

PLAYBOOK

for healing environments

A spatial strategy for Landgoed De Grote Beek

essential summary

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Healing is a process

Healing is a process, not a final or permanent state. The same is true for sustainability: it is a journey towards a healthier relationship with our landscapes and communities. Accepting the process and embracing the uncertainty are some of the values that GGzE's clients learn. It only seemed fitting to propose that the healing environment acts in the same way, that it develops at their pace. Instead of focusing on the larger transformations, the project starts with small, localised interventions that are not architectural in the classical sense, but already have the possibility to improve the daily experience of De Grote Beek. The proposals elaborated in each Frame are not entirely new to De Grote Beek, the novelty is in how the separate parts relate to each other. The physical fragmentation of the site is also a fragmentation of the communities within it. The future development should include ways to heal that.

The strategy presented in the following pages is essentially a developmental process that has a programmatic, narrative and architectural layers. The challenge with transforming De Grote Beek into a healing environment is to find the right balance between them. Firstly, the construction process is usually such that a building must be finished to maintain structural integrity. Secondly, a building is an investment, so it must be finished as soon as possible in order to fulfil its purpose and to generate returns. Such technical and administrative constraints are important, but they create the illusion that the process is over as soon as construction is finished. This focus on the final result diverts attention from the disruptive effects of building on life quality in the area during, like all the noise, and dust. Building is often preceded by demolition, digging and profound disturbance of the area. None of these experiences are conducive of a healing environment. This is another reason why the strategy proposes that change happens in small, incremental steps, and not in violent, radical leaps.

Masterplans tend to create the impression that the most important thing is the final state of the project. As a result they are less fitted for continuous adaptation, meaningful participation or learning through the process of development. To remedy these pitfalls, a masterplan needs to be accompanied by an implementation strategy that places people and landscape at the centre and that embraces uncertainty and experimentation. A major part of this is working with different timeframes; the time it takes to grow a forest, or change behaviour, is often longer than the time it takes to build a house. Time is the key ingredient in inclusive development. Implementing a strategy that acknowledges the timespans at which a person or a landscape can transform is the best way to include them in the development of a healing environment.

Spatial strategy for Landgoed De Grote Beek

The outcome of this project is a spatial strategy of four timeframes that explores how Landgoed De Grote Beek can transform as a sustainable, healing environment. It is also the question posed by the client, GGzE. Landgoed De Grote Beek is the location of the headquarters of GGzE. It is a park of 125 ha, situated in the north of Eindhoven. The site has been devoted to mental health since 1918, and its long history and development are visible in both the architecture and the landscape. In 1993, the vast majority of fences around the site were removed, marking a new era of mental health care based on social integration, but also creating new vulnerabilities.

Sustainability has been pushed up the public agenda for decades, and certainly with more vigour than mental health. Yet, it must be clear that there is a shared urgency to them, as delaying action in both areas only exacerbates the systemic consequences. In this sense GGzE, as one of the largest mental health institutions in the Netherlands, recognises its dual responsibility. Over the last few years, they have been actively working on developing as a sustainable, people-centred, healing environment. This is attested by the Planetree and Milieu Platform Zorgsector certifications their location and organisation have been awarded. As well as their participation in national and international initiatives spearheading the much-needed transformation in the health sector, such as Green Mental Health and Green Deal Duurzame Zorg, among many others.

For its Eindhoven context, GGzE has defined its ambition for the future development of Landgoed De Grote Beek as a sustainable healing environment that accommodates a community of mental resilience (kracht), and acts as Eindhoven's Central Park.

The existing master plan addresses a period of 10 years, and it serves as a framework that can be filled in with a range of initiatives by GGzE. The aim of this strategy is to provide an overarching narrative that can guide curatorial decision-making and can connect the initiatives in spatial and community development. The explorative nature of this speculative design research opened up the opportunity to take advantage of a longer time-span of 15 years. In this way the strategy adds to the development plans for De Grote Beek by illustrating a horizon beyond the masterplan, based on the plans for Landelijk Strijp as a reference point. At the same time it also highlights the potential of short-term adaptations and additions that can support the long-term transformation into a healing environment.

Landgoed De Grote Beek presents a variety of design challenges, that can and should be approached through the use of different timeframes.

The strategy is structured in four timeframes outlining potential interventions on different timescales - weeks, months, years, and decades. The idea behind this choice is that the spatial development of the site should be an incremental process, not a singular large-scale intervention. The healing environment strategy presents a set of tangible interventions and tactics for specific locations and timeframes of the site of De Grote Beek. These spatial and narrative interventions will enable GGzE to experiment with solutions in the areas of programming, activities, experiences, biodiversity and movement. In this way the proposal address the sustainable healing environment at two levels, firstly the content of the interventions and secondly the approach of the development as a process.

Frame 1: Fine-tune & Connect

2021-22



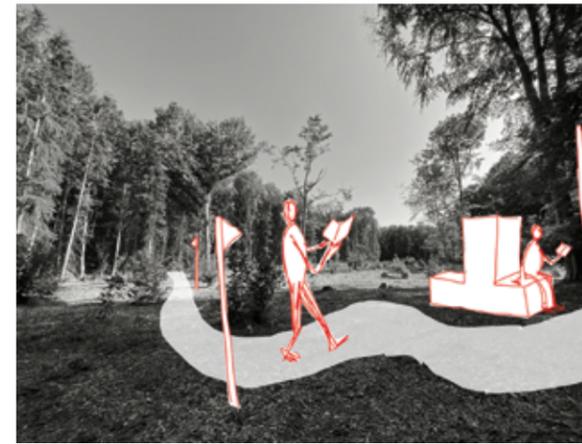
In the span of a few weeks the Healing Path can be established simply by demarcating its envisioned route. Topical issues of accessibility and basic needs can also be addressed, which would enable visitors to spend more time there in a more dignified way. The underlying assumption of this phase is that Landgoed De Grote Beek already has many of the qualities of a healing environment, but it is necessary to formalise these qualities via the Healing Path, and to fine-tune the existing facilities on the site.

The first phase explores the potential of small-scale topical interventions, which can be implemented in a matter of weeks, but can already improve accessibility and make the experience of the site more dignifying and inclusive. By using simple means like flags, the Healing Path route and thematic areas can first be communicated to the users of the park. This would already create a sense of awareness of the transformation processes that will be taking place in the following timeframes. The thematic areas to be defined correspond to existing activities and conditions. Finally, the idea to establish a single main road and limit car traffic on the terrain does not have to wait until the new masterplan is realised. It is perfectly possible to start experimenting with the traffic flows, by simply implementing signage that diverts car traffic in order to test the direct impact of a single main road on behaviour and movement across the site.

What can be done in a few weeks?

- Implement small additions and improvements, in order to make the park more welcoming, accessible and inclusive for the clients of GGzE and for recreational visitors.

- Demarcate the route for the Healing path and define the thematic areas for future development, in order to facilitate navigation and encourage wider recreational use of the park.



Healing path demarcation - illustrated in the forest clearing in the Art Forest area in the North-East of De Grote Beek.



Healing path demarcation - illustrated in the Material Depot, place of the Rode Dorp.



Traffic diversion - start experimenting with possible routes for the main road. It also opens possibilities to explore the effect of car traffic and location of parking lots on pedestrian and cycling traffic.



Water taps installed on existing well plugs. These can serve as a convenient source of refreshment for a variety of users of the park to make it welcoming and easier to spend more time in nature.



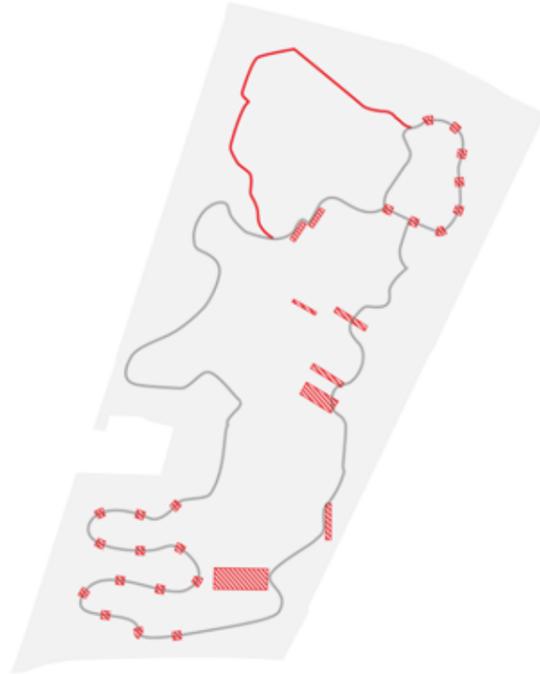
Improving seating areas by adding shading elements and greenery.



Coffee machines near building entrances, where the clients gather - affordable points of social contact, where both resident and non-resident clients of De Grote Beek can meet with park visitors. These can be combined with a WiFi hotspot.

Frame 2: Engage & Initiate

2022-23



Within a few months, an integrated annual event programme can be set up, in which the event facilities, like an outdoor cinema and canopies, can be used for a longer period than just a few days. Combining events with spatial development is valuable for several reasons. Firstly, it offers space for participation and engagement to the client community and staff with the development process of the healing environment. Secondly, it opens space for deliberate experimentation to find out with what kinds of facilities and activities should have a permanent place in the healing environment of De Grote Beek. In this way it also creates the possibility to test certain assumptions.

Additionally, the format of thematic events allows for thematic collaborative actions with local organisations from Eindhoven and the region. For instance, the idea to make small built interventions opens up potential to collaborate with the community of designers and architects. The event format would also generate additional funding opportunities from national and regional cultural organisations.

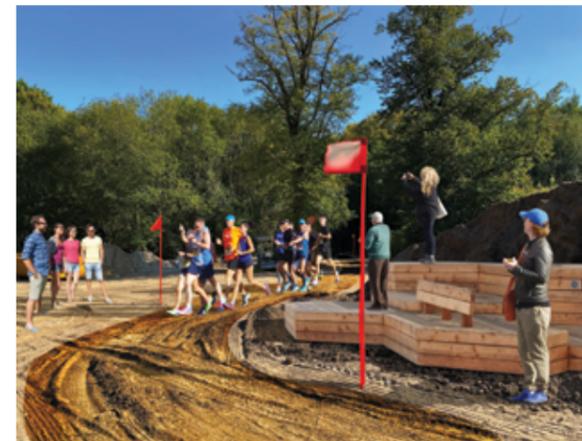
Finally, an integrated event programme can connect the healing environment more visibly with the existing events that take place on Landgoed De Grote Beek, like Grote Beek Pop and Vanstreek festival. The focus is on exploring how the temporary facilities can be reused for other events, as well as how these facilities can be given a longer life, for instance three months instead of a single day. This could be beneficial to both the experience of the community and the sustainability of the efforts.

What can be done in a few months?

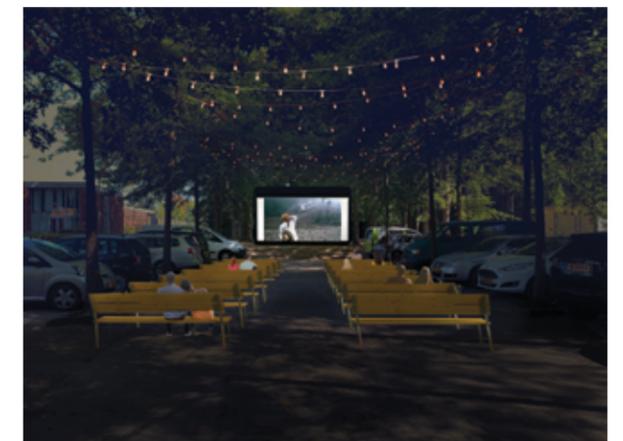
- Adjust the annual event program in order to connect it with the healing path and spatial development plans.
- Collaborate with partners to set up pilots, in order to test ideas for activities and spatial solutions.
- Use events to introduce temporary new facilities, which stay for a continued period on site to be used by clients, families, staff and visitors.



The aim of this event is to promote self-care in a dignifying environment through active participation of the residents. Self-care is crucial in mental wellbeing. The self-care programme includes services like a hairdresser's, barbershop, clothing repair shop.



Sports and games event, promoting activities and offering facilities for leisurely use of the park.



Movies for mental health, a pop-up cinema festival adding to the entertainment program during the weekends.



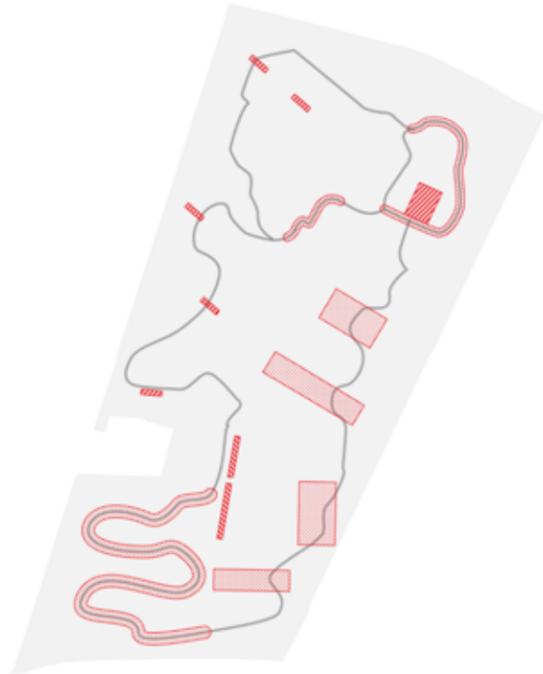
Sunbathing fields, as a way of promoting use of outdoor areas for relaxation.



Forest-bathing decks as part of the mindfulness program of the park, and inviting alternative uses of enjoying nature.

Frame 3: Continuity

2025



Over a period of a few years, GGzE can explore the potential of reiterating the annual event programme, and adapt it to the needs of the client community. For instance, if the pilot events reveal that a forest playground is a popular facility, it should be adapted or expanded in a more permanent form. Alternatively, if it turns out that the outdoor theatre is rarely used, it can be disassembled, and the materials can be reused to construct another experimental feature. This section illustrates various transformations that may result from the integration of participatory processes with the spatial development and the event programme.

Such an approach, and thinking in terms of several years at a time, provides the continuity needed to build a community of active individuals. Additionally, creating a mechanism of continuity for those specific actions is motivated by the findings from the analysis - that events and activities constitute a critical point of intersection between the institution, the community and the landscape. Therefore, it is clear that they should be an integral part of the development of De Grote Beek as a sustainable healing environment. Sustainability in this case includes both responsible use of materials, and inclusive processes of development.

What can be done in a few years?

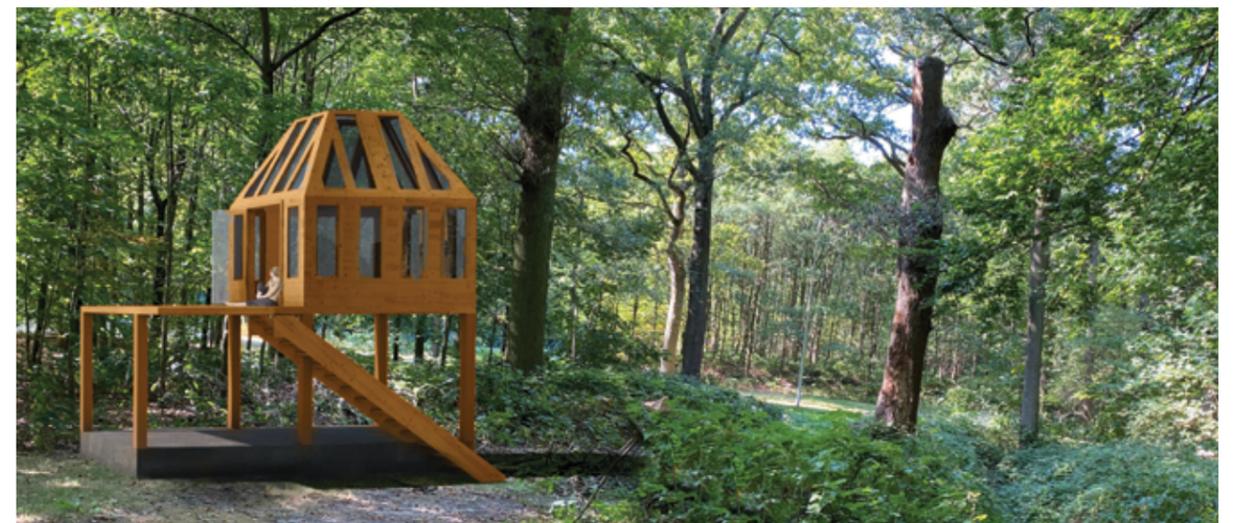
- The management staff and the clients' council should evaluate the experiments at the end of the event cycle.
- Consolidate the successful pilots, by including them in the new event program or giving them more permanent physical form when this is necessary. (five examples are designed to illustrate this process)
- Reiterating the program in this way creates the space for flexibility and participation in shaping the healing environment.



Community square: The event space can evolve to become a permanent outdoor social area.



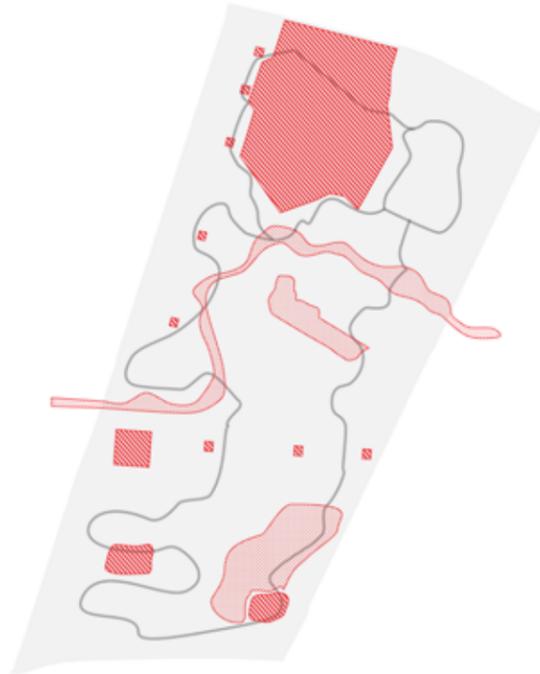
Sun deck: The sunbathing activity could develop as a more permanent form of self-care.



Tiny house retreat: New forms of low-stimulus residences can be developed in the form of a forest retreat.

Frame 4: Island for mental health

2035



Over the next 10 years, GGzE's continued effort to develop De Grote Beek as a healing environment will become more aligned with its societal responsibility in terms of mitigating stigmatisation and the local effects of climate change. The first three timeframes present and visualise a set of foreseeable change and practical proposals. The fourth timeframe shifts its approach to explore how societal and environmental developments might reflect on De Grote Beek as a healing environment.

It is based on the assumption that GGzE will continue to develop a broad range of healing processes and offer services for a variety of clients. Due to practical and legal limitations, the only services that will remain secured and segregated are those of forensic psychiatry department De Woenselse Poort. In the context of De Grote Beek there is a potential to improve its services, by expanding this department further North to create more outdoor space to be enjoyed by its inhabitants. Some of the interventions in this Frame explore how the later stages of the initial facilities can be developed. Others explore the potential of larger systemic interventions, like intensifying the site's capacity to buffer water, or the decommission of the overhead power lines.

The interventions outlined in the fourth phase are by no means exhaustive of the conceivable possibilities in a development process over several decades. Still, they illustrate the importance of changing the assumption that dominant elements like the overhead power lines should be permanent. Similarly, the railroad might be lowered below ground level in the future, which would reconnect De Grote Beek with the adjacent parks after having been divided for over a 100 years.

What can be done in a few decades?

- Guide the initiatives to build a community of (environ-) mental strength with shared values: participation, sustainability, nature stewardship.

- Anticipate transition in the ecological and technological systems. De Grote Beek looks and functions like a green island for mental health that support its community through program of events/ rituals, and thematic landmarks.



Bird tower: As the infrastructure evolves, new uses can be imagined for the electricity towers, in a way that adds to the wellbeing of the community and the landscape.



Canoe dock (left) and forest retreat (right): As De Grote Beek transforms into a water and climate buffer, the landscape will evolve towards becoming a green island for mental health - a mixture of ecological and therapeutic functions.

**Essential summary of the Playbook for healing environments.
A spatial strategy for Landgoed De Grote Beek.**

Studio Kornelia Dimitrova is a design-research practice helping care communities and organizations to identify, explore and address their spatial questions and challenges. This is done by combining methods from architecture and social design.

The studio facilitates workshops and participation, designs future visions and scenarios, based on the careful analysis of space and its community, and translates these into transformation strategies.

This booklet presents the essential summary of the spatial strategy developed for GGzE's headquarters, during a 2-year design research, jointly funded by TU Eindhoven and GGzE, in the PDEng program of TU Eindhoven. The work was done from December 2018 - November 2020, with the valuable guidance and support of Prof. Ir. Juliette Bekkering, as academic advisor, and Mr. Joep Verbugt as company advisor.

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