

R O O M
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In urge for kin-architecture

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INTRODUCTION

Marineterrein is an Amsterdam enclave, that has been physically transformed over the years, by the hand of human species, to suit the needed human activity, such as harbour that was present in 1928 since 1960 when it becomes a military zone. Nowadays, the military part is still present but on a smaller scale, leaving room for public activities such as walks with dogs, workout spaces, baths in the summer, and private activity such as start-ups, schools, bars and restaurants. Is a place built by people for people therefore with elements that suits the needs of human necessity, leading to exclusion or adaptation of other species, such as birds, to a space that has been imposed to them.

Hence, concentrating on the magpie, the research paper in going to be an investigation about the elements in Marineterrein that include or exclude that bird by following the follow question: “What are the elements that include or exclude magpie in Marineterrein?”

Personally, I think this to be an important topic to consider for a designer: whether in a large or small scale, a design decision brings great responsibility, which, in my opinion, is often underestimated. With the choice of position, the designer goes to occupy and invade a territory. From the choice of material, the designer gives more or less attraction to the occupation. By the choice of the shape, the designer gives more or less accessibility.

My interest lies not only in the fact that I want to have more magpies around in my daily life, but there is a bigger underlying reason: human species are not the only live being in the planet earth and, more important, since everything is part of an ecosystem ¹, all species needs each other to survive.

The ecologist, philosopher, feminist, Donna Haraway (born September 6, 1944), in her book “staying with the trouble, making kin in Chthulucene” (2017) ², talks how important is to make “Kin” ³. In very simple words, “kin” is a word invented by Haraway herself to express the obligatory and necessary-to-survive relationship between all living being because we are part of an ecosystem. Here the idea of “kin-architecture” by which I mean a link through design that can blur the boundaries between human and non-human species and being more connected through a more cohabitate design.

Starting from a Marineterrein project, I will bring an example of what kin-architecture means to me. Then I will continue with a conceptual analysis of Marineterrein, understanding in which places the bird species can be found, and then focus on the magpie, putting myself in its shoes, walking through bushes and looking from its perspective to better understand which are the key elements that make up its ideal habitat and therefore attract it. With a case study I will better understand what it means to design with different materials and shapes how these can affect the accessibility of bird species, and then finally come to a conclusion and understand: “In what way an architecture gesture can be kin?”, “How could a kin-architecture be?”

²Haraway D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble, making Kin in the Chthulucene*. USA: Duke University Press

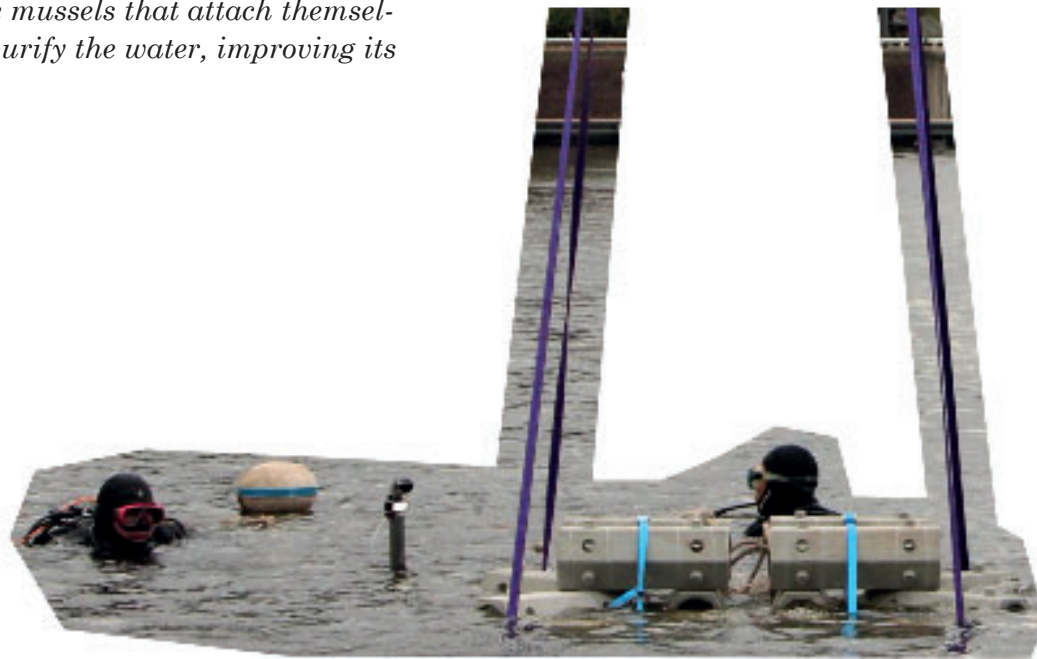
³ “By kin I mean those who have an enduring mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can’t-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences. I have a cousin, the cousin has me; I have a dog, a dog has me... It’s not necessarily to be biologically related but in some consequential way to belong in the same category with each other in such a way that has consequences.”. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/making-kin-an-interview-with-donna-haraway/>
“Making—and recognizing—kin is perhaps the hardest and most urgent part”.

Haraway, Donna J.. *Staying with the Trouble (Experimental Futures)* (p.102). Duke University Press. Kindle edition.

¹ ecosystem is a physically defined environment, made up of two inseparable components: The biotope (abiotic): a particular physical environment with specific physical characteristics such as the climate, temperature, humidity, concentration of nutrients or pH. The biocenosis (biotic): a set of living organisms such as animals, plants or micro-organisms, that are in constant interaction and are, therefore, in a situation of interdependence. <https://youmatter.world/en/definition/ecosystem-definition-example/>

KIN-ARCHITECTURE IN MARINETERREIN

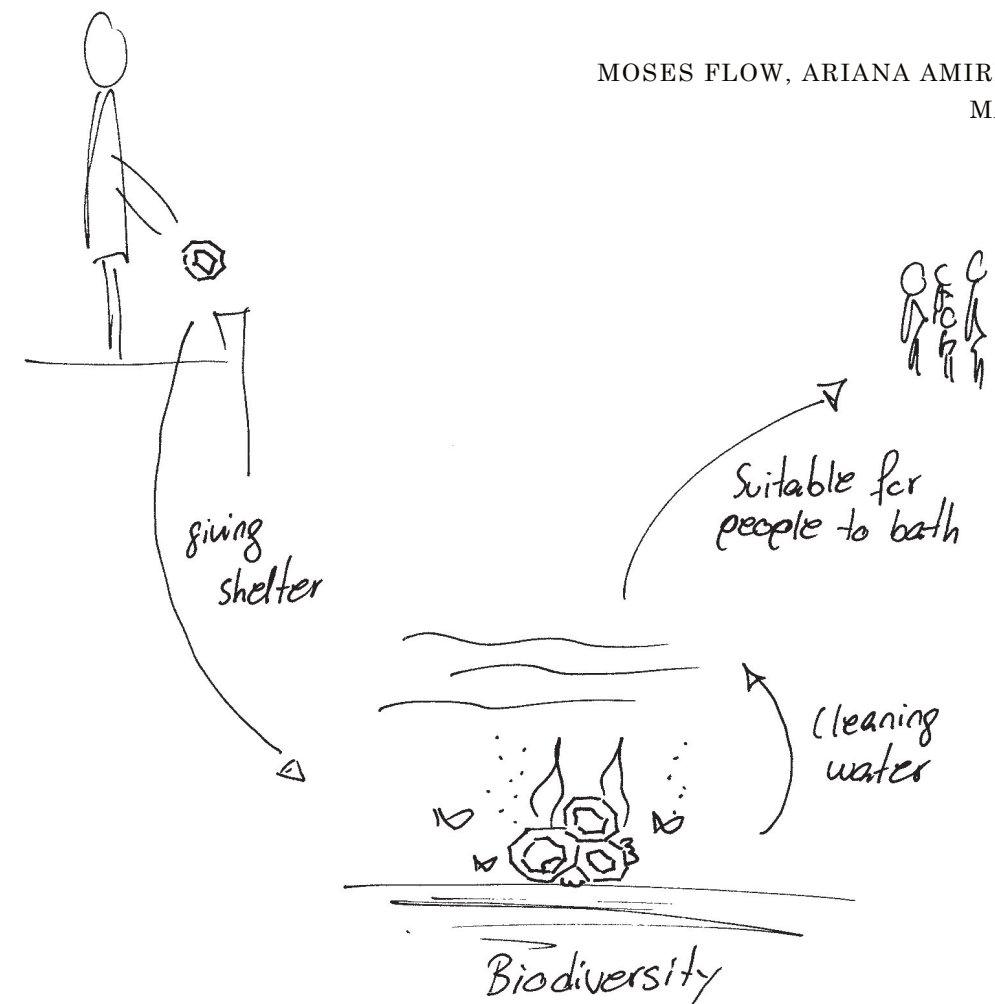
In Marineterrein there is a project that caught my attention. Its name is "Modular Sealife System" (MOSES) ⁴ and is presented as a research project to implement biodiversity by introducing interlocking modular concrete elements where *"Shellfish and plants can easily adhere to the rough outside of the modules, while the smooth inside ensures that the modules do not silt up... This allows one MOSES installation to provide shelter and food for a wide variety of types. The mussels that attach themselves to the reef also purify the water, improving its quality."* ⁴



MOSES PROJECT,
IN THE MOMENT OF THE INSTALLATION,
(NOVEMBER 2020), MARINETERREIN AMSTERDAM ⁵

^{4,5} Reef System, (November 2020), "Modular Sealife System" (MOSES) [ONLINE] Available: <https://www.living-lab.nl/experiments/modular-sea-life-system-moses>

The relationship that is created is what interests me the most: by looking from other species perspective, and providing a best environment, it was possible to provide shelters to fishes and crabs, and in return having clean water where to bath. This creates a "win-win" relationship, where "I have you and you have me", where "fishes have me as a designer to provide them a good environment, and I have them to provide me cleaner water". That is what I mean by kin-architecture: caring for others and looking from a different perspective, the design result as a link that permits exchange and collaboration in a "win-win" relationship between species.



MOSES FLOW, ARIANA AMIRHOSSEINI,
MARCH 2021

A CONCEPTUAL MAP OF MARINETERREIN

Marineterrein is an Amsterdam enclave, that has been transformed over the years, by the hand of human species, to suit the needed human activity, such as harbour that was present in 1928 since 1960 when it becomes a military zone. Nowadays, the military part is still present but in a smaller scale, leaving room for public activities such as walks with dogs, workout spaces, baths in the summer, and privat activity such as start-ups, schools, bars and restaurants.

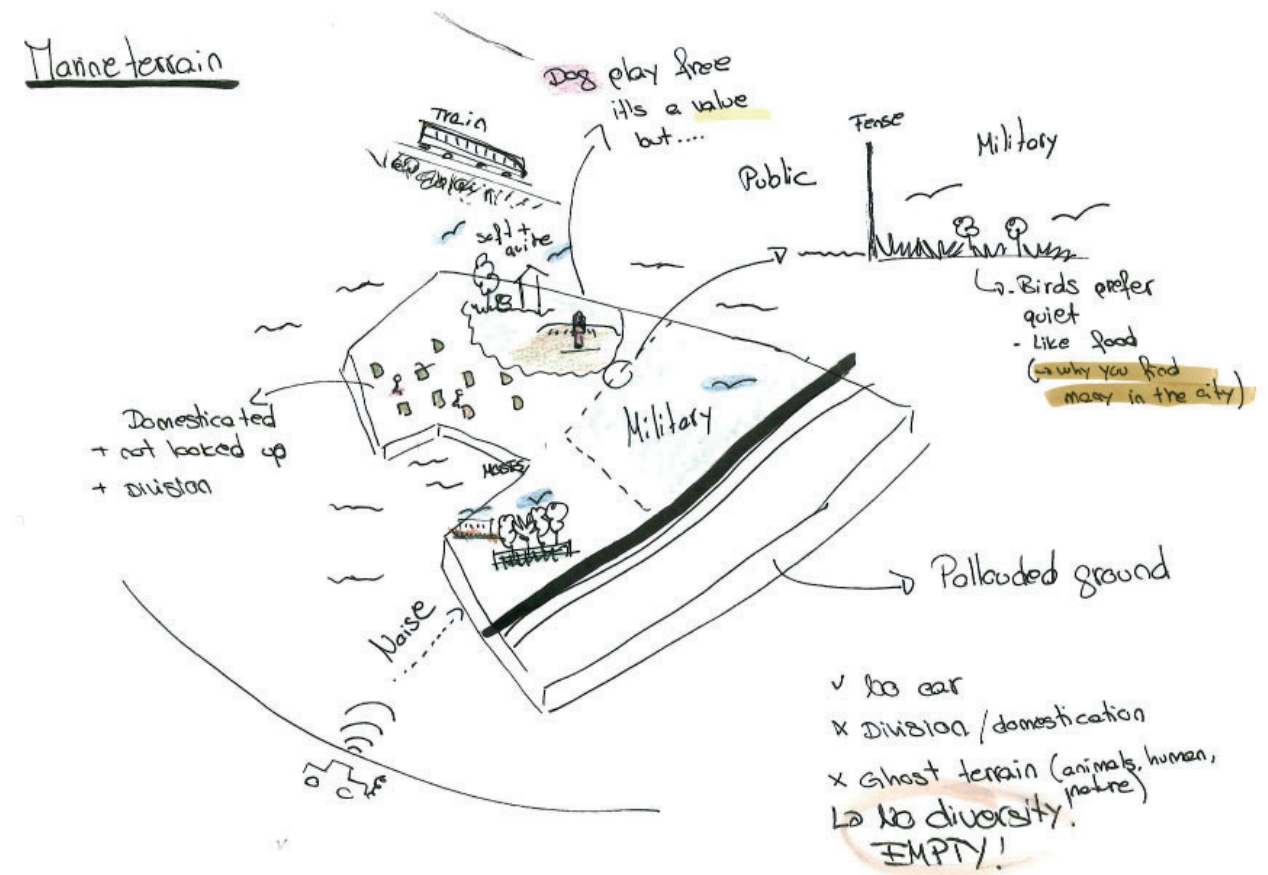
After a walk with my research partner Tom, we made a conceptual map of our first impression of the site coming out with four main zones:

1) "Domesticated Nature" zone, where, used for buildings and pedestrian paths, concrete is the main protagonist of the space. In the vast concrete surface, there are some cut out areas used as divisional and decorative elements, with bushes and seedings.

3) The "Dog Lovers" zone, a large green area, which when not used for helicopter landings, is mainly occupied by dogs and their owners as a recreational area. Here we have encountered the problem of the holes that the dogs create by digging, but on the other hand we appreciate its value of being a large green space and used as a recreational area.

2) The "Military" zone, which takes up a large part of the Marineterrein. It is divided from the public part with a fence, and we noticed that there the grass is thicker, and the turf is greener as it is undisturbed by human or dog activity. We also noticed that in the military zone there are pigeons taking advantage of the undisturbed place to eat on the ground.

4) The last area is the "Summer Garden", which is a big green area near by the bath area, with big trees, fountains, benches and is only open in the summer, as it is closed during the year to allow the vegetation to regrow after the stress of being trampled by the users of the place.



MARINETERREIN CONCEPTUAL MAP,
ARIANA AMIRHOSSEINI, MARCH 2021

What these four zones have in common is that green area and, where those are protected, the green can grow stronger and most of the birds are present. Analysing more closely I noticed that there are different types of delimitations to allow the adaptation of the bird species. Among these, one caught my attention. Between the brie soleil slabs of a Marineterrein building facade, I noticed a bird's nest. Despite the nest's interesting location, my discovery led me to an unexpected conclusion. In fact, I realized that seeing the birds adapt to such a specific facade implies much more. It was indeed confirmation that at Marineterrein the animal species adapts to the human one. I wanted to know more, so I decide to go back to the mainland and understand if there are other elements that attract birds.

ELEMENTS OF ATTRACTION

Going back on Marineterrein I was attracted by the magpie because of its beautiful contrasted white and black colours, his long tail, his loud singing and his funny way of moving. So, I choose to figure out how the magpie move on the ground and what are the elements that make the space more attractive to the bird.

I found most of them in the “Domesticated nature” zone, between the bushes in the cut out green area. And yes, I hid in the bushes, I almost crawled through the shrubs, passing from one to another, trying to look through their eyes and film from their perspective (who knows what people were thinking when they passed by?)

Twigs, loose soil, therefore not compact, short and unexposed paths leading from one bush to another quickly were the elements by which I was surrounded. I had the same feeling as when I was a little girl playing hide-and-seek with my friends in the woods: I would sneak into the holes, maybe between the trees where I could blend in with the rest but still have a glimpse of what was going on outside, also, it had to be somewhere not too isolated but close to other hiding places so that I could slowly get closer to my goal and free everyone!

I think birds play hide and seek all the time.



DRAWING OF THE BUSHES,
ARIANA AMIRHOSSEINI, MAY 2021

ELEMENTS OF ENCOUNTER

The award winning studio “Studio Ossidiana” founded in 2015 by Alessandra Covini and Giovanni Bellotti, works with tactility, playfulness and multispecies inclusion they propose a design that, in my way of seeing, is innovative and highly attractive by and according to their theory, with which I agree, the built environment inevitably leads to inclusions and exclusions depending on who the object is designed for. In my opinion their project “The Vocabulary of the Cage” (2020)⁶ shows this aspect very well. Playing with scale, heights, shapes, materials and accessibility they propose different type of cages that they see as “... a simplified model of nature,... medium through which those inside and outside of it are defined, guests and hosts, captives and keepers, the physical language through which two species communicate.” And since the human species is the one that has the privilege of being able to physically transform the space, it is “the specie that mediates its encounters with the world through objects.”



STUDIO OSSIDIANA, “VOCABULARY OF CAGE”, (2020)⁷

^{6, 7, 8, 9} Studio Ossidiana, (2020), “The Vocabulary of the Cage”, partner: Van Eyck Academie, Het Nieuwe Instituut, location: Maastricht (NL) [ONLINE] Available: <http://www.studio-ossidiana.com/vocabulary-of-the-cage>

How Studio Ossidiana describes its project “The Vocabulary of Cage”. “...From the timid bird feeder to literal enclosures, the Vocabulary of the Cage proposes forms and materials for exercises in negotiation and new encounters, reflecting on the ideas of territory, boundary, border, proximity, and domestication through acts of invasion, retreat, and coexistence.”⁸

Let’s analyse the shape that they propose:

For instance, the proposed towers have several holes throughout their height and stairs that only reach some of these holes. Only by the element of height, holes and accessibility, the designers decide where some specie will be. In the highest part will be accessible mostly by birds, thus leading to a greater occupation of this species in the upper part, while in the lower part it will probably be more heterogeneous as it is also accessible to non-volatile species.



STUDIO OSSIDIANA, “VOCABULARY OF CAGE”, TOWER (2020)⁹

If we take instead, the model with the two waves of nets covering a pool with a perimeter of arches, we have a different inclusiveness game. First of all, two main areas are created, one above, between the two nets, and one below, within the perimeter of arches. The former will be primarily used by birds while the latter by humans. Also, the accessibility of the place I find interesting, as there is a tower that looks like a chimney, which brings accessibility from above, only for the species with wings while from below the non-flying species can access it through the arches.



STUDIO OSSIDIANA, "VOCABULARY OF CAGE",
POOL (2020) ¹⁰



One last example, that would look great in the Marineterrein beach area, is the round platform with arches in the base. It would be perfect as a platform to let humans enjoy the sun above it while creating a protected area for aquatic animals under it.

STUDIO OSSIDIANA, "VOCABULARY OF CAGE",
PLATFORM (2020) ¹¹

^{10,11} Studio Ossidiana, (2020), "*The Vocabulary of the Cage*", partner: Van Eyck Academie, Het Nieuwe Instituut, location: Maastricht (NL) [ONLINE] Available: <http://www.studio-ossidiana.com/vocabulary-of-the-cage>

CONCLUSION

So, to sum up my thoughts, I started to show through MOSES project¹² what a kin-architecture means to me, describing it as a connection where “I have you and you have me”, where “fishes has me as a designer to provide them a good environment, and I have them to provide me cleaner water”, giving a “win-win” relation for both species.

¹² Reef System, (November 2020), “Modular Sealife System” (MOSES) [ONLINE] Available: <https://www.living-lab.nl/experiments/modular-sealife-system-moses>

Through the “Marineterrein conceptual map” I concluded that the bird species has preferences about where to stay based on the presence of specific elements. In fact, they are found more in the green areas but above all, when it comes to going to look for food, they prefer a protected place such as behind the fence that delimits the public area from the private military one. Intrigued by the types of boundaries on Marineterrein that interact with the birds, I discovered one that got me thinking. On a brie soleil louvered facade of a Marineterrein building, I noticed a bird’s nest. Even though I was happy to see that a facade could be useful for bird nesting, it made me aware that there are no elements on Marineterrein that are specifically designed for the bird species. In fact, this is a proof that it is the animal species that must adapt to the human species. None the less, the adaptation of the birds comes by coincidence: the barrier that divides the public part of Marineterrein from the private military part was designed specifically for the delimitation of two zones for the human species, and not for the protection of the birds. The facade with the brie soleil louvers was designed to protect the interior of the building from the sun for the human species, not to house a bird nest (I wonder if the human species will ever remove it). This should not be enough. Who’s the space? But why is this facade attractive to birds?

When I started to analyse Marineterrein I understood that, even though I agree with the book “Urban Maken Nature”(2017)¹³, that claims that cities biodiversity are higher rather than the suburbs biodiversity, I think that some further steps in the way of designing a simple bench or a skyscraper need to be done. This for a simple reason:

¹³ Vink, J., Volland, P., De Zwarte, N., *Urban maken nature* (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2017).

Unfortunately, I didn’t see what kind of bird lived there but I think, from the size and the proximity of the building to the “domesticated nature” area, it could be a magpie one. In fact, the slats of the facade of brie soleil are reminiscent of a simplification of the branching of a shrub or a tree with the advantage that is more protected from the wind.

This connects me with the “Vocabulary of cage” (2020)¹⁴ project of studio “Studio Ossidiana” where they play with scale, heights, shapes, materials and accessibility proposing different type of cages that can be less or more, accessible to birds and human species, letting the latter be the one that decide it encounters.

¹⁴ Studio Ossidiana, (2020), “The Vocabulary of the Cage”, partner: Van Eyck Academie, Het Nieuwe Instituut, location: Maastricht (NL) [ONLINE] Available: <http://www.studio-ossidiana.com/vocabulary-of-the-cage>

This leads to the conclusion that the designer’s choice of location, shape and material interacts with other species such as birds. This leads to great responsibility. Therefore, my goal for this project is to raise awareness about the responsibility of choices during the design process. Only in this way can architecture be more kin. What would it be like if the human species had to adapt to another species?

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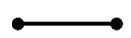
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