

PARALLEL FRAGMENTS

NAUERNNA 2080

In 1880 the polder was created...
In 1980 the landfill was designated...
In 2022 the park was opened...
In 2080 ...

A future scenario of the Nauernasche polder.

voice 1: the villager

voice 2: the maintainer

prologue

- the slope
- the sieve
- the chimneys

prologue

The landfill is covered by grass, several bushes and small trees, but the most special planting found here is the glycol bent grass (lat. *Agrostis glycol*). Similar to the 'zinkviooltje', the yellow violet flower found in the southern part of Limburg that adapted itself to the presence of sink in the water, the grass on the landfill adapted itself to the glycol brought in by snow from the Schiphol landing strips. A mutation of the grass species known for its fine dark green leaves and that needs to be lawn-mowed frequently. It made it onto list of protected plant species in the Netherlands. A few years after the operations had stopped this unique grass species was discovered by a local ecologist. In order to survive, the conventional bent grass adapted itself to the excess of the glycol seeping out of the snow. The green colour of the tips of the grass mutated to blue. This is visible in spring, from april to june, when the roots sprout in such a fast pace, extracting their nutrition from the landfill. After that the blue is dyed by the sun and turns slowly to green again. The grass is symbolic for the proposed attitude towards the landfill. Instead of treating the site as being natural, it should be treated as a post-industrial landscape.

THE SLOPE

They were arguing. "It started with 5 meter." Stated the maintainer. "Hmmm.. I don't think so." was the answer of the villager. "I am pretty sure the first agreement was set at 3 meter." As soon as they reached the border of the former farmland past conflicts from family ancestors came to the surface. From the top, at 37 meters they looked down in an open strip, towards the bottom of the polder at sea-level. In the distance they could see the contours of a front door. "Even the last years the height of the landfill got stretched another couple of meters. That may seem not much, but in this total area that means another 2 million m³." They stood still, looking at the agreements in meters throughout the years.. The maintainer nodded, feeling uncomfortable: "Yes I know...I know."

Every year on the 1st of April the opening of the park is celebrated. At the break of dawn the village gathers in the old farmhouse at the south-eastern border of the side. The farm 'Anna Antonia' has been standing there since the beginning of the creation of the polderland. The landfill operations started around it. By the time the recycling company lacked space they dumped the waste around the house. The owner, a native Nauerna'er was so stubborn and too proud to leave his family land, despite several tempting offers. One day he would wake up and saw the waste surrounded him from all sides: a structure was built around the house and carried the waste dumped onto it. Only a small passage to his front door led him to enter and leave his home, like a scooped path in a thick layer of snow. Maybe it was his age, maybe it was the act of him almost getting buried alive, soon after he died. It would have taken more to remove the building so it was left there underneath the mass of waste.

They start the day with fresh coffee before the back door is opened towards the open strip. In front of them rises an enormous stepped landscape. At the indicated meters, corresponding to the agreements made through time, slopes can be pulled up to make way to the top of the mountain. The rise of the landfill in 39 years is now experienced in one day. The 37-meter-incline makes the period between 1983 en 2022 tangible, spans the time between the moment the landfill operations started and stopped. Surrounded by straight walls of sprayed concrete, stabilizing the loose consistency of the waste, the amount of meters is carved into the walls, as if a giant scratched lines with the point of his fingernail. The 90-degree angle is rare in this landscape. Sharp shadows are a result from this harsh cut: a contrast with the convenient resting-angle of 1/3 that marks the borders of the landfill. This rigidness emphasizes the friction experienced in history. Together they pull up one slope after the other, using the advantage of gravity created by the slope with the weight of the amount of people. At midday the villagers reach the last few slopes. When arrived on top of the plateau they have a drink all together. Already looking forward to the coming year.

THE SIEVE

The sharp corners they took were uncomfortably unnatural. "I believe we cross a huge pile of asbestos here on our left hand." The maintainer explained, as he saw the villager struggling to keep up in the underground tunnel. They passed unknown objects on both sides of the route, weathered by time. The villager thought: "These are possible remains of the throw-away society." Following his gaze the maintainer said: "They used to find strange things when dumping the waste, objects that stayed intact in the process of burning waste." Also the tools and machines used in the recycling process got a purpose in the final destination of the site. "Ah, almost there." The maintainer seemed to recognize the route again when approaching the last few turns. What the villager saw at the edge of the tunnel gave him a weird taste in his mouth. The confrontation with the past was so vividly he got overwhelmed and so he stopped half way the viewing platform. "What on earth have we been doing for decades." He was seriously touched. All the maintainer could reply was: "Compared to other countries we have not been doing bad at all..."

In the core of the landfill there is as much waste above you as there is below you. And you can feel that: it is dark and heavy. The route is carved out in the matter like a mine; a connection of tunnels connected to even more tunnels, feeling like a mole inside of its natural habitat. In fact, we used to act like moles in our former natural habitat. We did not dig with our paws, or hands, but with machines as being extensions of our bodies. After every few meters of the digging the underground network got sealed and stabilized with sprayed concrete. Sometimes they would dig and bump into a piece of asbestos, covered it with waste again and make a turn around it. Walking through the grotto-like space, following the rhythmic circular skylights, it might remind you of being in a church with in its alcoves not relics of religion but archaeological artefacts of the past of the age of the anthropocene instead. The alcoves are cuts in the tunnel sealed by a transparent polycarbonate tube, showcasing the artefacts on a background of waste. The objects get lit through grazing light. It does not get cold here in winter and it is not warming up in summer either. A smell of oldness fills the network that lingers in your olfactory memory. Once you have taken the spiral stairs with its ninety-six steps down you take a right, followed by a left, a right, a left, a right, a left, a right and at the moment when you think you get lost you finally see daylight entering the tunnel. A circle frames the light; first it appears as a beam, when getting closer you see that the light is divided through the holes in the rusty metal cylinder. A sieve, used to filter particles from the waste cantilevers over the mass. The slope underneath runs down while you continue horizontal, moving towards the framed picture. What you see is bulldozers, trucks, tractors, and cranes moving matter. Day in, day out, they mimic recycling operations of past generations for educational purposes: an open-air historical museum.

THE CHIMNEYS

“What is that?” While walking on top of the plateau, the villager pointed to two enormous mounds. On each of the mound a pipe stuck out on the top. The maintainer replied: “On the left is a gas collector, connected to drainages throughout the landfill. It is still in motion, it always will be.” The villager reacted: “Until eternity?” The maintainer frowned, as if that was a question at all. He continued: “Gas releases itself from within, with an average south western wind it would be possible to smell the waste in the village, a little reminder of our behaviour in the past.” The villager tried to understand the complexity. “What about the other mound? I don’t understand... I do not recall smelling the waste. I do smell an odour of pine trees from time to time.” The maintainer ignored the comment to avoid any further inconveniences.

Two perfectly shaped mounds are grounded slightly on top of the landfill off-centred to the north. From bird-eye view they would appear as small objects, but from close on eye-height view the size of the cones is incomprehensible. The core of the western cone contains a gas collector, connected to a network of gas drainages throughout the landfill. Gas moves vertically, it is gathered at several points on site, with this being the main collector. The mound on the east releases an odour of pine trees; functioning as a counterpart to its neighbouring mound it covers the smell of the gas. The odour is not released on clock time but instead it is connected to the lived time of the landfill. Every time gas is released, a signal is sent from the gas collector to the odour diffuser. As a visitor you take a ramp that covers a quarter of the mound, leading all the way up. From here, you oversee the whole site, extending the view on the surrounding landscape. A wasteland of nothingness, or you can call it extensive recreation: exactly as the villagers wished the site to be after years of operations. The surface is covered with wild grasses, contradictory in its function the hairy vegetation give the shapes a cuddly appearance. This part of the landfill is home to several small animals like mice, rabbits, hedgehogs, insects and birds. In case of exceptional gas escapism, the maintainer’s buzzer goes off. He gets as fast as he can to the maintenance door on the foot of the western mound, rushes through the tunnel to the core, checks the gas, leaves the mound through the tunnel, crosses the twenty meters to the eastern mound, enters the maintenance door, rushes again through a tunnel to the core where it turns on some knobs at the odour releaser – like an early telephone operator. From these chimneys the aftercare of the landfill is controlled. Forever.

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