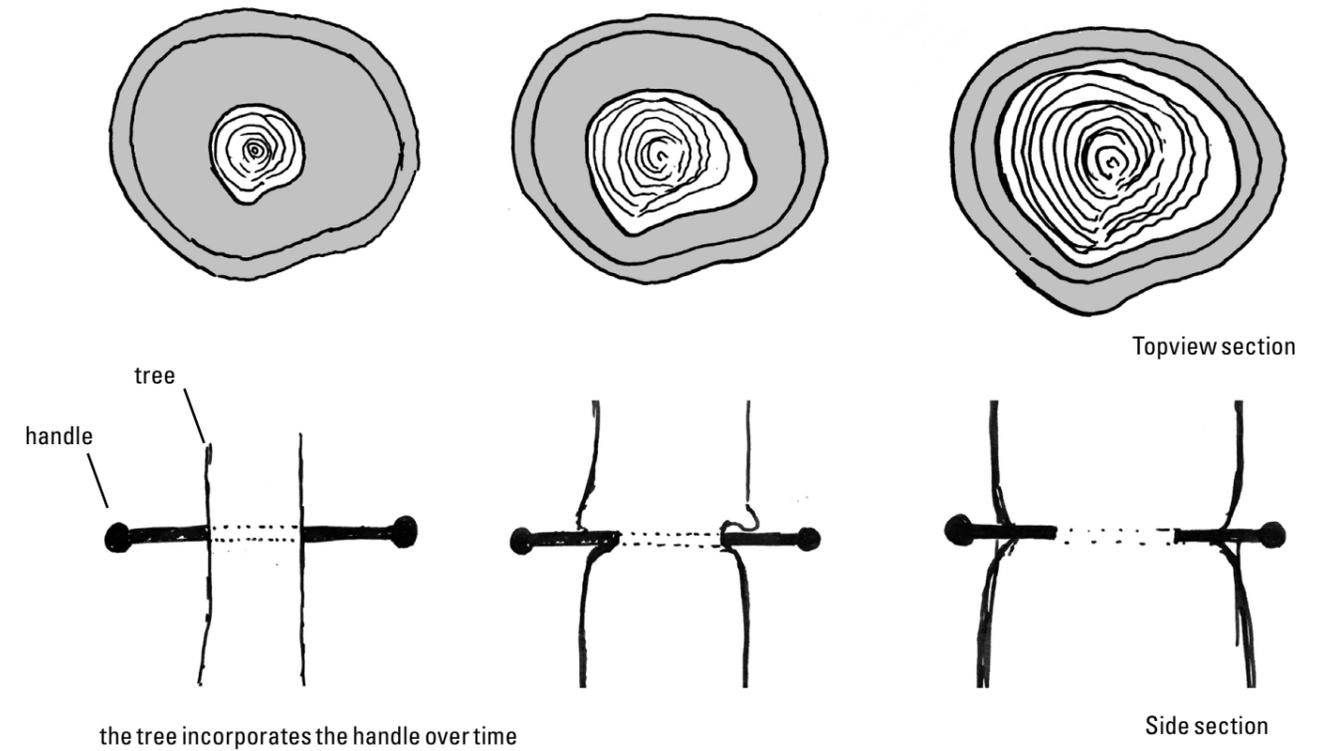
Some will be taken in use as entrances while others get overgrown with vegetation.



**Connection between the field and the tracks**



On two locations the fence along the trainstop is opened up. There are a few handles on the trunks of selected trees to indicate a way to get up. People can hold on to the handles when moving up, they are thereby creating the path by eroding the slope around the roots of the trees. The handles are installed when the trees are still relatively young, they will keep growing and in this way incorporating the handle into the trunk.





## CONCLUSION

### **Urban interstitial spaces as additional type of public green space**

**Earlier research has pointed to the idea that interstitial spaces may very well serve the diverse needs of urban inhabitants. Beyond my personal intuition, it is now also my research experience that interstices are disposed to function as additional type of public green space. However, an important condition for interstices to fulfill this function seems to rest on the question whether an appropriate design approach is taken when dealing with the interstices. This thesis provides such an approach: an alternative approach for developing urban interstitial spaces, alternative to the so often applied tabula rasa approach. The aim of the approach is to increase publicness of urban interstitial spaces without fully formalizing the green space. In my alternative approach the following elements come to the fore.**

#### **Genius loci**

In designing for the urban interstice the characteristics of the specific site should be the point of entry. What one finds at the interstice, albeit human activity or traces of human activity, should be the leading inspiration for the design. Thus, the designer draws inspiration from processes, forms and human activity that takes place on interstice. This is because it is the current state of the interstice that creates the conditions in which the interstice can host and facilitate the diverse uses and, in doing so, distinguishes it from the formal green space. In brief, extensive site analysis should pay attention to precisely those characteristics of the interstice that set it apart from its formal surroundings.

#### **Cues of intention to show that the place is intended as it is**

In order to increase publicness, the physical appearance of the interstice ought to communicate that the site is intended as it is - not barren land waiting for development. Without going as far as trying to please each and every visitor, but nonetheless showing that the space has the right to exist.

If the appearance of the site is able to transfer the sense of intention, than that can be the difference between seeing the messy landscape as dumping ground or appreciating it as urban green space (Nassauer, 1995). Thus, the design interventions on the interstice are, and should be, the cues of intention, showing that the site is intended as it is, without changing

the entire spatial appearance. Simply put, the interventions do not to dominate the landscape but find a way to stage the 'messiness' in way that reflects intention.

#### **Flexibility as to different levels of formality between interventions**

Within the area of one interstice it is important to evaluate what level of formality the different interventions need.

Since the question was to increase publicness without formalizing the green space, the aim should therefore be to stay close to the informality of the interstice. Yet, sometimes, a specific intervention asks for a more formal approach. Subdividing the site into categories – such as edges and entrances, routing, program and activities, alterations to the site and leftovers - gives the designer the freedom to, for each category, apply more formal interventions or informal interventions if needed. In this way, my approach provides flexibility in the level of informality between interventions.

#### **Interventions should be a means to prompt certain behaviors and trigger curiosity**

Rather than providing an ultimate state, or a design that predefines 'uses', interventions are meant for the users of the interstice to come up with their own uses, which in turn allows the users of the interstice – human or nonhuman – to shape and give form to the site. In practice, this means that the designer creates design interventions that trigger a certain behavior without completely predefining the use of the site. So, instead of explicitly defining an element of the site, the interventions should incite curiosity for users to give meaning to elements of the site; rather than setting a path into stone, the interventions should incite curiosity for users to determine their own paths. Users, in this case, can be understood to vary between humans (a woman walking on a patch to create a path) or nonhumans (a shrub that grows to cover a path).

# DISCUSSION



## Of theory

The theoretical discussion on the concept of publicness and what it means in relation to different spaces is one of high complexity. Multiple researchers define dimensions of publicness with a high level of commonality and slight differences. I have decided to work with the dimensions of Langstraat and van Melik (2013) who define Ownership, management, accessibility and inclusiveness. For the sake of feasibility of my research I have opted to focus specifically on accessibility and inclusiveness as dimensions for publicness of interstitial spaces. Ownership and management frequently seem to be hurdle in the discussion on interstitial spaces and more often than not lead to a dead-end rather than provide directions to a solution. For the feasibility of this research, with a focus on design interventions, I have chosen to leave them out. This does certainly not mean that they are unimportant, finding fitting ownership management constructions around urban interstitial spaces might even be inspiration for future research.

## Of case

Per definition, any interstice is part of a larger location, surrounded by a larger urban environment and – most importantly – sits in a specific socio-cultural context. The way urban inhabitants make use of the interstitial spaces is thus always based on its cultural context. In this way, the geographic location of the selected research sites plays an important role as to how people make use of the sites. Germany, for instance, has an emancipated society and it would seem that the concept of interstitial space ties into the German urban culture. Ideally, to draw conclusions about interstitial spaces in more general terms, my research of the selected sites in Leipzig should be compared to other urban interstices in Germany and to interstices in different socio-cultural contexts. However, this question was not within the scope of this thesis. Future research could establish whether interstitial sites in Germany might be comparable with other western European interstices on account of a shared cultural context.

## Of methods

The motivation for this research is personal and also certain research methods stay very close to my personal experience, e.g. autoethnography and multisensory walk. This means the research outcomes most certainly have a personal bias. To increase the validity of the information, mixed methods of data collection are applied, e.g. the multi sensory walk is combined with objective observations of the use of space and interviews. Besides this the personal bias implies that I will have to be very considerate of my position and personal background. The fact that I grew up in a prosperous western European city with a high standard of public space will influence the way I look at interstitial spaces as opposed to someone who knows only neglected public space, this will be elaborated on in the discussion of the research.

## Human focused

The research of this thesis is human focussed, hereby missing the great influence of interstitial spaces on non-human life in the city. However even though I did not pay attention to specific ecological habitats in my research questions and methods, I dare say this approach to interstitial spaces does benefit ecological habitats and biodiversity, strictly for the reason that this approach increases diversity in green spaces in the city (Bonthoux, Brun, Di Pietro, Greulich, & Bouché-Pillon, 2014).



**Designing for interstitial space is a contradictio in terminis.**

Earlier, I established how I understand the undefinedness of the interstitial space to be its defining characteristic. However, since the essence of the interstitial space lies in its indeterminacy, then determining it through design, would render the interstice essentially changed.

Be that as it may, I would hold that, even if interstices are essentially undefinable, they are not untouchable for design, on the condition that designers are mindful of the self-transforming nature of the sites. It is the self-transforming interstices that make interstices so inspirational for design.

The indeterminate nature of interstices should not hinder designers to keep researching the delicate line, instead inspire / encourage to look for interventions that expose the inherent value of interstices. The result might be that with finding the right interventions interstitial spaces can more often be an addition to the urban public green space.



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All images by author

Source maps: Google maps

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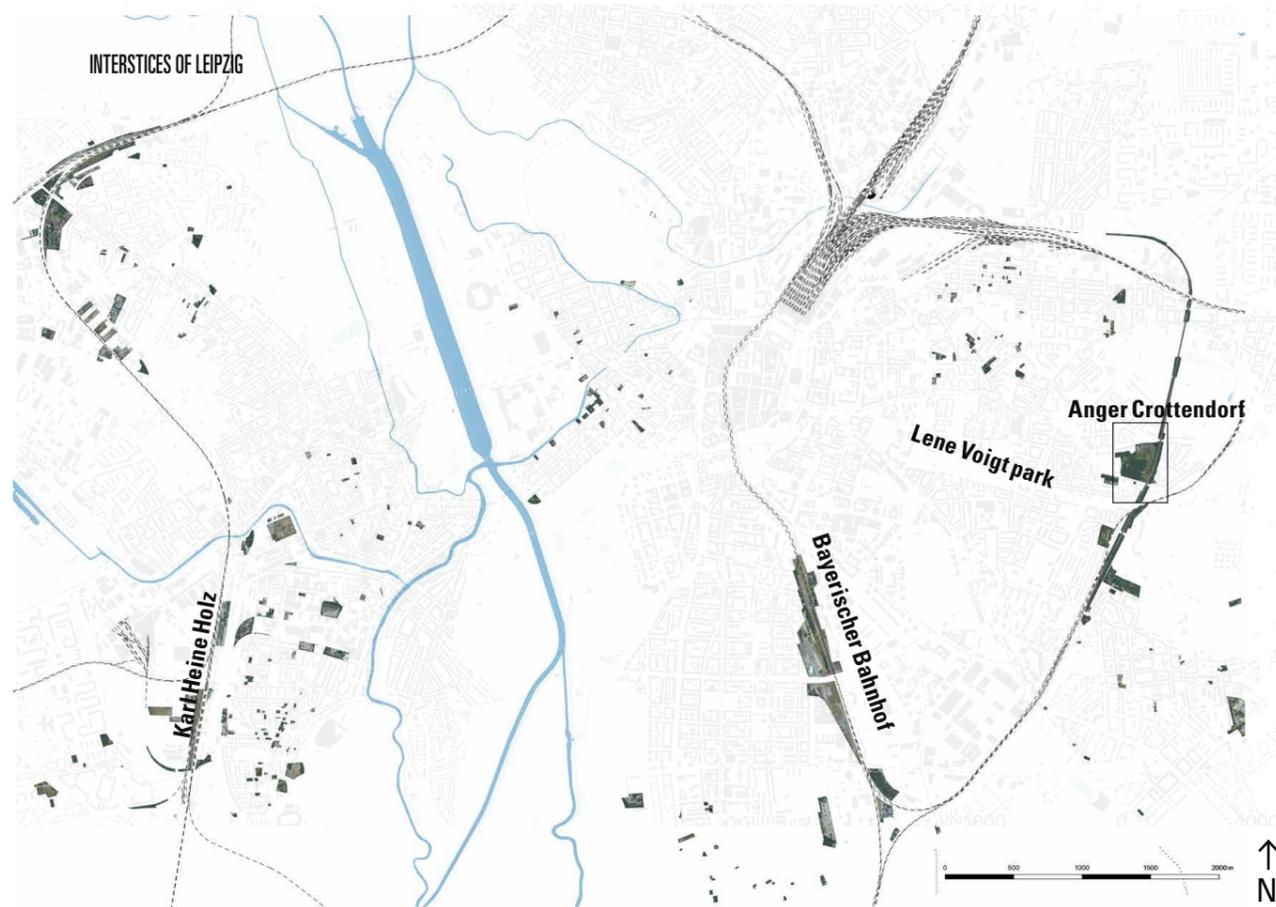


# APPENDIX

# PART 1: ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIOR RESEARCH 4 SELECTED SITES

The four selected locations are current or former interstices. The city of Leipzig expanded drastically in the so called Gründerzeit, an industrial and economically prosperous period between ± 1840 and 1914 with a specific architectural style. The majority of the inner city, except from the medieval center, dates from the Gründerzeit period, and has the urban morphology with the typical building blocks and former industrial areas and train stations along the train tracks. All four sites lie within this recognizable urban morphology and are connected to the railroad network. They are comparable in size but differ from each other in formality. The Lene Voigt park is a completely designed urban park with strong specific program, the park does therefor not appear on the map of the interstices of Leipzig, see map 1. Karl Heine Holz has been

designed but contains large areas of interstitial nature, it appears on the maps in fragments. On the area of Bayerischer Bahnhof municipality interferes with some vegetation management, the planting of some trees and grasses and removal of invasive bushes. The interstitial site in Anger Crottendorf is almost untouched since the end of the former function.

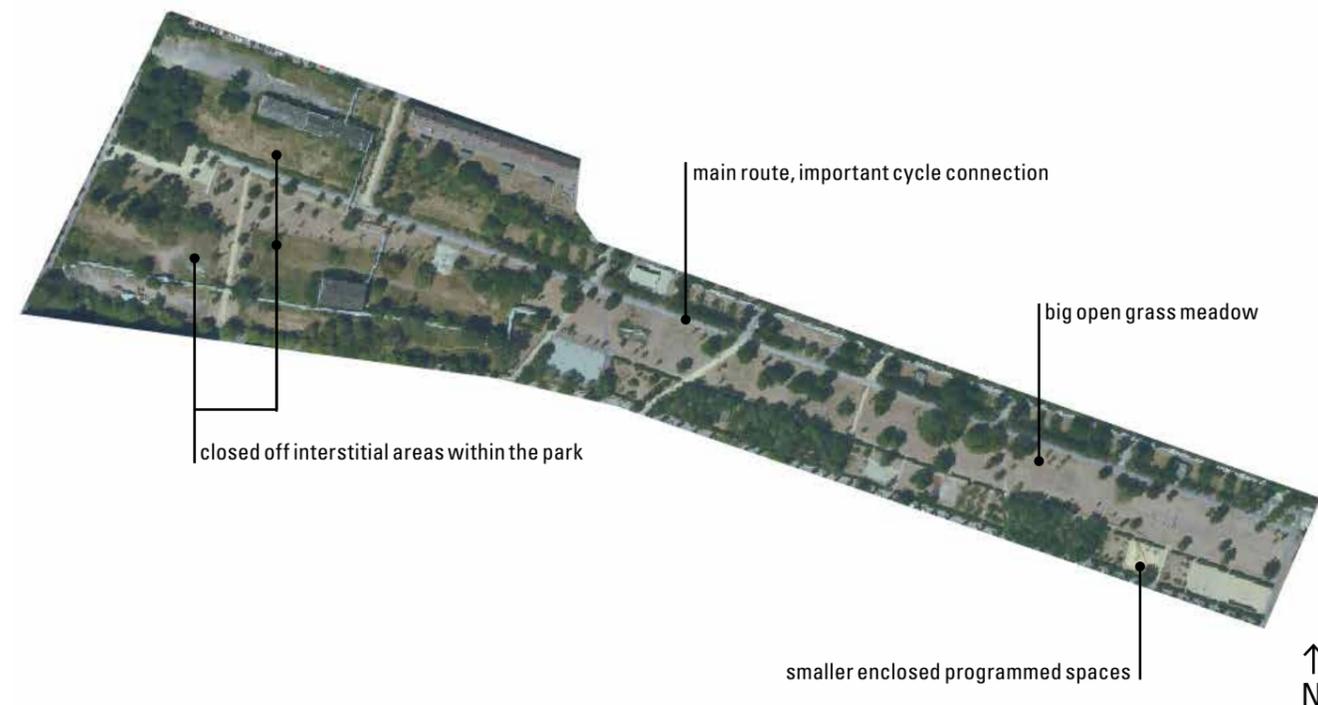


Map 1: Interstitial spaces in Leipzig and location of the four research sites. Data on interstices, received from Prof. Dr D. Haase, Humboldt Universität Berlin

## LENE VOIGT PARK

### INFO

Name: Lene Voigt  
 Location: Leipzig Ost  
 Size: 10 ha  
 Designer: Buero Kiefer  
 Construction: 2001 - Opening: 2004  
 Former function: Eilenburger Bahnhof with tracks established in 1915  
 Surrounding: Grunderzeit building blocks, residential area  
 Interstitial period: 1942–2001



## EDGES AND ENTRANCES



fig 1: The gate



fig 2: 2 Meter high Beech hedge with openings every ±20m.



fig 3: Interstitial edge: Billboards and advertising attached to the basic fence



fig 4: Cheap fences divide the park and the interstitial area



fig 5: People create openings in the fence



fig 6: The fence gets restored



fig 7: Traces of activity in the interstitial area

Lene Voigt park has generally 3 types of edges, which comes with a hierarchy in entrances. Along the north edge the park is defined by a designed fence with an architectural reference to the former function as train station. This fence is bordered by the silver city-heating tubes, above ground at eye level that form an important element in the entire park. Along this edge the entrances are very outspoken, the brought opening (5m) in the fence in combination with the shape of the bending tubes forms a proper gate, see fig 1. Along the entire edge the view onto the park is blocked by the thick tubes, these gates provide the only visual access onto the park. The entrances are connected to the road and relief differences are minimized. These entrances are used by all users at all speeds, from wheelchair, pedestrians, skaters to cyclists.

Towards the south side of the park the edge is defined by a thick Beech hedge of around 2 m high, see fig. 2. Also here the view onto the park is completely blocked apart from the openings in the hedge. The openings are small, about 2m wide, and only when you are right in front you can see into the park. The paths coming from the park are connected to the sidewalk without elevation difference but not directly connected to the road. These entrances are only used by pedestrians.

The 3rd type of edge is the border with the still interstitial areas in the park. Lene Voigt contains 4 areas that are forbidden to enter, they accommodate the abandoned buildings from the former train station and the neglected green space around it. The areas are closed off with the basic green municipality fence that you can find on more locations in Leipzig, at the outer edge billboards and posters are attached to the fence, see fig. 3. The fence is see-through and gives a view onto the spontaneous vegetation and the buildings. From the inside of the park some "forbidden to enter" signs are visible, see fig 4. People have cut open the fences to enter the interstitial sites after which the fences have been restored and again cut open, see fig. 5, 6, 7.

**Inclusiveness:** -Hedge and Fence are well maintained -Hierarchy in entrances for diverse users: 2m wide for slower traffic, 5m wide for combination of all users

**Accessibility:** Visual accessibility through the entrances -No obstructions to enter -No elevation differences with surrounding street or sidewalk -The park is open at all times

## ROUTING

The main connection is the combined bicycle and footpath over the entire east-west length of the park, all along the main grass meadow, see fig. 8. The path is 5-meter-wide and divided in two parts through the use of different material, 2m asphalt and 3m tiles. All alongside the path is a small wall with Birch trees and seating elements which is the main design element of the park. This main route is intensely used by all different users of the park. People sitting at the seating element, parents with baby-carriages, elderly people with a rollator, next to joggers, skaters and cyclists. The number of users and their different speeds regularly poses conflicts.

Second most used are the north-south connections. They connect the gates at the north with the openings in the south and are used by people passing the park in this direction on foot or by bike. The third type differs between 1,5m and 2,5m wide asphalt and is not connected to any entrance, see fig. 9, these paths are mostly used by the people that have the park as a destination instead of merely moving through. Although the paths are accessible for cyclists they are mostly used by pedestrians, probably because the path is too narrow and not directly connected to the surrounding streets. Some of these paths are very visible next to the central open meadow, whereas others are more enclosed, see fig. 10.

Apart from the designed paths there are the informally established paths, see fig. 11, 12, 13, 14, where the users behave differently than planned. Erosions occur for example: in the corners of two paths (almost all corners in the design of the park are straight angles) see fig. 14, or where Informal unplanned activities take place, like the giveaway closet, see fig. 13. The main route in the park is very busy and different speeds and modes of transport conflict each other. Thereafter a desire-path has developed in the grass alongside the paved path, this path is mostly used by joggers during rush hour, see fig. 11.

**Inclusiveness:** Hierarchy in paths system, defined by size, connectedness, materiality and visibility, hosts different types of users but also poses conflicts

**Accessibility:** Materiality width and lighting make paths accessible at all times for wide range of users -Smooth hard surface of the paths without elevation differences make all paths accessible for all users. Pedestrians, rollator, baby carriage, skaters, cyclists



fig 8: Main route, bicycle and pedestrian, important east-west connection in the city



fig 9: Narrower path, used by slower traffic



fig 10: Smallest path, more enclosed



fig 11: Desire-path along the main route, mostly used by joggers during rush hour



fig 12: Well established desire path next to main entrance



fig 13: Erosions around informal program



fig 14: Erosions in the corners, even after adjustments

## PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES



fig 15: Volleyball field, enclosed by Beech hedges



fig 16: Ping-pong facilities



fig 17: Playgrounds for specific age groups



fig 18: Erosions on open field for different activities



fig 19: "Traditional" park bench



fig 20: "Modern" seating element along the main route and grass meadow



fig 21: Different ways of sitting

Lene Voigt park has different types of spaces for different activities. The spaces are specifically designed for certain uses. There are sport terrains for volleyball, Ping-pong, basketball and football, and playgrounds for separate specific age groups, see fig. 15, 16, 17. The spaces for this specific program are enclosed by beech hedges that block the visibility from the street and the rest of the park. Next to these smaller spaces for specific uses there is the bigger open field in the middle, over the entire length of the park. This field with short cut grass hosts different uses like sports, games and people sitting or lying down in different group compositions, see fig 18. The field is completely open and bordered by the main route through the park in combination with the main seating element alongside it. This creates maximum visibility of the activities on the field, a very high level of see and be seen. The park is very popular and all spaces are used intensively, you can see the erosions on the grass meadow.

The orientation of activities in the park is focused on seeing and being seen. All seating elements are oriented towards the programmed spaces or the central open meadow. There is a difference in design of seating elements, and I observed that different types of users make use of them in a different way. For example, elderly people sit more often on the more "traditional" park bench than on the "modern" bench, see fig.19 and 20. The latter is used in myriad ways, see fig. 21.

**Inclusiveness:** -Diversity of open meadow bordered by enclosed programmed spaces hosts diverse activities for a wide range of users -Short cut grass on the open meadow hosts different types of activities -Inclusive atmosphere through close combination of seating elements and other program. -Different types of seating elements are used by different users.

**Accessibility:** -Central grass meadow with flexible program has maximum physical and visual access from inside the park, 100% see and be seen. -Enclosed programmed spaces (e.g. sport, playground) surrounded by hedges, physical and visual accessibility that fits the specific program. -Playgrounds and sport fields are closed at nighttime.

## ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE

Informal alterations to Lene Voigt park are either illegal or unwanted. Changes done by users are mostly discouraged and removed. For example:

**Discouraged:** multiple trees in the park have golden nameplates, see fig 22, this will a.o. discourage people to cut or harm the tree. Who would cut a tree with a golden nameplate?

**Removed:** Another example is the informally established giveaway closet, see fig. 23. People come by to donate clothes or other goods and others seek for things they might need. The closet is frequently used, almost always at least one person is making use of the facility, see the erosions on the grass on fig. 13. In February the closet was inside an informally constructed wooden shelter, see fig. 23, but in June the shelter had been removed, leaving the giveaway closet continuing in cardboard boxes, see fig. 24 a+b.

Users of the park cut holes in the fence to enter the interstitial sites within the park. These openings are being repaired, but park users are persistent and the cuts are opened again and again, see fig. 5 and 6.

**Tolerated:** Alterations in the form of graffiti is widely present on all possible surfaces in the park and seems to not be removed, note that in the context of Leipzig this is no exception, see for example fig. 19, 20.

**Inclusiveness and accessibility:** In this case there is no example that facilitates the inclusiveness or accessibility of Lene Voigt park

## LEFTOVERS

Lene Voigt is a busy park. Users leave trash lying around, trash bins get overfull and inappropriate trash like washing machines get dumped in or outside the park, see fig. 25, 26. The municipality is responsible, and the park gets cleaned on a daily basis.

**Inclusiveness:** Trash bins are emptied daily and traces of fly-tipping are removed

**Accessibility:** Trash bins are accessible in the entire park



fig 22: Golden nameplate for the trees



fig 23: Giveaway closet in February



fig 24a: Giveaway closet in June on a sunny day



fig 24b: Giveaway closet in June after the rain



fig 25: Trash bins fill up and get emptied every day

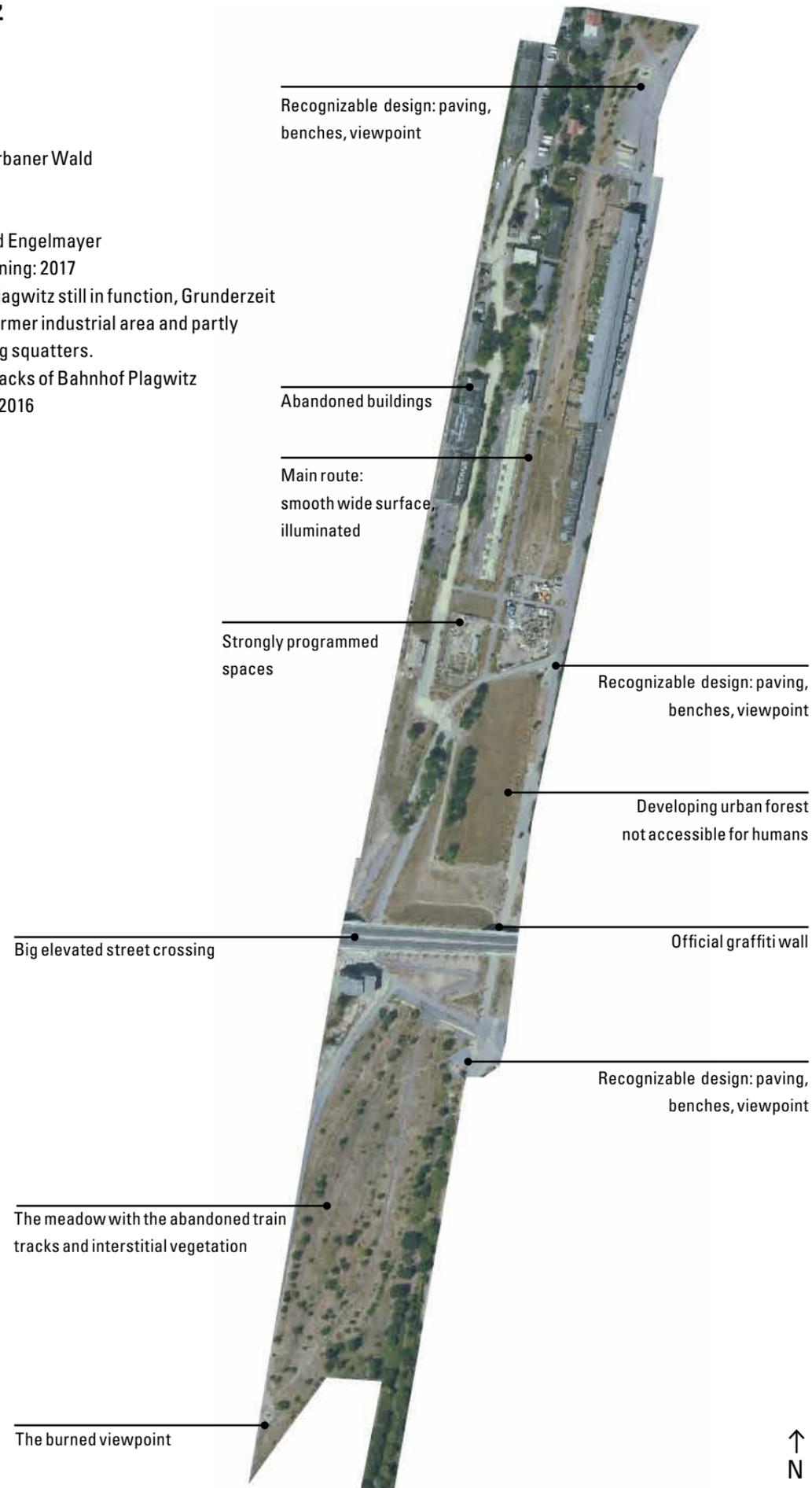


fig 26: Traces of fly-tipping are removed

# KARL HEINE HOLZ

## INFO

Name: Karl Heine Holz Urbaner Wald  
 Location: Leipzig West  
 Size: 10,5 ha  
 Designer: Büro Burkhard Engelmayer  
 Construction: 2016 - Opening: 2017  
 Surrounding: Bahnhof Plagwitz still in function, Grunderzeit building blocks, partly former industrial area and partly residential area including squatters.  
 Former function: Train tracks of Bahnhof Plagwitz  
 Interstitial period: 1989-2016



## EDGES AND ENTRANCES

Karl Heine Holz next to Plagwitz Bahnhof has no clearly defined edges like Lene Voigt has, the edges of the green space extend till the border of the neighboring functions. Instead of clearly defined edges, some repeating design elements define the extend of the park and the entrances of the different areas. The entrées are marked with the same recognizable paving, seating element, elevated viewpoint and/or a name indication of the park, see fig. 27, 28, 29, 32. On several locations the entrance includes an information board, explaining the transition of the site and the ecological quality of the interstitial vegetation, see fig. 30.

**Inclusiveness:** -Recognizable repeating design elements define the diverse edge of the park  
 -“Entrances” of different parts of the park are combined with seating elements and information boards, creating a welcoming atmosphere

**Accessibility:** -No obstructions to enter or see onto the site



fig 28: Repeating element marks the entrance



fig 29: Recognizable paving and seating element



fig 30: Information boards at the entrance



fig 27: Repeating element marks the entrance



fig 32: Name indication

## ROUTING



fig 33: Informal paths over the railway remnants



fig 34: Gravel path to give direction



fig 35: Path develops where obstacles (rails) end



fig 36: Informal paths from the main route into interstitial area without obstruction

There exists a hierarchy in the paths system, in this case the range extends from the main illuminated bicycle road to informally established paths. Main routes are between 3 and 5 m wide illuminated asphalt roads that are without elevation difference connected to the surrounding road system, see fig 37 and 38. This main route is an important bicycle connection in the neighborhood and intensely used to move through by cyclists, skaters and pedestrians. Like in Lene Voigt, seating elements are connected to the main route, see fig. 38, this combination of staying and moving through sustains social life in the green space.

Apart from the main routes the paths are more informal, see fig. 33, users of the park are free to find their way through the green space that has remnants of the previous function as a train depot. The design has very delicate ways of indicating the paths. Either there is no path, only a "landmark" or destination further away, e.g. a gate or a viewpoint, see fig. 33, 34 and 36. Or there is a very subtle indication through a gravel path starting from the recognizable "entrance", see fig. 34. The more informal paths are used only by pedestrians.

**Inclusiveness:** -Hierarchy in paths: range from illuminated 5m asphalt road to intentionally informally established paths, hosts wide range of users -Combination of main routes and seating elements sustains social life in the park

**Accessibility:** -Main routes are well connected to surrounding network -Materiality, width and lighting make the main route accessible at all times for wide range of users



fig 37: Main bicycle road, illuminated and well connected



fig 38: Main bicycle road, linked to program and repeating seating elements

## PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

The park has generally three types of program, ranging from informal to formal. A large area of the park contains the meadows with ruderal vegetation and the abandoned train tracks, here the program is almost completely undetermined see fig. 41 and 42. Only at the entrée next to the main route are information boards on ecological succession and the value of the interstitial vegetation, see fig.30, besides that people can find their own paths and create their own activities with what the area contains.

Second general type is linked to the recognizable entrances of the different parts of the park along the main route. The spots are recognizably similar in the same paving, seating element but differ from each other with an object that differs per entrance; this can be a set of rocks to climb on, big swings or a climbing frame/viewpoint, see fig.39, 40 and 27. No rules or instructions are indicated, and there is no fence around the program to close it off at nighttime.

Furthermore the park contains: a community vegetable garden (membership required), a bar and music stage (open for organized events), a football field, and a wood construction playground site for children (closed in winter). This third type of program, is community based, the different areas are surrounded by a fence and all have their own rules and opening hours, see fig. 43,44,45.

**Inclusiveness:** -Difference between informal and formal program hosts diverse activities for a wide range of users.

**Accessibility:** -All formal program is accessible via main route but has specific target audience and opening hours -All interstitial areas of the site are accessible via intended informal paths



fig 39: Recognizable paving and seating element



fig 40: Recognizable paving and seating element



fig 41: Repeating element marks the entrance



fig 42: Meadows with abandoned train tracks



fig 43: Wood construction site for children



fig 44: Rules and regulations for the community garden



45: Entrance of the bar and music venue

## ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE



fig 46: Self organised BBQ spot on the rails, incl trash bins



fig 47: Wooden planks in the climbing tree



fig 48: Art installations with found objects



fig 49: The burned viewpoint

Alterations to the site are allowed up till a certain point. Like described before, the park has different areas with different levels of formality, these areas differ clearly from each other concerning the presence of informal alterations. The more formal programmed areas of the park contain no informal alterations, either they do not occur or they are removed. The more interstitial areas with abandoned train tracks and buildings are less determined and contain multiple alterations. Examples of allowed alterations are: a self-constructed seating element around a bbq fireplace on the abandoned tracks made from the wooden sleepers, see fig.46, a tree with wooden planks that serves for climbing, see fig. 47, art installations made from found materials, see fig. 48. An official "graffiti wall" provides alterations of this kind. Alterations to the site that are not allowed: Some users had set the viewpoint on fire after which it has been repaired. Alterations in the sense of burning the key design elements of the park is not allowed, see fig. 49.

**Inclusiveness:** - Alterations are allowed in the interstitial parts of the park -Alterations that have a negative influence on the inclusivity are removed or repaired, like burning or destroying elements of the park

## LEFTOVERS

The park has trash bins and other leftovers that are dumped by users is removed on a daily basis

**Inclusiveness:** Trash bins are emptied daily and traces of fly-tipping are removed

**Accessibility:** Trash bins are accessible in the entire park



fig 50: Pallets and shopping carts as leftovers

## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

### Accessibility

### Inclusiveness

#### EDGES AND ENTRANCES

-Visual permeability through edge or entrance

-Avoiding 'worthless' image of the edges

-Entrances linked to surrounding network without obstructions

-Hierarchy in entrances for diverse users

- Seating elements are located at the entrances to sustain social life around the entrance

#### ROUTING

- Main routes are well connected to surrounding network

-Hierarchy in path system, in materiality, width and level of formality, allows diverse users

-Materiality, width and lighting make paths accessible at all times for wide range of users

-Combination of staying (seating elements) and moving through (routing) creates inclusive atmosphere

-Smooth hard surface of the paths without elevation differences make main route accessible for all users. E.g. pedestrians, rollator, baby carriage, cyclists, skaters

#### PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

-Differences between visual and physical access that fits the specific program

-Diversity in spaces, in size, open and enclosedness and formality of the program hosts diverse activities

-Making it possible to observe other people doing activities creates an inclusive atmosphere

#### ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE

- Alterations that serve other users are allowed

-Alterations that have a negative influence on the inclusivity are removed or repaired, like burning or destroying elements of the green space

#### LEFTOVERS

-Trash bins are accessible in the entire park

-Trash bins are emptied daily  
-Other trash is regularly removed

# BAYERISCHER BAHNHOF

## INFO

Name: Bayerischer Bahnhof

Location: Leipzig South East

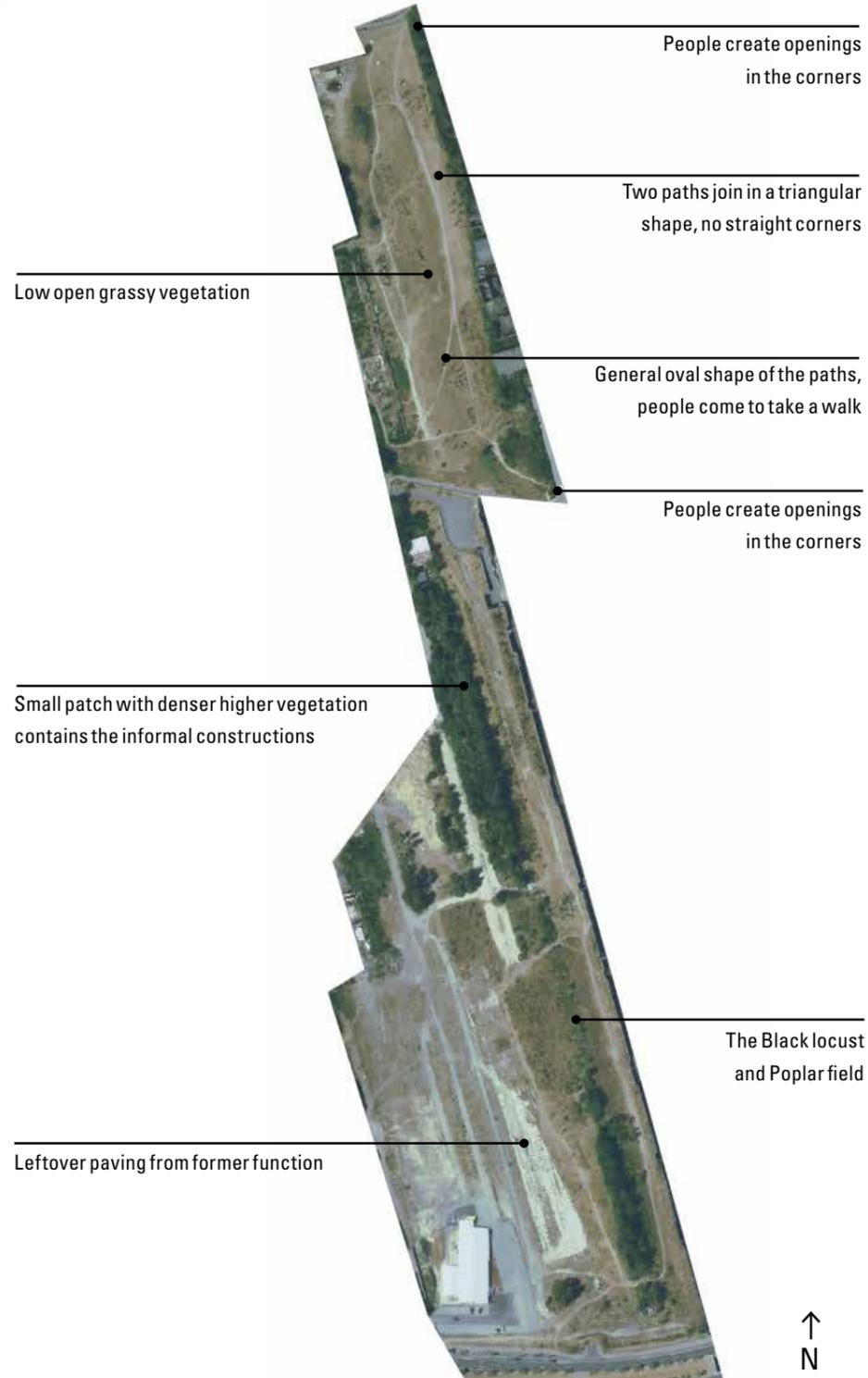
Size: 10,2 ha

Designer: No design

Former function: Train tracks of

Bayerischer Bahnhof, established 1842

Interstitial period: ?? – current



## EDGES AND ENTRANCES

Edges of Bayerischer Bahnhof have big differences in how accessible they are. They are defined by: a metro line (completely impassable), overgrown abandoned industrial buildings (not much passing through), standard municipality fences, see fig.55 (can be cut open when needed) or a street without separation (completely open). The vegetation is generally low ruderal grassy vegetation which allows high visibility onto the site.

People enter the site where it is relatively easiest, this means at remnants of former gates see fig. 56 and 57, or an opening in the vegetation. Some parts of the area are surrounded by a fence, here people have made openings in the fence to be able to enter the field, see fig. 53,54 and 58. The openings in the fence are mostly placed in the corners of the area, only if there is not an easier option available within 50m.

There are different formal and informal messages at the entrances. The formal sign "Betreten verboten" is covered by leaves and does not seem to influence people's behavior see fig.51. The informal NO COPS NO NAZIS is a slogan of the antifa movement, who are widely present in Leipzig, the slogan is often visible at the interstitial sites, see fig 52.



fig 55: Municipality fence along one of the edges



fig 56: Former gate as entrance



fig 57: Former gate as entrance



fig 51: Formal sign "Betreten verboten"



fig 53: Openings in the fence



fig 52: Informal sign, Antifa slogan



fig 54: Openings in the fence



fig 58: Openings in the fence

## ROUTING



fig 59: Eroded path in February, no straight corners



fig 60: Three diverging paths from one entrance



fig 61a: Feb, second path to avoid the puddle



fig 62: Path avoids the wet areas in February



fig 61b: Jun, two parallel paths



fig 63: A small path over the hill, a bigger one around it

The routes on the field are produced by pedestrians, they are generally 20-40cm sand or mud where the grass has eroded after much trampling, see fig. 59 and 60. Much used paths are completely sandy whereas less popular routes exist of trampled grass, see fig. 63.

Not one corner between paths is a straight one, they are connected in a kind of triangular shape in different sizes. The majority of the users comes to the site to take a walk, which results in the general oval shape of the paths on the field, at the corners connected to the entrances. Within this general shape the path changes direction when confronted with: -wet ground or puddle, see fig. 61 a+b and 62, elevation difference, see fig. 63, shrubs or group of trees or a single tree.

## PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

The activities are influenced by the physical appearance of the site, the site contains an open field with low grassy vegetation and a smaller more enclosed part with densely growing 7 m high trees. The activities in the two vegetation types differ from each other.

Traces of / or activities I observed on the open field:

Walking the dog and meeting other dog owners, see fig. 65 -traces: paths, trampled grass, dog poop

Taking a walk (often either calling or in deep thoughts, sometimes with a cigarette), see fig. 67, -traces: paths

Walking slowly while closely observing plants and stones (most often parents or grandparents with children)

Picking flowers berries and branches - traces: paths

Birdwatching, see fig. 64, - traces: paths

Making a drawing on the pieces of paving with found objects, see fig 66 a+b, - traces: chalk drawings on the paving

Flying a drone and flying a kite.

The observed activities could generally be divided in two types of activities. One concerned dog walking and the social side of meeting other dog owners, on the interstice people feel the freedom to let their dog off the leash, dog owners indicate that that is the reason they prefer this interstice above a park. The other types of activities linked to what the site has to offer, people seem to be aware of the surroundings and are either closely observing the environment or feel the freedom to take something from the site. It was notable that non of the activities contained sitting down on the field, everyone was standing or walking.

In the more enclosed part of the site, which covered 20x150m (relatively small), if found traces of different type of activities (See next page for more information):

-Building or altering constructions

-Living

Note that these are the activities that I have observed, found the traces of or heard about by interviewing people, there may be many other activities taking place.



fig 65: Dog owners meet on a daily basis



fig 66a: Drawing on pavement ...



fig 66b: ... with available material



fig 64: Birdwatching



fig 67: Taking a walk in deep thoughts

## ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE



fig 68: Hut from available branches



fig 69: Constructed steps to cover the elevation



fig 70a: Please do not destroy our tipi!



fig 70b: Garbage bag to collect the trash

Alterations are most evident in the small part with the higher dense vegetation. This 20x150m patch of densely placed narrow trees hosted some main alterations:

- A hut built from available tree trunks and branches, with a sign asking not to destroy the construction, it includes a trash bag to be able to collect the garbage, see fig 68 and 70a+b.
- Steps to cover the elevation difference, made from available material: a piece of wood and a car wheel, see fig.69.
- In the most enclosed part someone created a place to live, using the seclusion of the dense placement of the tree trunks as shelter for a temporal place to live.

Alterations of this kind are not present on the open field with low vegetation.

## LEFTOVERS

There are no trash bins on the interstice but people find other ways to organize the collection of trash on the site.

A shopping cart is used as an alternative trash bin, see fig. 71, a homeless person came by to collect the deposit bottles from the cart. There are no traces of fly-tipping at Bayerischer Bahnhof. There is a possibility that the municipality takes care of removing the trash because there is municipal vegetation management on the site as well, but this is only a guess.



fig 71: Shopping cart used as trash bin

# ANGER CROTTENDORF

## INFO

Name: "Danger Crottendorf" "The paper factory"  
 Location: Leipzig Ost, Anger Crottendorf district  
 Size: 7,8 ha  
 Designer: No design  
 Former function:  
 Karl Krause Maschinenfabrik Polygrafischer Maschinenbau  
 Factory building for production of bookbinding machinery  
 and apprentice workshop, established 1914  
 Interstitial period: 1994 – current



## EDGES AND ENTRANCES

Anger Crottendorf has great differences in types of the edges and entrances with different levels of accessibility and inclusiveness. In this case the vegetation structure on the site is denser, above all in spring and summer, which makes it really hard to see onto the site from the street. The public edges are defined by:

**North edge:** An impassible and indestructible but see-through fence next to the abandoned factory building, Heras fences block the former entrance to the train stop. **East edge:** All along the east edge is the elevated train tracks, a steep slope with thick high trees up to the 7m elevated tracks. **South edge:** Remnants of an old natural stone wall ±60cm high with Birch and Black locust trees behind it, see fig.72a+b, Heras fences with three advertising billboards with very young Black locust and Poplar trees behind it.

**West edge:** On the west side the interstice borders a wellness center, that has invested in a 3 m high stone wall to keep the messy vegetation away from their clean-cut meadow.

People enter preferably where there is the highest visibility and lowest amount of obstacles, if there is an obstacle that is destructible or passible than that is the second best option.

In order of ease and visibility:

- Former entrances, see fig. 77a+b
- Strip with low cut grass next to dense forest see fig. 74
- Opening between the curbstones, see fig 75
- Bypassing the cheap fences or denser vegetation, see fig. 73a+b and 76.

People do not enter where there is a barrier in the form of:

- An old wall 60cm high, see fig. 72a+b (easier option available within 50m)
- An indestructible fence 3m high, North edge



fig 74: Lower cut grass next to the dense forest is preferred as an entrance onto the site.



fig 75: An opening in the curbstones triggers a path onto the site



fig 76: Bypassing the Heras obstacle



fig 72a: Feb. The old stone wall with Birch trunks



fig 73a: Feb, entrance directly next to denser vegetation. Visible trash in winter months



fig 77a: 2008 East entree to the elevated trainstop



fig 72b: Jun. The old stone wall with Black locust leaves



fig 73b: Jun, entrance directly next to denser vegetation. Trash is covered in spring and summer



fig 77b: 2020 Same location, current path to train stop

## ROUTING



fig 78a: Paths meander through the forest



fig 78b: Paths meander through the forest



fig 79: Paths can be "fixed" adorned with found objects



fig 80a: Feb. path on the field



fig 80b: Jun. path on the field



fig 81: Trees as steps and handles to cover the elevation difference



fig 81a: The abandoned train stop



fig 81b: The concrete sleepers

The routes at Anger Crottendorf are all created by pedestrian users, they are narrow and exist of eroded surface by trampling. On the site there are generally three different landscape types: the forest, the field and the elevated tracks. The paths are different in the different surroundings:

**Forest:** In the forest the paths meander through the trees, see fig. 78a+b. In the forest are multiple constructions like shelters or tree houses, the paths close to those constructions or entering the forest are in some cases adorned with available objects like bricks or pieces of wood, see fig. 79.

**Field:** The field is vegetated by grasses, young Black locust and Poplar trees. The young Black locust trunks have many long thorns which makes large parts impassible, the narrow paths that move in-between are the only way to pass. The abundant presence of the green leaves in spring and summer creates a big difference of experience of the paths between winter and summer. In winter the narrow branches with long thorns let you generally oversee the entire site, see fig. 80a, whereas in summer the leaves block any view and at certain points create tunnels of vegetation, see fig. 80b. The routes are so narrow that when you encounter another person you see them rather late and you have to pass the person very close by, one has to step aside. My guess is that the vegetation on the field is cut away entirely every 5 years and that the paths that exist have been created before the Black locust made new routes impossible.

**Tracks:** The elevation difference between the field and the abandoned train stop is bridged only on one location, where the slope is relatively shallow and the trees on the slope provide enough grip, functioning as steps and handles, see fig. 81. On the abandoned train tracks lie ballast stones, see fig. 81a (very hard to walk on) and on some parts the concrete sleepers, see fig. 81b (perfect steppingstone distance). The tracks are used by people to take a walk, it is possible to follow the tracks pretty far up north.

## PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

-The abandoned factory building seems to be the main attraction, see fig. 82, it is used every day for visiting with friends, to enjoy the view, to make graffiti pieces, to have a beer or have diner. It is officially illegal to enter the building, after sunset this prohibition is enforced by the police (I got fined but thanks to German bureaucracy did not receive the amount of the fine) Traces: paths around and into the building, beer bottles and graffiti pieces

-Walking the dog of the leash is another daily practiced activity, dog owners stay on the field and in the forest. Some are more engaged with the site than others, they know each other from the daily walks and some of them complain about the trash that might harm the health their dog. Traces: paths and some dog poop.

-Taking a walk, often alone sometimes in duos, see fig. 83. Users indicated that coming to the site after a busy workday helped to release stress of the day. People preferably walk over the tracks or through the forest. Once I observed a man in the forest that sat down at a tree trunk and after a while started crying, after a few minutes he took a deep breath, got up and left again. He had come to the site specially to cry.

-Building/altering constructions and spending time at the shelters, the shelters and other constructions in the forest are constructed and altered with found objects or imported materials, see next page. The constructions are not owned by one group but can be used and altered by different people. Sometimes one person is in deep thoughts in one shelter while at the other one a group of friends in preparing dinner. Sometimes the shelters are the location for an afterparty after the clubs have closed.

-Playing without parental supervision, there are groups of children between 8 and 15 years old that come to the interstice to be able to play without having to keep to the rules of their parents or public playgrounds. They enter the building, run though the field, hang out at the train stop and the viewpoint. Apart from those adventures, part of their play is to smash and destroy anything they can find, preferably throwing it down from as high as possible. Traces: paths, scattered glass and other destroyed objects (preferably thrown down from higher parts, see fig.85) frequency: daily

-Hanging out with friends at the train stop and the 'viewpoint', see fig. 84 and 85. The train stop is used as seating element to gather with friends to enjoy the sun or drink beers, most often people sit at the point where you have a view over the entire interstice from above, they listen to music, smoke weed, talk and enjoy the sunset. Traces: glass bottles and other small trash frequency: daily

-The interstice is also used by people for taking drugs, the many leaves provide seclusion to take for example crystal meth with a bit of privacy, as indicated by an interviewed homeless person.

-Informal cleaning days are organized by users that care for the site and are annoyed by the amount of trash, I do not know the way and how often they are organized. Traces: less trash

Note that these are the activities that I have observed, found the traces of or heard about by interviewing people, there may be many other activities taking place.



fig 82: Enjoying the view on top of the abandoned building



fig 83: Taking a walk on the tracks



fig 84: Hanging with friends at the viewpoint



fig 85: Climbing the wall to get to the viewpoint

## ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE



fig 86: Shelter on the slope of one of the pits in the forrest



fig 87a: Tree house next to the camp oversees the field



fig 87b: The shelter and fireplace



fig 87c: Collection of stones as decoration



fig 89:



fig 88: Pile of materials



fig 90: Decorated gate at the entrance of the building

Alterations are found in different forms: an indication of a path, a gate, a shelter, a camp with fireplace, vegetable garden and treehouse. For all constructions available materials are used: trees, stones, pallets, fences, but also trash or other objects are not found on the site itself, see fig 88. The constructions are not owned by one group but can be used and altered by anyone. Use of the constructions is mostly seasonal, in spring and summer the constructions can change daily but in winter times be abandoned for more than a month.

### Locations:

The forest is the only location where the alterations are placed. The mossy soil, the thin, high tree trunks with the high canopy seems to provide the right atmosphere. The right ratio of open/secluded space for observing the space around. The ground surface is uneven, several pits are spread over the forest, some up to 15m wide and 4 meter deep. The paths stay at one elevation level avoiding the pits, the shelters and other constructions are inside the pits.

-Shelters are built inside the forest, see fig 86, they are simple constructions providing some places to sit or only a small roof. Making use of the slope of the pits and sturdy (enough) tree trunks to construct the roof structures.

-The camp is constructed at the forest edge, see fig 87a,b+c, also at the edge of a pit. This is the most elaborated construction, including a vegetable garden a fireplace and a treehouse.

-The gate is constructed at the entrance of the abandoned factory building, see fig. 90. This gate provides some places to sit but is mostly decorating the entrance with "mosaics" of found objects like graffiti cans.

## LEFTOVERS

There are two types of trash to be found on the interstice. The first type are the leftovers of activities on the site e.g.: glass bottles, pizza boxes and other packaging materials, leftovers of a campfire, etc. See fig. 91, 92, 95.

They are spread over the site where there is the most activity, mostly around the train stop and the abandoned building.

The other type is the result of fly-tipping, people come to the site to drop big amounts of trash at once, often bigger objects like sofa's, washing machines, buggies and suitcases, see fig. 93a,b+c. People who do this are probably not making use of the interstice for any other activity, they make use of the fact that the rules of public space are not enforced here, they will not get fined for dumping their trash here. The piles of trash are found along the public edges within 30 from the public road, behind some vegetation to not be visible from the street and easily accessible (no elevation difference or other obstructions from the public road). Besides this, trash dumping accumulates, people dump trash on top of trash that others have placed there. It is noticeable that trash does not get dumped where it is slightly harder to come, e.g. a slight elevation difference, or where you are visible from the street.

Another type of leftovers concerns the constructions in the forest. They are built out of all different types of materials coming from the site itself or imported from elsewhere. Some users invest a lot of time and energy in creating the constructions, but similarly other users greatly enjoy destroying them, see fig 94 and 88. Mostly in wintertime when the constructions are not used very often the leftovers can give the impression of a pile of trash.



fig 93a:



fig 93b:



fig 93c:



fig 94: Leftovers of a thrashed part of the camp



fig 91: Leftovers of a fireplace at the trainstop



fig 92: Other type of leftover



fig 95:

## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

### What are traces of human activity in informal green spaces?

#### EDGES AND ENTRANCES

Edges that have a worthless image, with cheap broken fences and tacky advertising are more likely to be used as a location for fly-tipping.

People enter preferably where there is the highest visibility and lowest amount of obstacles; this often means: at the location former entrances, at a strip with low cut grass, next to denser vegetation or fences.

People do not enter where there is an indestructible barrier (fence or wall) or small obstacle (e.g. elevation difference) in combination with an easier option to enter within  $\pm 50$ m.

#### ROUTING

In these specific cases interstitial sites are more frequently a destination to take a walk than a part of the route to get from one place to the other.

General part of the routes are erosions of frequent walking over grass or other vegetation. They are narrow gravel paths, created at pedestrian speed which influences the shape of the corners. There are no straight corners between paths, two paths join each other in a triangle.

When two people encounter each other on the path, one has to step aside to let the other pass, in densely vegetated parts the two people see each other only at the last moment.

People generally take the easiest way, if there is the possibility people preferably walk on leftover paving. Other reasons to change direction can be: -wet ground or a puddle, -elevation differences -shrubs or group of trees, -a single tree, -seeing a "landmark"

Paths can be "fixed", adorned with found objects like bricks or pieces of wood, this is mostly done close to other constructions, like shelters, treehouses or gates.

Steep elevation differences are bridged where the slope is relatively shallow and the trees on the slope provide enough grip, functioning as steps and handles.

#### PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

The official rules in the interstice are not enforced, (e.g. the fences and the 'betreten verboden' sign are present but everyone can enter and no one will tell you to get off the interstice). This apparent relaxation of rules makes some activities possible that cannot find a place in formal public space. Walking the dog off the leash, 'destructive play' without parental supervision, making a fire, organizing afterparties but also the more negative fly-tipping and destruction of something someone else has created.

Other activities that differ from formal greenspaces can be linked to the indeterminacy of the site. This results in different activities that often make use of the environment and the feeling of freedom to change it: e.g. collecting materials from the site to construct shelters in the forest, picking flowers and berries on the field, making a drawing with brick or chalk found on the site, breaking or burning found objects.

Other activities on the site are linked to the perceived calmness and "untouchedness" of the interstice, visitors indicate specially to visit the site to be alone for a moment and to enjoy the sight of plant succession without human interference.

Besides coming to the site alone, people indicate to encounter likeminded people in the interstices, although coming to the site without anyone else they do not feel alone and even a higher chance of meeting other people that have a similar interest.

It is noticeable that the activities mostly concern moving through or standing still, not so many include sitting or lying down. Except in the constructed camps and shelters or other objects that present themselves as perfect seating elements by accident, like the abandoned train stop and viewpoint.

#### ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE

Alterations are found in different forms: shelter, tipi, camp, treehouse, gate, indication of a path

Alterations are found in dense higher forest-like vegetation structures, less often in open fields. More specifically they are mostly located at transition areas: the camp and treehouse at the edge of the forest, the shelters at the slopes of the pits making use of the slope for the construction, and the gate at the entrance of the building.

Constructions are not "owned" by one group but can be used and altered by anyone. Use and altering of the constructions is mostly seasonal, in

spring and summer the constructions can change daily but in winter times be abandoned for more than a month.

For all constructions available materials are used: trees, stones, pallets, fences, but also trash or other objects are not found on the site itself. The materiality influences the inclusiveness of the construction, e.g. an abandoned construction in wintertime can either look like a pile of trash (use of external materials) or blend in with the environment (site's own materials).

#### LEFTOVERS

##### Fly tipping

Coming by to dump large amounts of trash from outside the interstice, often large objects. The piles of trash get dumped on the site within 30m from the public edge, where the act of dumping can be done secretly (behind thick bushes) and easily accessible (no elevation difference or other obstructions from the public road). On those spots the trash accumulates, people dump trash on top of trash that others have placed there.

Trash does **not** get dumped:

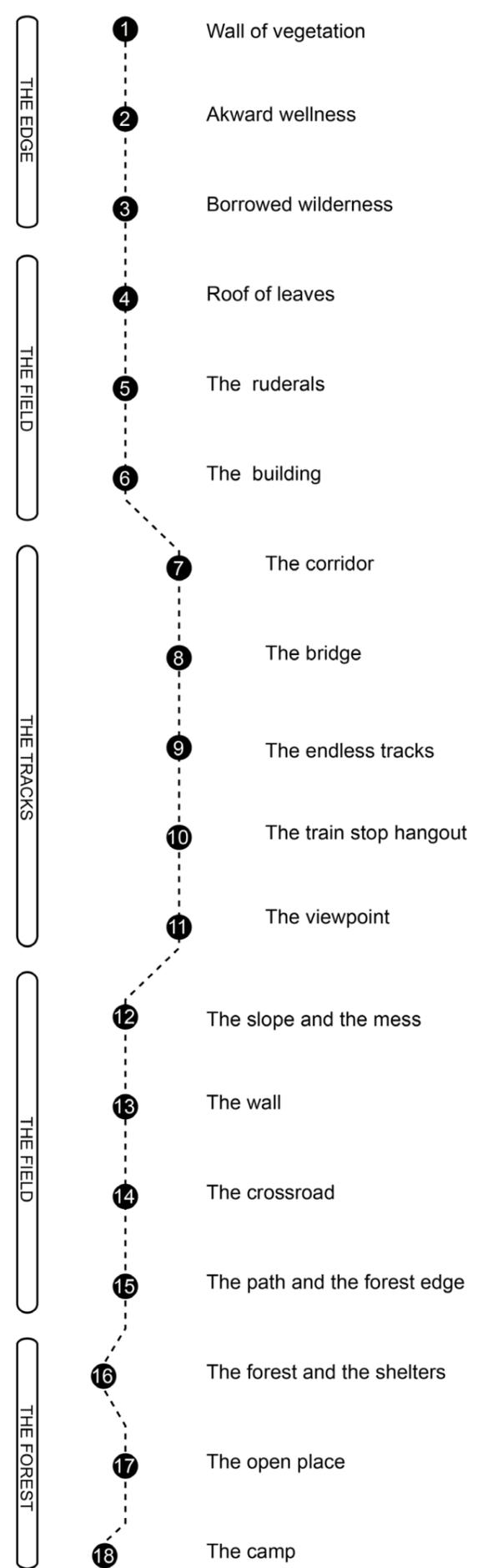
Where it is harder or impossible to come or where you are very visible from the street.

##### Other trash:

Other type of trash is the smaller leftovers of activities on the interstice itself, objects like e.g. empty glass bottles and other food packaging. Some people feel engaged with the interstice, they seek opportunities to collect smaller trash, e.g. in a shopping cart or a trash bag or organize cleaning sessions. Thereby organizing trash collection in an informal way.



## PART2: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ANGER CROTTENDORF

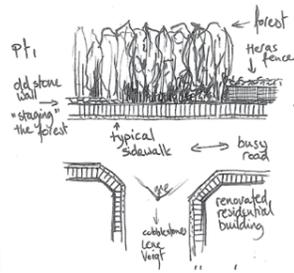




## Point 1

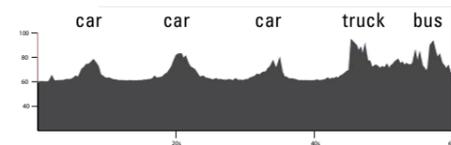
### See

I come from a street with cobblestones which makes the connection to the Lene Voigt park. I am at a T-crossing, the road along the interstice is very busy, cars, trucks, busses and cyclists come by. In front of me I see a wall of dense vegetation, the trees are almost as high as the buildings on my left and right. The buildings are the typical 5 story residential blocks from the end of the 19th century. In front of me I see Poplars, Betula, Robinia, Acer. On the right side, where the trees are not as high, there are Heras fences and tree billboard advertisement at the edge of the sidewalk and the greenspace. Also at the edge of the sidewalk but towards the left side there is an old stone wall around 60cm high, the trees grow behind and on top of the wall. It looks like the wall is "staging" the forest, putting it on a pedestal. The sidewalks are the big granite slabs in a standard size added with the smaller rectangular pieces of granite in an elegant pattern closed in by big granite curbs. This type of sidewalk is visible everywhere in Leipzig and typical to eastern German cities. Although the sidewalks are well maintained, plants grow in the cracks of the granite pattern on the areas that are not so much used for walking. I want to go in but I do not directly see an entrance.



### Hear

The sound of cars is overwhelming. Almost constant are the sounds of the engines and the wheels on the asphalt. The trucks and busses make the most sound, sometimes a bike comes by and in the background I hear a bird.



### Smell

Water on warm asphalt, cars

### Texture

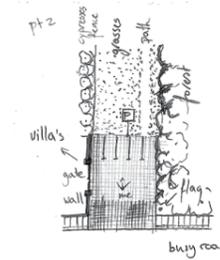
The side street has cobblestones that are not very pleasant to cycle on. the busy street is asphalt. The sidewalks are elevated, the materials are granite stone slabs and smaller granite pieces in a pattern.



## Point 2

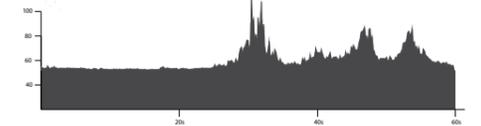
### See

I'm at the parking of the wellness center, this is where I enter the site. On my left are some fancy villa's with a white wall and a grey gate to separate the street and the interstice from their property. The paving is basic concrete klinkers that give a cheap impression. At the corner of the parking and the street a flag with the logo of the wellness center is placed in the birch forest. This gives the impression that they have taken a piece of land from the interstice and use it as parking. In front of me a strip of 10m from the fence is covered with knee high grasses, next to the grass the trees are dense and high, up to 25 m. A parking sign with indication of rules is placed at the edge between the parking and the grasses of the interstice. Next to the sign a path has eroded that proceeds through the grasses along the edge of the forest, I can see about 50m far.



### Hear

The busy road behind me. In front of me I hear birds, a lot of them, now also the more quiet ones.



### Smell

Very pleasant herblike smell that comes in waves from the forest.

### Texture

There is a short transition from the granite slabs of the sidewalk to the clinker of the parking to the gravel of the desire path.



### Point 3

**See** I'm at a kind of open spot in the interstice, the grass is kneehigh and the high trees are further away from me now. The path has been meandering through the grass with the high trees on my right side. I have passed two narrow paths that went into the dense forest. I am at a turn in the path, it bows towards the right. In front of me are very thick and thorny blackberry bushes up to 2m high, there is no way to go in there. On my left is a fence toward the wellness center. The fence is open and I can see the tightly maintained grass meadows on the other side. They have not blocked the view with dense hedges, so they have a view on the landscape where I am standing. It is a nice visual connection. In the concept of the garden, the meadow and the wilderness, I am standing in their borrowed wilderness.



**Hear** A lot of birds, the street and a faraway construction site in the background

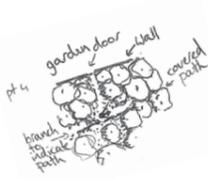
**Smell** wet grass

**Texture** The path is uneven, sandy with some gravel, grass is growing over it at some places, it feels soft to walk on



### Point 4

**See** I am now completely enclosed by vegetation, the path is still very clear. The vegetation is about 5m high and very dense, I cannot see more than 3m. It is a mix of a.o. young Ailanthus, Quercus, Acer and Populus. While walking I had no means to orientate where I am on the site, now I realized I am very close to the 5-story residential building at the north-west side of the site, but I cannot see it because of the bushes. I see a little path going towards the walls of the backyards, along the path someone has placed a branch of a tree along the path to indicate the path. In front of me the path continues into the bushes, the Robinia leaves form a cover above my head. The path is wide enough for one person. a mix of all the vegetation



**Hear** A wide variety of birds very present, construction site and road in the background.

**Smell** It is a gravel path with grass on the side, it is

**Texture** easy to walk. Thee leaves touch my arms



### Point 5

**See** The path to come here was very enclosed, at some points the blackberry thorns attached to my clothes. The robinia leaves formed a cover over my head, this created a kind of inner world underneath the leaves, the way the sunlight fell through the leaves was very beautiful. After 20 m the vegetation opened up and I can see very far, for about 100m. For the first time I have a view on the abandoned factory building. The building is impressive, it towers above the trees, all windows are scattered and the Heras fence around it looks tiny and unimportant. Right in front of me all the vegetation is gone, I see the gate left of the factory that forms the north edge of the site. The ground is covered in a kind of white sand and gravel from building activity, it fans-out from the gate. At the edge of the gravel you see how the vegetation reacts to this disturbance, different, more ruderal plants grow at the border, and the more invasive competitive plants grow where no disturbance has taken place lately. From here you can also see the residential buildings on the left with their adjacent backyards. In the gardens grow 30m high trees and one of them contains a treehouse.

**Hear** Birds and insects! The wheels of a car passing on the street at the northside of the building. Construction site far away

**Smell** mix of all the vegetation

**Texture** Path consist of gravel and is uneven, thorns clung to my cloths and the wet leaves touched my arms



### Point 6

**See** I am at the bottom of the abandoned factory building. To get here I stepped over the fence that has been tipped over and after that I had to bend over to follow the path underneath some bushes. When you come out on the other side of the bushes you face a kind of gate that people have erected around the entrance of the building. The gate consists of all kind of found materials and has elaborate detailing. On the ground the found materials are used to indicate the path and "planting borders". Between the walls of the building and the vegetation there is a kind of enclosed space over the length of the building and about 15m wide, the path meanders through it. The dense vegetation allows no views beyond the bushes. There are mounts of rubble lying against the walls of the building, paths on the mounts show that people climb them and at one point it leads to an entrance into the building. The fence that now lies on its side created a long linear opening in the vegetation and thereby forms a viewshed over the length of the building, the plants have already started to grow through it and a path has eroded next to it.

**Hear** Birds and insects! Children playing, cars in the background

**Smell** Mix of all the Mix of all the vegetation

**Texture** Path consist of gravel and sand and is uneven but easy to walk on.



## Point 7

**See** I have arrived at the abandoned train stop. This location lies 9m higher than the rest of the field and to get here I have climbed up a very steep slope keeping my balance by holding on to different trees and stepping from root to root. This was the way the path led me, the many other users had eroded the ground which had shaped as a kind of steps in-between the roots. Beautiful shapes. In front of me I see the concrete slabs with a thin bitumen cover all the way to the other end, about 200m. It is nice to be able to see a longer distance. The orientation of the construction reminds me of the Sachenbrücke in the Clara Zetkin park, the two sides that are mostly used for residing, are orientated towards the middle, space that is used to pass through. In the current situation the space in the middle is not used for passing through, the tracks have been removed and what remains are the rusty stones that used to support the rails, they are hard to walk on and currently a lot of trash is lying around; empty pizza boxes and glass bottles. On both sides of the linear concrete train stop the trees grow very high, up to 15m, which make this space feel like a corridor. I would like to have a view over the field, but the trees are blocking the view. Almost all surfaces that are not vegetation are covered in graffiti.

**Hear** Birds, children walking around, playing, wheels of a car on the cobblestones on the street north of the building

**Smell** No particular smell

**Texture** The way up was a mix of sand and gravel, apart from the very steep part it is easy to walk.  
Signs of engagement: By users – People write graffiti's or poems but the trash is not removed.

## Point 8

**See** I am at the northern rail bridge over the road, the rails and concrete rail holders have been removed, the rusty stones remain. In front of me the tracks continue in a straight line, endlessly. I can see for about 500m straight ahead, the vegetation on the sides on the tracks form a corridor, but not as high and outspoken as at the train stop, a dense mix of Ailanthus, Betula, Crataegus, Acer, Quercus, Salix. The concrete rail holders on the left side are visible and free from vegetation, they form a beautiful rhythm of steps. On the right side the vegetation grows over, the blackberry bushes seem to jump on the tracks, this feels as a pity to me because I would like to see the structure. On my left, below, I see the square in front of the factory building. The big building with the broken windows is dominating the square, where cars are parked in the middle on the cobblestones, this feels like a waste of the qualitative paving. Behind me I see the train stop from afar. Close-by, in the middle of the tracks some young Acers are growing between the stones. This makes me understand that there have been two rails on both sides of the vegetation. I enjoy it that this makes me able to read the former use of the landscape. On the bridge bigger natural stone slabs on the side close in the smaller gravel stones to prevent them from falling from the bridge on the road. These big stones also have a rusty color coming from the former rails, they are 50cm high and appear to me as perfect seating element with a view over the square below. Some trash left behind, chips and soda packaging, also indicates this use.

**Hear** Sound of car wheels on the cobblestones below is very present every 2 to 5 minutes. Some bikes on the cobblestones as well. There is a garbage collection point below, people throw glass in the glass collection point. Children are running around and screaming at each other while playing. Someone walks slowly over the tracks, the stones make a recognizable sound. Lots of birds

**Smell** The smell of warm stones and vegetation

**Texture** The stones are very hard to walk on, my ankle twisted a few times it is tiring to walk on. The big stones are smooth and 50cm high, perfect for sitting.



### Point 9

**See** I am further on the tracks now, here the concrete rail holders are still in place and function as steppingstones. In front of me the steps continue with the corridor-like vegetation on both sides. The similar view does not invite me to continue further on this path. On my left the vegetation is very dense, the trees are about 10 m high, the trunks have 10-20cm diameter. On my right I can see over the flowering blackberry bushes, 1,5 m high, and see very far to some residential facades and other big trees in the distance.

**Hear** The wind in the leaves, birds, a construction site in the background and the bees in the blackberry flowers. **Smell** The vegetation

**Texture** The concrete slabs that hold the rails are a nice stepping distance, walking here is way easier than over the small stones. The sun is shining on the stones and the heat that comes from below is fierce.



### Point 10

**See** I am at the very middle of the train stop. I am sitting down at the concrete slabs because it seems as if they are made for it. The slabs stick out of what is holding them, this make it look like they are flying, besides the surface is not everywhere the same height which gives the impression of waves flowing underneath the construction. Some high grasses grow between the rusty stones. On the slabs some mosses grow in the cracks. There is scattered glass everywhere, pizza boxes, aluminum, shot bottles and cigarette packages. Left of me the vegetation is very dense, no opportunity to see anything behind it. I see an apple tree. On the right side the vegetation is a bit less dense and you can see a little bit of the field behind it, but still very little.

**Hear** Birds all around, wind in the trees, construction site and cars on the road in the back **Smell** Vegetation

**Texture** To get from the rusty stones in the middle onto the concrete steps is a big step, 50 cm. The rough concrete is easy to walk on and very good to sit on, except with a skirt on a warm sunny day, the material radiates the heat.



### Point 11

**See** I am at the bridge over the street at the southern end. I have reached a fence to prevent people to cross the bridge. Here is no wall of vegetation on the right side and the view from up here is very beautiful. The field below is like a green sea with, from the one side, the high trees of the forest edge behind it and on the other side the abandoned factory building towering over it. Because all windows are broken you can see through the whole building to the other side. The difference between the high forest and the lower trees on the field is very clearly visible, you can distinguish the different groups of tree types, on the field it is mostly young Robinia and Poplars of about 4 m high. The camp at the forest edge is not visible from here, I do see some paths between the trees below. The bridge looks old, made from stone and rusty metal. Similar to the other bridge the gravel in the middle is held together by two metal beams of about 40cm which seem to be made as a seating element to enjoy the view. The view over the field is on my right side, in front of me the tracks cross over the road and continue with vegetation rising on both sides. There are no concrete rail holders left to step on and some young trees grow divide the gravel path in the middle.

**Hear** The sound of the cars passing underneath is almost constant, when busses and trucks come by the sound is very intense. I hear only the loud birds in the background. Children behind me are playing and smashing the glass bottles they have found there. **Smell** Nothing in particular

**Texture** The rusty stone gravel that used to hold the concrete slabs are very hard to walk on, it does not invite you to take a long walk. The barriers that have been put up in order to prevent people from crossing the bridge are easy to climb through or over. If you want you can, that is nice.



### Point 12

**See** I am walking below on the edge of the field, on my left hand the slope that goes up 7 m to the elevated train stop. To get here I had to walk all the way back towards the building because there is no connection between above and below on the south. Down here I feel very enclosed, the path is narrow, on my left are the very high trees 20m and the slope, on my right the young trees, go up till 4m and their leaves are blocking every view. Sometimes the young trees on my right give space to an open grass plain, which welcomly increases visibility up to 10m maximum. When you look up you can see the roof of the factory building with the trees growing on top of it. On my left hand the elements on the slope look messy, it is a mix of very high trees with big trunks up to 40cm and other very skinny branches. Through the different trunks you can see the black earth scattered with trash; a sofa, a mattress, desk chairs, and everything smaller imaginable, what a mess.

**Hear** Wind in the leaves, birds, road in the background **Smell** The vegetation

**Texture** The path is uneven, the mix of rubble that I am walking on is diverse and you have to look where you put your feet. Sometimes the leaves are touching your arms and you have to dive under some branches to follow the path.



### Point 13

#### See

I'm at the bottom of the wall, seeing the stone structure in the middle of all the vegetation is impressive. At the part where the slope is, there is a layer of black earth of about 50cm on which the trees and grasses are growing. One of them is particularly interesting, it is a big Ailanthus tree with multiple stems of about 40cm diameter. One of its roots grows out underneath the earth layer. ... In front of me the wall continues, it is ±9m high, almost vertical and exist of big dark gray stones. Next to it is an opening towards the road where the old entrance of the train stop has been. What remains is a fence 5 meters from and parallel to the wall that creates a kind of entrance corridor that is visible from the street. The ground of the corridor is covered with grass but at the end, where the spontaneous vegetation starts there are the traces of fly-tipping. Attached to the wall, halfway to the top, some metal structure from the old stairs still remains, from up there you must have a nice view over the field. I see that people have climbed up there to spray the wall on a higher level. On my right hand the robinia trees are further away which leaves some space for grass and birches, behind this you see the high trees of the forest. At this spot there is relatively much human activity going on. Yesterday I saw someone climbing the wall, the rough big stones have the perfect texture for it. At the top of this wall is "the viewpoint", it is the southern end of the concrete structure of the train stop. It is orientated towards the west and from up there you have view over the field, the forest and the building all at once. Very often small groups of people, ages between 12–35 year old, are sitting there, talking and enjoying the view, mostly around sunset. The path down here is very uneven, you have to step over mounts of rubble mixed with trash. I saw a woman picking up her big dog to carry it for 10m over the trash so that it would not hurt its feet on the scattered glass lying around. I'm seeing two types of trash, if I may take an educated guess here; there is the trash that people must have thrown from on top of the wall. I have seen that it is tempting for children to throw down stuff from up there, Edensor describes this as destructive play (Edensor 2011), besides this there is another type of trash, a result from fly-tipping, because this area of the site is close to the edge easy accessible from the road.

#### Hear

The road gives a constant noise, the birds as well. I hear people talking calmly on the viewpoint

#### Smell

It has started to rain, the smell of rain on warm stones takes over

#### Texture

The big stones of the wall are very rough and therefor they are used for climbing, the diverse mix of rubble and trash makes it harder to walk here, you have to see where to put your feet.



### Point 14

#### See

I am at an open spot on the field, around me I can see for about 10m far till the leaves block the view at eyelevel. I am coming from the busy street on the south, next to the path, close to the road, people have dumped a lot of trash, all collected on one sofa. When you walk further onto the site the trash disappears. The path is well defined and very enclosed by vegetation on both sides. The Robinia leaves also formed a cover above my head which gives a feeling of being inside with beautiful lighting. The open space is covered with grass and two paths are crossing here, this gives the impression of a crossroad of routes to important destinations. Above the young trees in front of me I see the factory building, I see people on top of the roof. The path that I am on is clearly defined, the sand and gravel show that it is frequently used for walking, the main road. The path meanders and disappears in front of me behind some bushes. Two girls pass by, the one is showing the area to the other. On my right side is a less frequently used path, there are grasses on the path and the trees stand closer together there. Above those trees in the background are the train stop and the viewpoint where two people of around 25 are talking calmly, they feel close by now. On my left side is the camp at the forest edge, I only see the treehouse. Because the vegetation is low here, I can see the high trees from the bottom to the top.

#### Hear

In order of importance 1: the cars on the road 2: the birds  
3: two people at the camp talking and listening to music 4:  
Two people talking calmly at the viewpoint  
5 Children playing, laughing and screaming

#### Smell

The vegetation

#### Texture

It is open here, the path is well established and covered in sandy gravel, almost like in a park

### Point 15



#### See

I see the building right in front of me! The impressive size, the decay, the broken windows and the trees on the roof, may you call this sublime? There are groups of people at the roof and the tower. The path continues in front of me, it goes up and down and looks like it is going in waves, yellow sand on the tops and grass growing at the low parts. To the side of the path is grass growing and then Robinia. To my left is the corner of forest, a path is going there. This path is not as frequently used as the one that I am on right now, grass is growing on it. Behind me meanders the "main path" I see it for 10m, then it disappears behind the bushes. The crossing of these two roads is very square. On my right side I can see for 2m till the young Robinia's are blocking the view.

#### Hear

Birds, cars on the road behind me, people talking on the roof

#### Smell

Nothing particular

#### Texture

The path goes up and down in little waves and the yellow sand has clung together like clay and the ground is hard.



## Point 16

**See** I'm in the forest on the northside, I'm completely surrounded by trees and I cannot see the edge of the forest. The trees are growing closely together but you can see quite far, ±30m because the leaf cover is very high up, about 10- 15m high. The tree trunks are max 10 cm and a lot of them have multiple stems, the white trunks of the betulas pop out with their contrasting white color. Because the canopy is so high and relatively dense the sunlight scatters through in a very pleasant way, it feels very calm here. There are several large pits in the surface, they are about 4 meters deep and 10-15m wide. I have seen 4 in the forest so far, 3 of them had a shelter or den constructed in them. Most of these dens have space for 1 person, except the camp at the forest edge that has space for more people. I have passed one shelter where one man was sitting alone in very deep thoughts, almost meditating. Another man around his 30th sits at a fallen tree trunk further away from me, he does not know that I am here, I can see that he is crying, after some minutes he takes a deep breath, gets up and walks away. The paths meanders alongside the pits, never straight through them. I stepped of the path into one of the pits where there was no shelter, mosses are growing over the stones. When you look really closely you see that they are not natural stones but bricks, concrete blocks and torn metal. I slowly begin to realize that this forest has grown on very large mounts of rubble from the demolition of some other buildings that must had stood here on the site. The mosses and trees have almost completely covered the rubble and changed it into the forest that it is now. Only when you look with care you can start to understand this, I find it enchanting and can understand that you come here to cry.

**Hear** A lot of birds, cars on the road in the background, some people walking and talking calmly.

**Smell** Wet forest

**Texture** The moss is soft to walk on and the path is relatively even, when you go off the path you have to watch your steps.



## Point 17

**See** I'm at a clearing in the forest, it is very calm here. The trees open up and create an enclosed private space of about 40m wide. The trees surrounding are high up till 15m. On the field in the middle different grasses are growing and I see a path that splits in three. There is enough space to sit down in the grass besides the path. I realize that this is the first time on my walk that I encounter a place to sit down in the grass. From where I sit, I see the white trunks of the Betula, the round leaves of the robinia and the white-blueish leaves of the populus trees. The paths are covered in in short grass, which means they are used less frequently. The higher grasses next to the paths are flowering. The size of the open place is pleasant and I feel very at ease here, during my stay at this spot no one walks by.

**Hear** A lot of birds and insects, the busy road in the background. **Smell** The grasses, the cool wind from the forest brings the smells of the other plants.

**Texture** The path goes up and down in little waves like at point 15. The high grass is easy to sit in.



## Point 18

**See** I'm at the camp, this one is also constructed at the bottom of a large pit. I am making use of the shelter because it has started to rain. I call this one a camp because it is a collection of multiple elements. The camp consists of a shelter with benches, two fireplaces, a compost bin, two vegetable gardens, a small pool, a little meadow with some woven fences and two different tree houses in the trees surrounding the pit. A main path from the forest to the field goes through the camp and is indicated with aligned stones. It is clear that the place is built with a lot of care. Some trees have been cut to use as building materials. Behind me is a collection of materials, Heras feces, a lot of pallets, a buggy. It is not so clear to me whether this is the result of a cleaning action or that these are put here to be used as building materials. Probably both. The place is quite dirty right now, trash lying around, I have seen the camp in a better state. At this camp, someone shows care, after which it will get trashed, which will be responded with great care which will get trashed again. It seems like people have accepted that this is the way it goes.

**Hear** The busy road constantly, birds, children in the background **Smell** Rain on the vegetation after a long dry period.

**Texture** The way down is steep, inside the camp you slalom around the objects

# PART 2: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

## ANGER CROTTENDORF

### **Autoethnographical description of my experiences on site, influenced both by interaction with the physical world and social encounters.**

The interstitial site that is subject to this research question first caught my attention on google maps. In general, the organization of space and vegetation in interstitial sites differs greatly from that of formal greenspaces, they are therefor easily detectible from above. The elaborate system and clarity of desire paths on the site, the relatively big surface and the abandoned factory building and train tracks made me think that this might be a very interesting interstice to take a closer look at.

I had never been to Leipzig before, I was not familiar with the city other than the articles I had read and the satellite images that google provided me. Before my first visit in February I could merely hope that the city would be the way I had imagined it. That the interstitial sites were organized as I had thought they were. By coincidence the Airbnb we booked was located in Anger-Crottendorf, one street away from the interstitial site that I had seen on google maps, it was the first thing we visited. The site exceeded my expectations on certain aspects but also surprised me negatively on others, it was directly clear to me that this was to be the location of my research. My relation to the site has changed greatly since that first time. I feel that this is partly because of my increasing understanding of the spatial aspects of the site and secondly because of the insights I got from encounters with other users of the site. In this description of my experiences on site in February and June of 2020 I elaborate on those moments of realization. I am aware that in the time that I have taken to research the site I have only seen several facets of the site, to get a complete understanding it takes a longer period of observation in more seasons of the year. Despite the short period of observation I have the feeling that my observations are valuable insight into the nature of the sight.

### **Day 1: First hesitation later disappears**

On the first day that I arrive at the site in June I am surprised by my own feeling. I am hesitant to go in, it feels illegal and I do not know what is happening inside. I have been here once before but in February it looked very different, back then you could oversee the whole field which made it easier to know what to expect. At this moment I arrived from the south side. The dense wall of leaves at the edges lets no visibility further onto the site and I have no idea what I will find there. This feeling of discomfort surprises me to be honest, I thought I had no fear concerning interstitial spaces during daytime. What am I afraid of? I feel that I am not afraid to get stopped by the police or that someone will try to do me harm. I am afraid to run into people that do not expect or want me to be there. Why am I afraid of this and what gives me this feeling? Last time I was here there were no leaves on the trees you could oversee the site, I did not see other people that time but I saw that someone had constructed a camp, so, it was very well possible that there is activity going on. I do not yet know what kind of activities take place on this site and because of the dense wall of vegetation I cannot see or know whether I am welcome on the site. I am afraid that I see something that I was not supposed to see and because the site is so enclosed that it will be hard to get out easily. I realize that I get this feeling also because I am by myself, if there would have been someone with me I would be less hesitant.

To get over my hesitation I actively tell myself that it is 2 pm, broad-day-light and that I already know the site, so everything will be fine. Nevertheless, I do not go in at the narrow path within the dense wall of vegetation, but I look for an entrance that shows me better what to expect. This is the southwest corner of the site and the adjacent wellness center has a luxurious appearance that looks kind of awkward next to the spontaneous vegetation of the interstitial site. The wellness center exists of two big villas and a big white gate around it, it gives the impression that they find everything outside the gates weird and dirty. I laugh at myself a bit because I criticized this entrance before. But at this moment it comforts me a little that there are buildings close by. But the most important reason is the visibility. I'm guessing that the wellness center is mowing the grass adjacent to their fence and parking lot. It results in an 8m wide strip of 8m of knee-high grasses with a desire path going in, I take this way. I still do not know what to expect but now I will be able to see other users from afar.

At the end of the grassy strip the path bends to the right, I had in mind to discover the northwest part of the site but this appears to be impossible. The thorny bushes are so dense and high that I see really no possibility to go in, I also do not see traces of other people that might have tried it. I thus follow the path to the right where the young Black locust trees grow closer and closer together. They grow so close together that the leaves are touching my arms, I notice that I find this annoying. Normally I would have no problem with leaves that touch my arms but in combination with the fact that

I am still not completely at ease at the site the feeling of something touching me makes me uncomfortable. The dense vegetation also makes it impossible to orientate myself.

At one point I hear sounds close by, it turns out that I am really close to the backyards of the houses on the northside of the site. People are constructing something in their backyard and I can hear them talking and working. Although I am not afraid it comforts me to know that there are people so close, in hearing distance. When continuing a bit further the vegetation widens and I see the roof of the abandoned factory building! It feels nice to be able to look further in the distance, only now I really understand where I am. I realize that this is also an important aspect of feeling comfortable in a new place.

I continue along the façade of the building. At the other side I find a way to get up the slope of the train tracks. I walk up and I see three girls sitting on blankets at the train stop, they are enjoying the sun that shines brightly, see social encounter three girls at the train stop. Because I was not completely comfortable at the site yet, I really had not expected this kind of activity. Seeing the girls sunbathing gave me an insight into the feeling of safety of this place. You only do this kind of activity when you feel totally at ease somewhere so after meeting the girls I actually felt entirely comfortable on the interstice. In this situation it was not the physical appearance that changed my relation to the site but an encounter with other users.

After I met the three girls at the train stop I felt much more at ease on the entire site. I was tired from the day and took a seat at the shelter in the camp at the forest edge. It felt weird to take out my laptop in this messy camp I was very aware of this being an unusual activity at this place. I did it before in the Lene Voigt park, there it was a very normal activity. This place is not really for luxury products like laptops, the contrast just felt too big. While I was typing I was hoping that no one would come by. At this spot you cannot pass someone without interacting with them, the moment you notice each other you are too close by to ignore them. Other people might want to take my laptop or they will find it weird that I am using my laptop at this place. Right at the moment that I was doubting whether it was a good idea to continue typing I met another person that would change my relationship to the interstice, see social encounters: Salman

### Social encounters day 1:

The first two encounters with other users I had on the first day meant a lot for my understanding of the feeling of safety of the place.

#### Three girls enjoying the sun at the train stop

**Location:** train stop **time:** 12:30 **activity others:** chatting and enjoying the sun **activity me:** walking

**Description:** I was still a bit uncomfortable being alone and unsure about what I would encounter on site. When I had walked up the train stop I saw the tree girls in bikini sitting on a blanket in the sun. This image directly gave me a feeling of safety about the area. Sunbathing with your friends, is an activity you would only do when you feel very at ease somewhere. The girls are between 20 and 22, I walk over to them to ask them some questions.

*Do you use this place often?*

**Girl 1:** I do because I live right over there, it only takes me 5 minutes to get here. I really like to come here because you have the afternoon sun, its often quiet here but you also see people. So you can look at other people but you can also focus on your book and be by yourself. I like that its nature but its also just nature (?), I like to be here and relax be away from the traffic. I started coming here during corona time. I really like it in the afternoon. Over there is the bridge over the road and that is one of the last spots where you can see the sun. I also visited the building, I went up the tower by myself. A friend told me that you can also go up on the middle of the roof but I think it's quite dangerous so I would not be so comfortable to do that alone, maybe if someone else would come with me. The graffiti are really cool there, also all the windows are scattered and the first time I went there it was sunset and the light came in so beautifully. I also saw that families with kids were visiting the building so it must not be that dangerous.

*Do you prefer this over a park?*

I also really like parks and I sometimes go there, but if I want to be by myself I like to go here.

*Do you sometimes feel uncomfortable to be here alone?*

**Girl 1:** No, I really think it's important to be alone and to spend time to be with yourself. Travelling alone helped me understand that people are good and they will not harm you.

**Girl 2:** I would not have come discovered this place by myself, I am here because she showed me the place. But maybe I would prefer a different place to be alone, not necessarily a park but I would choose a place with more nature for the view, a more cozy place.

*What would you change?*

**Girl 1:** Trash bins. There is a lot of trash around here, which I don't like. I see a lot of young adults who drink and leave their stuff here, thrash bins would be a step forward, then they at least have the opportunity to put it there. Also maybe some more comfortable ways to sit here, I mean this is fine but not for too long.

*Are you also making use of the greenspace below?*

**Girl 1:** I went to the old building there, that was the moment that I discovered that you can walk through the greenspace there. I had been living here for a year and that was the first time I came there

(in the green space). I was like Oh cool! And there is a treehouse which is pretty cool, but I haven't spent time there yet because there are always people, and when I come here I like to be alone. But I think you can also sit there with a blanket and just relax.

#### Action linked to spatial characteristics:

The location is close to one of the girls house, the train stop provides an open space where the sun can enter, the construction functions as a seating element, it's easy to put your blanket here, people can pass by at a comfortable distance, there is some opportunity to look at other people but not as busy as in the park.

#### Meeting Salman for the first time

**Location:** camp at the forest edge **time:** 15:30 **activity other:** walking and looking for his wife **activity me:** sitting inside the shelter typing on my laptop

**Description:** After I met the three girls at the train stop I felt much more at ease on the entire site. I was tired from the day and took a seat at the shelter. After 10 minutes I heard someone walking on the path behind me at the edge of the forest. I turned around and saw a man in his late 40's or 50's. He had not shaved for a couple of days, was wearing training pants, a sport shirt and a cap, he was carrying a plastic bag. I was not yes sure if he was homeless or just a bit messy. He looked a bit surprised to see me but then told me that he was looking for his wife and asked me if I had seen a short Bulgarian woman with long hair and skinny like me. Pointing at me. I was not so sure whether I felt like talking to this guy but, maybe naive, the fact that he was looking for his wife made me more comfortable with the situation. For the research I wanted to interview users of the site so after my gut feeling told me that this man had no wrong intentions, I tried to ask him some questions. His German was worse than mine and his English was nonexistent, on the other hand I did not master any Arabic or Kurdish, so we went for German. Because I started to ask him questions he came closer to the shelter and asked me if I was ok with him smoking a cigarette next to me, he smelled like old sweat. Later in the conversation he asked my consent a second time whether he was not bothering me with his stories. Being homeless, he probably had other experiences where he had felt as a burden when talking to other people and he was aware that I was a younger woman with a laptop and a camera that normally does not talk to man like him. But I was tired of working and relieved that I could put away my laptop, besides I was curious for the story of someone that comes to this place to look for his wife. The story and the language were messy but he had a sense of humor and with a lot of repeating I started to understand his story. He used to have money and an apartment but after some bad choices and a drug addiction he had lost everything and now he had no place to live anymore. He asked if I was doing drugs, when I answered no, he replied that was good and that I had to stay far away from it, "it's shit". He told about his wife, a small Bulgarian woman, she cared a lot about for her appearance, she used a lot of make-up and dyed her hair so many times in different colors that sometimes he did not recognize her. It sounded like a tumultuous relationship but, also to his own surprise, they had

been together for 6 years. I wanted to know if he came here often and who had constructed this camp and who had made such a mess. He came here often since he had no house anymore. He did not directly understand the question about who constructed the camp, ultimately he answered: 'You! Me!' meaning that everyone who came by altered the structures a little. He told that his wife would start cleaning directly when they got here, to make it more homely. When his cigarette was long finished and the conversation got to an end he told me that he actually was planning on taking some Chrystal in the bushes over there. He told me this in a way that expressed his inconvenience about it, he was a bit ashamed about it but he could also not do anything about it. He needed the drugs and an enclosed place where no one would bump into him. In the way he said it he asked me to excuse him for it and also he indicated roughly where he would be so that I would not go there by accident.

#### Action linked to spatial characteristics:

Salman has no job and no house, he has a lot of time to spend. At the interstice, he is not so visible to other city users who might judge him and do not want him in public space, he chooses a place where he is less visible and maybe less judged because of his behavior. Secondly he is addicted to crystal and unable to stop his addiction, on the interstice he finds enclosed spaces where no one will bump into him unexpectedly.

#### Conclusion social

These two very different encounters on the first day thought me things about the site that made that I had no hesitation anymore to come her alone. If other girls my age feel as comfortable as to go sunbathing that means that I can also feel comfortable. The encounter with Salman was different, he was maybe the person that I had been afraid to bump into when I was standing outside in front of the wall of vegetation, but now I had talked to him and I understood his reasons. I felt confortable at the interstice.

#### Conclusion physical

What annoyed me when I felt uncomfortable alone:

- lack of visibility from outside onto the site
- narrow paths with leaves touching my arms
- no orientation, dense vegetation on the field blocks the view of orientation points or landmarks.
- insecurity about the other users
- feeling of illegality

(I realize that this would not have been any concern if I had visited the site together with someone.)

What comforted me:

A wider visibility, to be able to see where you are going and what might be coming towards you  
Hearing voices and sounds from peoples back garden next to the interstice

#### Day 2: Alone to meet others

I went to the site in the afternoon, I know better what to expect on the site and therefore I feel no fear to go in. At one point I was standing at the narrow path close to the backyards of the adjacent houses. I was making a drawing in my notebook when a woman arrived. **See social ecounters day 2.**

#### Social encounter day 2: Escape from a stressful life

**Location:** enclosed path close to the back gardens **time:** 13:30 **activity other:** walking **activity me:** standing stil drawing

**Description:** I'm standing at the path to make a drawing, a blond woman, around 35, walks by, the narrow path makes interaction inevitable. I notice that she is interested in what I am doing, she asks me if I am writing poetry. Similarly I am interested in what she is doing here, still a little surprised to meet other women alone. Her English is not good, we try as good as we can in German. She is a bit heavy and her clothing could imply that she has not so much money to spend. She tells me she receives social welfare, and to get this funding the government requires her to apply for different jobs. These jobs do not fit her and trigger a lot of stress, after work she often comes here to release the stress.

When I ask her why she chooses this place to come after work she answers that there are two important things that she is looking for; Calmness and a possibility to talk to other people.

The untouched vegetation calms her down. She clearly has to think about how to describe the vegetation on the site, she explicitly does not want to call it nature. I interpret that she has ideas about what you can call nature and she is aware that the spontaneous vegetation that grows here is not the same as the nature that you find in a forest for example. In a perfect world she might prefer to come to a quiet forest, but being in the city, this site is probably the next best thing. She appreciates that nature can do as it pleases, not being managed as in a park. As a second important reason she indicates the possibility to meet others. She tells me that the people that come here are more open for conversation. In here she finds other people that are alone and looking for a similar kind of connection, everyone for their own reasons. She therefor describes that this site has good energy, as opposed to e.g. Lene Voigt park which she described as a place with a lot of ego, bad energy. Coming here helps her in the healing process, and before we part she gives me an address for a website that she had found helpful, [www.traumaheilung.net](http://www.traumaheilung.net).

#### Action linked to spatial characteristics:

The untouched vegetation gave her the feeling of reconnecting to nature, calling it good energy. The site gave her the space to be by herself but simultaneously meeting other people that were maybe looking for the same thing.

#### Conclusion:

Stressful life: The encounter with the woman taught me another facet of this interstitial site. On the site I encounter people that

indicate that this place is less stressful for them than other public spaces. They feel like the formal green spaces are maybe not for them, there they do not fit in. This encounter gave me insight into people that are socially more sensitive or vulnerable do need space in the city, and formal park do seldom provide space for that. They might not feel at ease in a park with a lot of people, see and be seen, and highly maintained vegetation. Like this woman, she comes to the interstice alone to find a place to release stress, she finds ‘good energy’ it in the unmaintained vegetation and likeminded people she encounters.

Meeting others:

The fact that she comes here alone does not mean that she does not want to meet others, this woman actually came here to meet other people that are maybe more like herself. Also other people I have spoken to indicate to come here to be alone but also to see what other people are doing on the site. The camp at the forest edge for example is a place where everyone passes by to check out what is going on.

I must admit that this is a different way of making use of greenspace than what I am used to, I therefor had not thought of this before. I do not often feel lonely or out of place in society. I am lucky to be able to do what interests me and have the feeling that life comes pretty easy to me. I do not have any trouble finding contact with other people and I feel at ease in public space. But that is of course not the case for everyone. If you are socially a bit more vulnerable, sensitive to stressful situations, just a little different than the norm it is probably hard and must feel lonely to always try to keep up. For this woman this interstitial site provides a place where she can connect with other people that have a similar interest.

### Day 3: Undetermined and illegal: great care and trash

Illegality: Although not very clearly communicated, it is officially illegal to come onto the site. There are no signs telling you to stay off the property. The only way you could interpret this prohibition are the cheap Heras fences that are unevenly placed along a few edges of the site, (but leaving the most important trees open). Access onto the interstitial site is thereby apparently tolerated but simultaneously the municipality cannot be held accountable for what happens on the site. Users can kind of do as they wish.

Indeterminacy: There is no plan for the site, there are no rules of how you should behave, no imposed purpose of the space. The interstice is undetermined. What does it do to me? You can walk over the abandoned train tracks and have the feeling that I have found this place and that it is my adventure. The feeling that I have discovered it and that I can see in it what I want makes me value the place more, more than if I can only see what someone wants me to see, determined. What I think the indeterminacy means for the users of the site. It means that every single person that comes here can discover the site by him or herself, they can see the site as they want/whish/need, the space can take on any form or purpose. It gives the freedom to come and take materials from the site, to alter the site, to own the site, to take on a level of responsibility towards it. As a result of these two components there are many different uses, with extreme differences in level of engagement with the site. For example: The person that needs to get rid of their sofa, suitcase, old mattress, clothes or washing machine can dump it on the site without consequence. The dog owners leave their dog off the leash and they can leave without cleaning up after their dog. Young children from the neighborhood can come to smash a glass bottle as hard as they can without their parents knowing. And simultaneously, someone can build the most elaborate shelter or treehouse including vegetable garden without the authorities removing the construction. These extremes in engagement can pose problems. The one building a camp with all the love he has, has as much right to do that as the one that comes by a week later to burn the construction to the ground. What can be considered misuse in this case? As to my own perception it annoys me to see all the trash laying around, it annoys me because it shows that people do not value the place as much as I think it’s worth. Other people I have spoken to care about the place and they all name the trash as the biggest nuisance. Two of them told me that they come here to clean, sometimes even organize cleaning days with friends to come and collect the rubbish. This reaction in itself shows the other extreme of great care and engagement.

### Social encounter Day 3: Girl in the perfect coffee place

This encounter gave me insight into why it is important to have a place that people can alter themselves for their own desired use, without wanting to bother anyone else.

**Location:** Coffee place Lene Voigt **time:** 10:00 **activity other:** making coffee **activity me:** buying a cappuccino

**Description:** Today I wanted to know whether people are actually

aware of the existence of the AC site, because literature told me that interstitial spaces are often not even perceived by urban inhabitants. To find this out I asked around at the coffee place next to the Lene Voigt park. The girl making the coffee is in the end of her 20’s, her hair is dyed blond and she has tattoos, she is as hip as the coffee place itself.

*Do you know the greenspace at the end of the bicycle lane in that direction?*

Do you mean the old paper factory? Yes I come there everyday to walk my dog.

*Do you make use of that place for other activities?*

We have afterparties there, at the camp at the forest edge where the treehouses are.

*Why there?*

Because it’s better than a park. It’s more quiet, it’s more cozy, a park is too perfect.

*Have you ever felt uncomfortable there?*

No never

*Have you ever seen anything you disapprove of?*

The trash! Together with friends, once in a while, we organize a cleaning day to clean the whole place. We should do one, the mess is too much at the moment.

*Do you know who makes the mess?*

They are the youngsters that come there to drink. I come there every day with my dog so I know them.

*If you could change anything what would it be?*

Nothing, I really want it to stay as it is. It’s calm and cozy and different.

*No trash bins either?*

No, it will all be so managed, we already have the parks, they are too managed. I am afraid that it is going to change.

### Action linked to spatial characteristics:

The location is close to her house, the dog can walk freely there. She and her friends go to the camp for afterparties in the early morning, no one sees you from the street, you can put music, you can arrange the place for yourself, you are outside but not bothering anyone.

### Social encounter Martin and Lina

**Location:** Airbnb close to Anger Crottendorf **time:** 18:00 **activity**

**others:** sitting at the balcony **activity me:** sitting at the balcony

**Description:** Martin and Lina are the hosts of my Airbnb in Leipzig, when I tell them what I am doing they are very enthusiastic and tell me they often visit the interstice in Anger Crottendorf.

*How often do you go to the site?*

**Martin:** We go to the building about once a month, we use the green area in front to get to the building

*For what reason would you go there?*

**Martin:** Adventure time

*What makes it adventurous?*

**Lina:** Because its illegal, it’s a thrill to try and get in And its always different, every time its different then the time before.

**Martin:** I adore the view you get from the building, when looking south over the green area. Especially in the summer when the leaves are so high.

**Lina:** We had also been there when it was raining, it was like a jungle,

**Martin:** Yeah, like a rainforest!

**Martin:** Once I was there at night and alone and I was very afraid, it was very frightening because there were voices coming from everywhere. There were shouting and screaming sometimes and I couldn’t locate where they were coming from. I didn’t know what kind of people where there,

**Lina:** Maybe some junkies

*And did you like or dislike this experience?*

**Martin:** It was also very adventurous, added to the adventure.

**Lina:** Why did you go there alone at night?

**Martin:** To pick up a dead body, hahah, no just I love to walk around there, it’s a very familiar walking route for me. Especially the trails, I love to walk there.

*Would you go again alone at night?*

**Martin:** Yes, haha

*Would you go alone at night?*

**Lina:** No, of course not. But I wouldn’t go anywhere alone at night where I wouldn’t know the place so well.

*And where do you go on the site when you visit?*

**Martin:** Mostly inside the building. They have closed the main entrée of the building recently and in front of the entrance there is a sitting area. We sat there last time.

**Lina:** What I also really enjoy is the graffiti’s in the building, that is another reason why I would go there, to spray sometimes and to look what others have sprayed.

**Martin:** That is also important to me, that there are a lot of graffiti’s inside a park, that is maybe not everyone’s idea of a park, but its what I love. When I imagine the Lene Voigt park I do not see any graffiti. (This is funny because the whole park is full of graffiti)

**Martin:** But when you focus on the green area especially, I was there a year ago when my sister started building up an atrium with wood. She showed it to me and we where hanging out there. I visited her there a couple of times, she was always going there after her workday, to escape reality a bit. But a month later after she had showed it to me someone destroyed it, there was nothing left. Idiots. She has spend a lot of time there, but not anymore. because she quit her job she is not that stressed anymore.

*Where was her construction and what kind of structure was it?*

**Martin:** Hmm, how to describe, On the way from the yard to the building. It was like ring, half a circle where you could sit on, three meters diameter, and there was a gap in the middle for a fire. There was a little fireplace with rocks. It was to hang out there, it didn’t really have a view.



Martin’s drawing of the construction

*Have you seen things you disapprove of?*

**Martin:** I disapprove of the destruction, the destruction of the yard area, the destruction of the structure my sister built.

**Lina:** Yes that, and there is a lot of trash, I don't really understand why people leave their trash behind, I mean its green and you don't do that.

*How could you influence the destruction?*

**Martin:** Maybe when you make a playing are for children then people are way more respectful with the environment. They would stop throwing their beer bottles there because there are children playing there. That is one approach. But the people that trash the constructions that other people built are just idiots and it's hard to influence them. Only by shutting the whole area down, putting a fence around it.

**Lina:** I think people are ignorant and I don't think that a children area would change that. I really don't think that people would enjoy a children area because the area is now more like an escape from reality and you don't want to have children around there because you can do whatever you want, it's your safe space when you come there.

**Martin:** That means it's also very exclusive towards people with children.

**Lina:** They can come to this area, they can explore it and they can discuss with their parents why there is garbage, you can give it some pedagogic turn. You can teach them environmental engagement.

*Do you have an idea who puts the trash there?*

**Lina:** Not a certain group of people. I can imagine that people organize some parties there and then they let the trash behind.

*If you could change anything, what would it be?*

**Martin:** Nothing

**Lina:** Maybe there could be some cool plants, not only the plants you see everywhere around the building. Like spaces where you could grow plants, so people that come there could pick some vegetables or flowers. That would be great because the green isn't much used. More diversity in plants and more usefulness.

**Martin:** And a little lake maybe, so you can go swimming there and fish.

*You said you used the tracks often for walking, what is the furthest you went?*

**Martin:** Further north you pass over the Eisenbahnstrasse and then the tracks have an ending because the real train tracks pass there. I went also passed them and followed the tracks further all the way up to Volksgarden (park). That is the most north I went.

*What if you would make that a connection, like a walking connection, would that add to the quality of the place?*

**Martin:** For me it would ruin the spirit of the tracks because of the lost atmosphere that the tracks have is the magic that always takes me back to them. But I think, why not, it's a good connection from north to south, it's a logic thing to do.

*For what reason would you go there (AC) instead of to a formal park like Lene Voigt for example?*

**Martin:** Because there (LV) are too many people and at AC you are on your own, especially on the train tracks. You are completely

alone, there is nobody. In the green yard there is also always very few people, and these people are always there for their own. There is always the same kind of people, it's not the kind of people that want to be seen. It's mostly people who do their own thing, when you talk to them it's nice because it's also like doing your own thing on this ground.

**Martin:** It is funny, I have a way better imagination of the green area at the factory than I have of the Lene Voigt park. Because that is a place where I would go to realize /to be aware of my environment, to see something stunning, and at Lene Voigt park I would just meet people or go for a walk.

*Is there a similar place in Leipzig?*

**Martin:** (has to think very hard) In Plagwitz there is a beautiful factory building where you also have a view over the city, I can really recommend you to go there but it does not have such a big greenspace in front of it.

*And BBH for example?*

**Martin:** Well that is almost not comparable because the green is missing, there are no plants there, only some berries.

**Conclusion:** I am in a dilemma, the more I get to know about the area, the less I know how you should change it. The reason that people are using the place is because it is like it is. They know it like this and they enjoy it. There are relatively few people making use of the site so the people that do come are attracted by the possibility to be alone. They also come here because they have the feeling that they are not allowed to be here, that makes the adventure. Any claimed "improvement" would change those characteristics and therefore change this specific use of space.

## Day 4: the tracks and the viewpoint

The train tracks run in a North-South direction on the eastside of the site. They are about 9m higher than the surroundings and neighbored by steep slopes with big trees growing on it. The southern part bridges over the busy road, here was the former entrance of the train stop, at this part the slope is reduced to a 9-meter-high wall which means that there are no trees to block the view. The southern end of the train stop forms a small plateau with a view over the entire field, this is what I start calling the viewpoint. Almost every time I have visited the site there where people at this location. The place seems designed to watch the sunset. The plateau orientates to the west, you are looking over the dense green sea of trees on the field and the sun sets behind the high trees of the forest. The abandoned factory building is on your right hand, it towers impressively over the site, with the scattered windows and trees growing out of the roof, it looks sublime to me.

Although the viewpoint was the former entrance of the train stop there is currently no way, besides climbing the wall, to get up to the tracks when you are standing below. To get up you have to walk along the slope in the direction of the building, it takes about 10 minutes. Almost at the north end of the site is a desire path that runs up the slope, still steep but a little shorter at this point. There are two small trees that are clearly part of the way to get up, the bark is smoothed by the hands that hold on to it every time someone comes up or down. It makes me think of the bronze sculptures, a golden shine over the nose or toes, touched by so many hands. The soil is carved out by the numerous footsteps, the roots of these same trees define the steps and shape of the erosions. After moving up you arrive at the abandoned train stop, it is here that I had the next social encounter that gave me another insight into the workings of the interstice.

### Social encounter day 4: The beehive and destructive play

Today I saw what destructive play is and why you can get very angry at it and at the same time it doesn't mean anything bad. It's a funny place.

**Location:** at the viewpoint **time:** 17:00 **activity others:** installing a beehive, talking and playing **activity me:** drawing

**Description:** A 25-year-old man, Noah, came by to install a beehive at the viewpoint, he got the bees today and he needed a place to stall the hive for a while before he had found a better place. He put up a note with his phone number saying to be careful with the bees and if there was any problem you could call him. It crossed my mind that this location next to the cliff of the wall was probably not the best option, but he probably knew better than I. 5 min after he left, two little 8-year-old blond boys arrived at the train stop. Someone had put some glass bottles together, probably for someone else to be collected for pfand. The boys took the bottles and smashed them as hard as they could against the concrete blocks. After finishing the bottles the next thing that caught their attention was the beehive. It took only 1 minute before they had kicked the hive

from the viewpoint, it fell 9m down on the ground below. I already had my doubts about breaking all the glass bottles but this was, in my perception, really the rudest thing to do. I thought it was time to intervene. My German is not good and especially in situations of anger the words are limited, I told them in English that it was a very stupid action, which they replied with giggling. I walked down to collect the note with the phone number and called the guy to tell him what had happened to the beehive. The hive was on its side and the bees were swarming everywhere, he came right away. The two boys had also come down, my angry words had not impressed them much and they were curious what was going on. When Noah, the owner of the bees, arrived he reacted differently than I had done. He was patient with the boys, I think he saw the action as ignorance about nature and insects, but he didn't really blame the boys for this. He told me "they do not learn this stuff in school". He talked firmly to the boys letting them know why it was not good what they had done. He also told them that he needed a rope to get the hive back up again, the two boys left directly to get a rope. He needed the to put the hive back up there again because the bees that had flown out would otherwise not find their way back home. Only when the bees had returned to the hive in the evening he could remove the hive to find a better place for it.

The little boys had found a rope and ran up to the viewpoint. Noah climbed up the wall as if it were a bouldering exercise to attach the rope to the metal bars above. Then he came down to tie the other end to the beehive. The boys started pulling the rope and Noah climbed slowly to keep the beehive away from the wall. They managed to get it up there together. While this was happening another user of the site came by. A woman around 30 years old entered the site from the street with her She did not react to what was happening on the wall I walked around to get up there as well, which takes around 4 minutes, and when I arrived I was amazed by what I saw. Noah and the two boys were sitting around the beehive and Noah was explaining them about the bees, how they make honey and that this hive is their home and how important insects are for the ecosystem. The boys kept apologizing for what they had done. What a place. The next day I crossed one of the young boys again in one of the streets around the interstice, he was with his mother, little sister and baby brother in the baby carriage. He came up to me and apologized again before he was strictly called back to his mother with her rules.

### Action linked to spatial characteristics:

The elevation difference of 9 meters in combination with a lack of rules makes it possible to throw things down. The indeterminacy of the site gave the freedom to Noah to temporarily stall his beehive here.

## Day 5: The forest, the moss and a deeper understanding

This is one of the last days and even if I thought that I had kind of seen everything already something happened that surprised me even more. First, the place has become smaller for me, by getting to know every route you recognize that the site is not as endless as you thought. At first every path felt like an adventure. This feeling made the area big in my perception, but today I was able to orientate myself everywhere where I came. I find it interesting that you can spend so much time in a place and that it still takes you 5 days to be able to understand the size of it. But the most important experience happened in the forest. I was quite deep inside the forest and had walked down in one of the pits to take a look at the construction of one of the shelters. I was taking pictures of the moss growing on the soil when all of a sudden, I realized that the material of the soil was not just natural stones and sand, what I had assumed up till now, but actual piles of rubble! Suddenly I saw blocks of brick, sandstone and metal, all overgrown with mosses. They were the remains of the buildings that had been destroyed in 1994 and left here to be overgrown by mosses and trees. That is why the soil is so uneven in the forest, with the weird deep pits, and that is also why the trees are so high here as compared to the field. It is not as easy to cut the vegetation on these uneven piles of rubble as it is on the sandy field. That is why they had left this part of the interstice alone and the forest had the time to develop here, whereas the young trees on the even field get cut every 5 years or so. The interstice has so many different facets that even on the 5th day I could discover such an essential thing.

A bit later I had climbed out of the pit and was standing still next to the path to note some things down. About 10m away from me a man around his 30 sat down at a tree trunk, he had not seen me. He was in deep thoughts and after a few minutes I saw that he had started crying. See social encounter day 5. This might not sound so important but before coming to Leipzig I had a conversation with my supervisor Rudi regarding interstices being an addition to formal public space. In this conversation he asked me: “where could go to cry in public space nowadays?” A question I had not directly understood the importance of. And now it happened right in front of my eyes! This man had come to the interstice to cry because this place fit that emotion, it was calm and secluded, and different from formal green space.

### Social encounter day 5: Boy crying in the woods

**Location:** Dense forest **time:** 16:00 **activity other:** sitting down at a fallen tree in the forest, unaware of my presence **activity me:** standing a bit farther away next to the path in the forest

**Description:** I was standing still next to the path in the forest. I noticed a man at about 10m away from me, he sat down at a tree branch without having seen me. He was around 30-year-old and interpreting from what I could see from this distance, an ordinary guy. It looked like he was meditating. I kept quiet and watched him, after a while he held his head in his hands and started crying. After around 2 minutes he took a deep breath got up and left.

### Action linked to spatial characteristics:

This man needed a place where to cry. The forest gave him the privacy, the calmness and atmosphere that fit this emotion.

**Conclusion:** What a place! It took me a while to understand the interstice but now I had the feeling it had all come together. This interstitial space in Anger Crottendorf has a complexness that makes it possible to spend so much time on it and even reveal new aspects after 5 intense research days.

## Day 6: Ever changing camps

The informal constructions that users of the site create can appear in any form. E.g. the indication of a path, a simple shelter, a gate or an elaborate combination of treehouses, fireplaces and vegetable garden. At the site I have discovered multiple constructions and it took me a while to understand the nature of them. My first feeling was that the construction meant a kind of ownership of the space, which in turn meant that it was not accessible for me as a newcomer, but I later understood that this was really not the case. When I met Salman at the shelter on the forest edge on the first day, I asked him who had constructed the camp. He answered with “you! Me!”, an answer I did not directly understand. Only later I understood what he had meant: everyone that comes by adjusts the camp in the way that fits the way he wants to make use of it.

There are multiple shelters in the forest and one more elaborate construction, the camp, at the forest edge. The very first time in February the camp looked completely abandoned. It was clear that someone had invested great care in it, including bricklaying a fireplace, a small pond, a vegetable garden and a compost bin. The shelter included a message to future users that this was the place to feel like a child again. But the state in which I encountered the place looked more like a battlefield. What struck me was that there was a clear difference in what made the place look like a collection of trash or an interesting ruin. The wood and stones and other materials that were found on site looked like they belonged here, whereas the ‘imported’ materials like pieces of plastic, flags and buckets made the place look like a pile of trash. When I came back in June I understood that the use of this camp is seasonal, and in spring people would invest their care again to put new life in it. I saw new additions to the treehouse and even a second fireplace. It was clear that it was not abandoned anymore but the mess was not less. Apart from the use being seasonal, the constructions are changing daily or weekly. In June I saw people making use of the shelters and the camp everyday, alone in deep thoughts or hanging out with some friends.

All constructions are located in the forest. More specifically they are located at transition areas: the camp and treehouse at the edge of the forest, the shelters at the slopes of the pits making use of the slope for the construction.