a nieuw-wild-west

SPACES OF WILDERNESS

A nieuw-wild-west takes up the responsibility to design living space for children and everybody they meet and need. Therefore we propose to reincarnate the AUP green structure of Amsterdam Nieuw-West by introducing wilderness into its neighborhoods. We believe that children need to be free to play close to their homes. A freezone - a public space they can explore and shape to their needs. A young world filled by the imagination of the child.

PLAYING AS A HOLISTIC APPROACH HEALTH

Playing is exercising for live.
Playing is dreaming alive.
Playing is living.

We start playing within the comfort of our home. Once we feel safe enough we explore the space behind the front door. Day by day this space expands into the courtyard, then into the neighborhood and finally into the wild city. The home and the portal are the first domain for a young child to roam and experience the world around them.

The playground as a starting point for this exercise derives from a holistic approach to health. Playgrounds are places of activity where a child and its friends are testing their physical boundaries, explore their phantasy and deepen their social understanding. Within a city they are gathering spaces outside, where children, parents, grandparents, neighbors and strangers come together. We believe that for the physical, mental and social health of a child the ability to play in freedom is essential in building a strong personality. And become healthy adults.

In this workshop we explored the play-spaces between house and neighborhood. Its a spatial exercise on masterplan scale reasseassing the AUP's green structure. A nieuw-wild-west presents a vision for free public space for children. Contributing to an active public domain for everyone.

NIEUW-WEST AS A HEAVY CASESTUDY

Nieuw-West is one of the areas in Amsterdam that has to deal with the concerns of rising numbers of overweight and obese children. 32% of the 10 year olds have become heavier than regarded healthy.

How does their "heavy environment" look like?

Nieuw-West was built according to the principles of "light, air and space". From a modernistic approach various planners applied their vision to building communal life. The affordable housing was put into their ideal green environment. From the living streets (woonstraat), to block streets (buurtstraten), to district streets (wijkstraten), to city lanes (stadslanen), the route for the car is efficiently organized and designed. The home-, the work- and the recreational functions were carefully split up into planned units. Underneath the housing-stamp-structure and grey-car-grid the green structure is planned into the leftover space. The long lines of the old populi and the central lake remind us of if this grand landscape.

The rise of car use and logic of planning broke the relation between the green spaces planned by Van Eesteren, standing on top of his ladder. The large structure is divided into small fragments and therefore reduced to decorative green. Throughout the years sitting has been reduced to benches. Drinking coffee has been limited to places in shopping malls. Playing has been reduced to the defined playgrounds.

In between the blocks there is a wipkip, a slide and one of Aldo's igloos every three hundred meters. Kids used to play in these explicit spaces in front of their houses. Over time the car gained dominance and swallowed more space. This led to less play areas and to fences around the one's left. Limited and standardized, all imagination and freedom seems lost. The wonder of exploration has been replaced by fear.
A child's life is not governed by dedicated hours to work, to recreation and time spend at home. A child's neighborhood should not be organized to these principles.

THE WORLD FROM KID PERSPECTIVE

With all the best intention we have to conclude that Nieuw-West has grown into an area for adults. People oscillate between their homes and their work, moving in and out of the city by car. In between the spare spaces left, safe from this routine, children still play their games. Their wonder and imagination moves them. Further and further away from the house into the big world.

We all build our first houses by draping a blanket over the kitchen table of our parents. Safely sharing a cup of tea with a stuffed animal or an imaginary friend. Once you feel safe enough to explore the bushes across the street, you grab hammers and nails, find a couple friends and build your first community house out in the wild, defending it from intruders of all age and species.

Most of us have memories alike. From these we conclude that playing only takes place in spaces that offer comfort, distant care by parents and secret places close to home. These are the conditions for free playing. What would the design of Nieuw-West look like seen through the eyes of a child? Can we design a playing field for children to shape their own world?

NEW-NIEUW-WEST

A nieuw-wild-west therefore takes up the responsibility to design living space for children and everybody they meet and need. We believe that children need more freedom in their public space. We set out to create a freezone, close to home, that they can explore and shape to their needs.

We set out to make a public space that extends the safety of the home outwards. Through the courtyard and the living streets, into the rough patches of green, along the heavy infrastructure lines that run through Nieuw-West. We are searching for an environment that is able to trigger the child's ingenuity by the simple means of a natural, dynamic surrounding.

We take the leftovers of the AUP green structure as a base to build up a parallel infrastructure. The child's infrastructure is running as a back alley through Nieuw-West.
A wild public space has a life of its own, it's space that can grow and age. Our aim is to start redesigning the green fragments of the edges into a coherent public space offering the opportunity of play.

The interventions lead to a public domain consisting of slow & fast infrastructure, diverse & dispersed facilities, big & small centers, meeting points and attractive playgrounds. This green structure is not a decorative element but part of everyday life extending the home from the walls of the house to the garden of the city.

SEEKING FOR PLACES OF

- *Comprehensibility* ("human scale" spaces, safe spaces of certainty)
- *Community* (programming of neighborhood spaces, eyes on the streets, an event, active participants, local heroes, friends to play)
- *Coherence* (linking the green fragments spatially and socially, creating a safe framework for the wilderness to emerge)
- *Wilderness* (as a space of imagination, places where children can test themselves, freezones)

We can divide the child's route from the house to the playground in several components:

The house, the courtyard, the street, the destination and the neighborhood as a whole.

On these scales our interventions articulate and strengthen the green structure of "Nieuw-West" and finally introduce a new wilderness.

The green courtyards of the typical L-shaped stamps need to become completely car-free. New rough vegetation will form a sharp contrast with the city lanes and urban squares. We ban the bushes with thorns and meaningless, forgotten planting beds to stop the green anesthesia of our living environment. We plea for landscapes of sand, earth and grassland roofed by solitary trees, Smithsonian hills opening towards the sky and rigid forests as a wood-bank for the future new-nieuw-west. In every courtyard we see a young world emerging.

Big infrastructure lines like the metro and the highway split "Nieuw-West" from the inner city. They form the rough backbones of a coherent structure running through the neighborhood. Following these mysterious edges one can wander along neighborhoods where kids can conquer the little islands flanking the foot of the railway. The structure crosses the lively city lanes. Emphasizing the pace of the child the car will have to slow down.

On the neighborhood scale the playground will become a destination again, contrary to the over distributed wipkip. By emphasizing on programmatic clusters where bigger playgrounds are combined with social activities for the older: coffee bars, teahouses, gardens, sports fields, swimming pools and community centers. We believe that offering a public space that is free enough to be claimed by playing children close to their homes drives the playground to expand and specialize. To finally become knots in the urban fabric connecting the play areas with the dynamic city life.

A nieuw-wild-west, a new young world, a new public domain.

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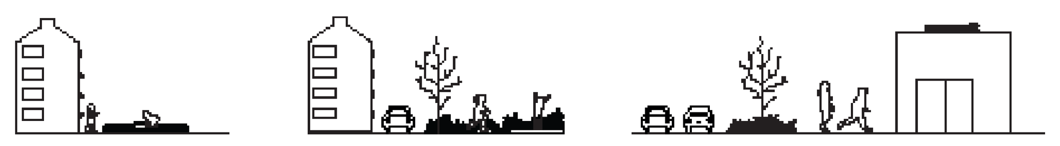
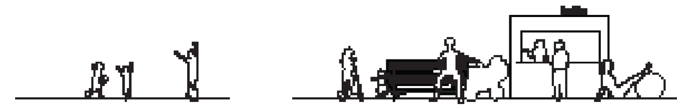
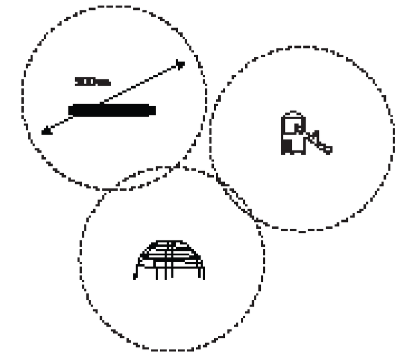


a child's expansion of the exploration area

cars shaping our public spaces

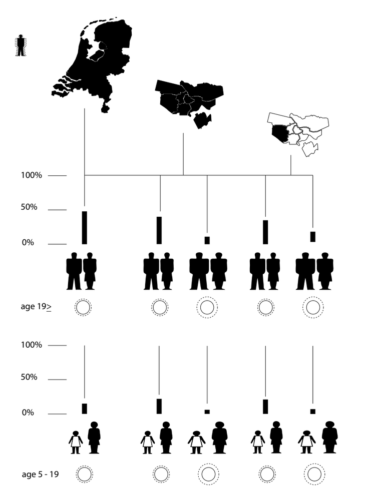


standardized playgrounds vs. centres of community

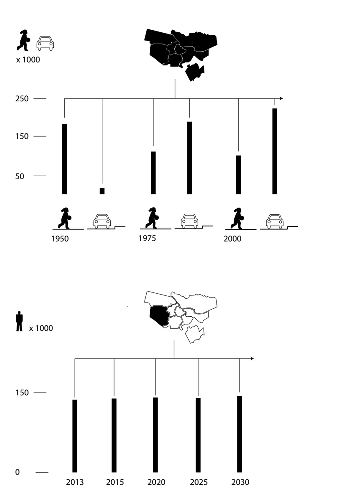


NIEUW-WEST IN FACTS

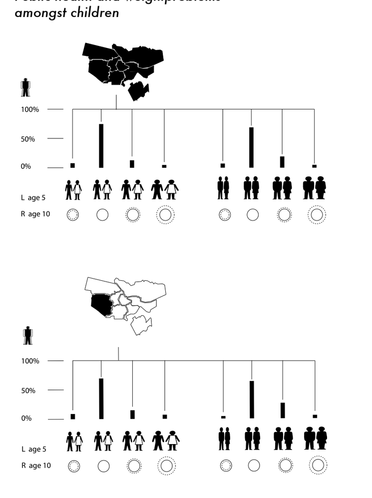
Overweight and Obesity amongst children and young adults



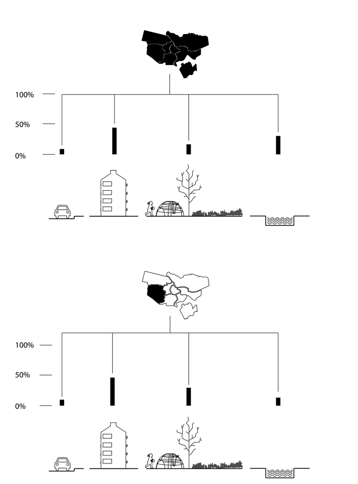
Increase of caruse and population growth



Public health and weightproblems amongst children



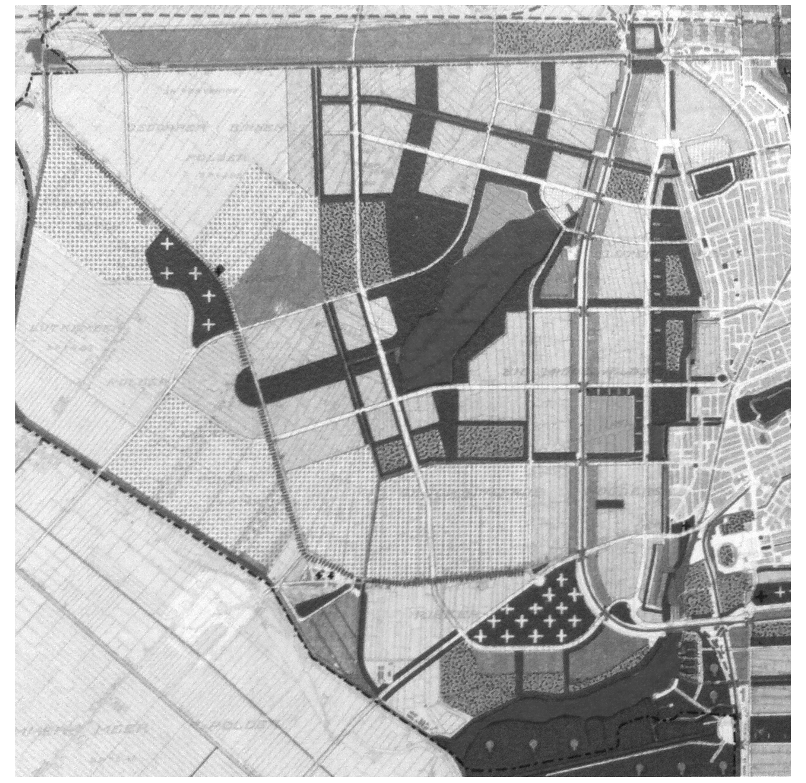
landuse



A PLAYSCAPE OF OLD NIEUW-WEST

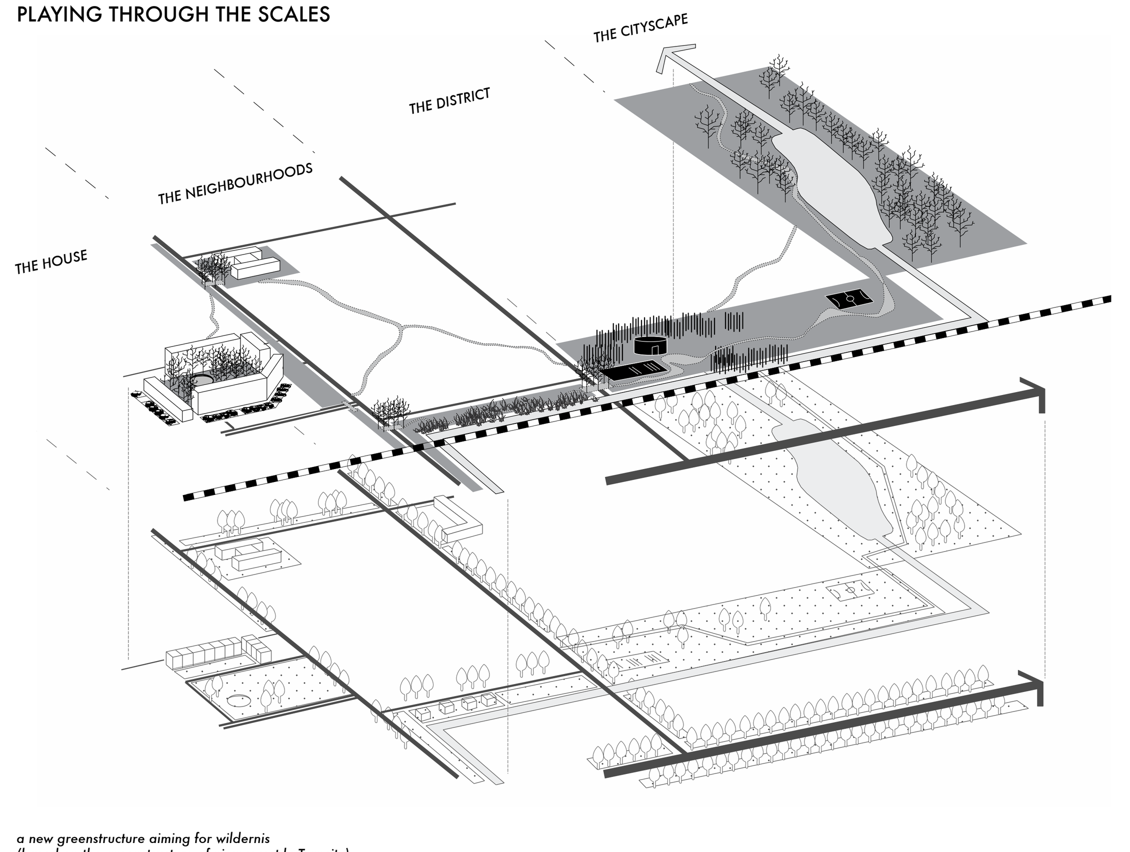
playground designed by Aldo van Eyck

A GREEN STRUCTURE



Map of the AUP the green structure of Van Eesteren - a grid landscape greening the modernist city

PLAYING THROUGH THE SCALES



a new greenstructure aiming for wildernis
(based on the greenstructure of nieuw-west byTrancity)

1 the sloterplas - heart of the idealistic gand landscape

2 chain of contrasting courtyards with different types of vegetation and atmospheres

3 islands with vegetation surrounded by water are small wild playgrounds at the green route along the metro children use them to build huts, collect findings from the street and use restwood as furniture

4 existing bigger playgrounds should be facilitated as meetingplaces for parents as well - by adding program like a kiosk or a small community center

5 the gerbrandispark becomes a big cluster where activities of all kinds should invite a bigger range of people - we add "adult program" like a teahouse and make centers surrounded by playelements for all agegroups

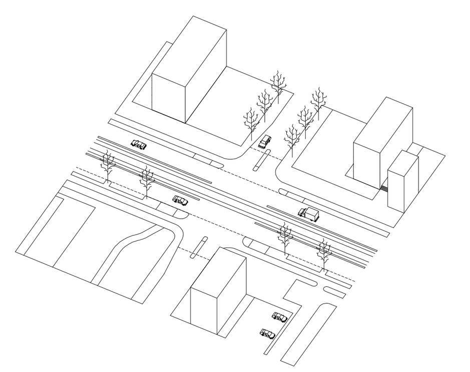
6 inbetween the blocks we expand the greenspaces and increase their coherence - no cars, lush vegetation, a linear landscape

7 at the end of this linear playspace we add a cluster

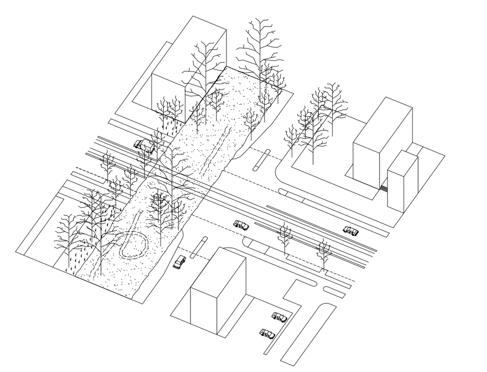
A LANDSCAPE OF PLAY

suggestive map of potential playspaces along the mayor infrastructures

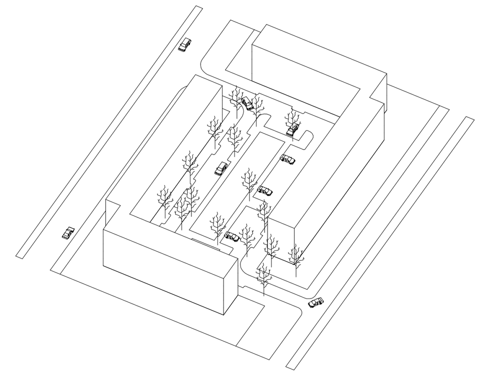
4 PROPOSALS TO INCREASE WILDERNESS



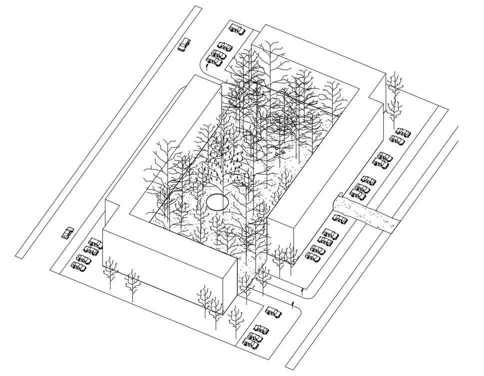
the dominance of streets



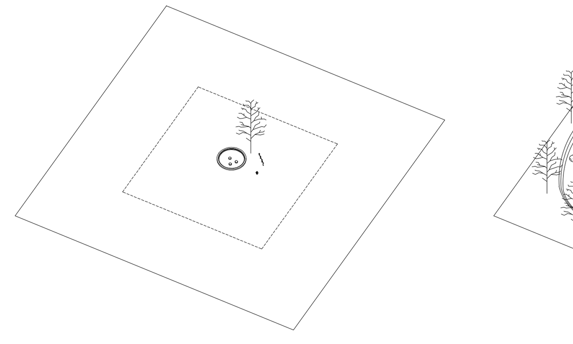
a change in mindset



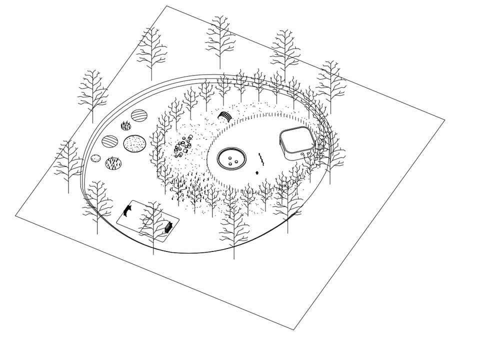
standardized boredom



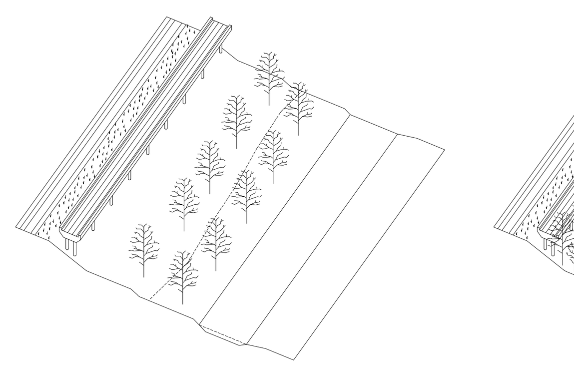
green chambers of wonder



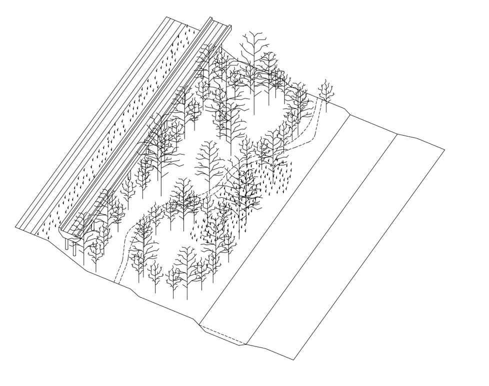
planned playing



fertile clusters for all ages



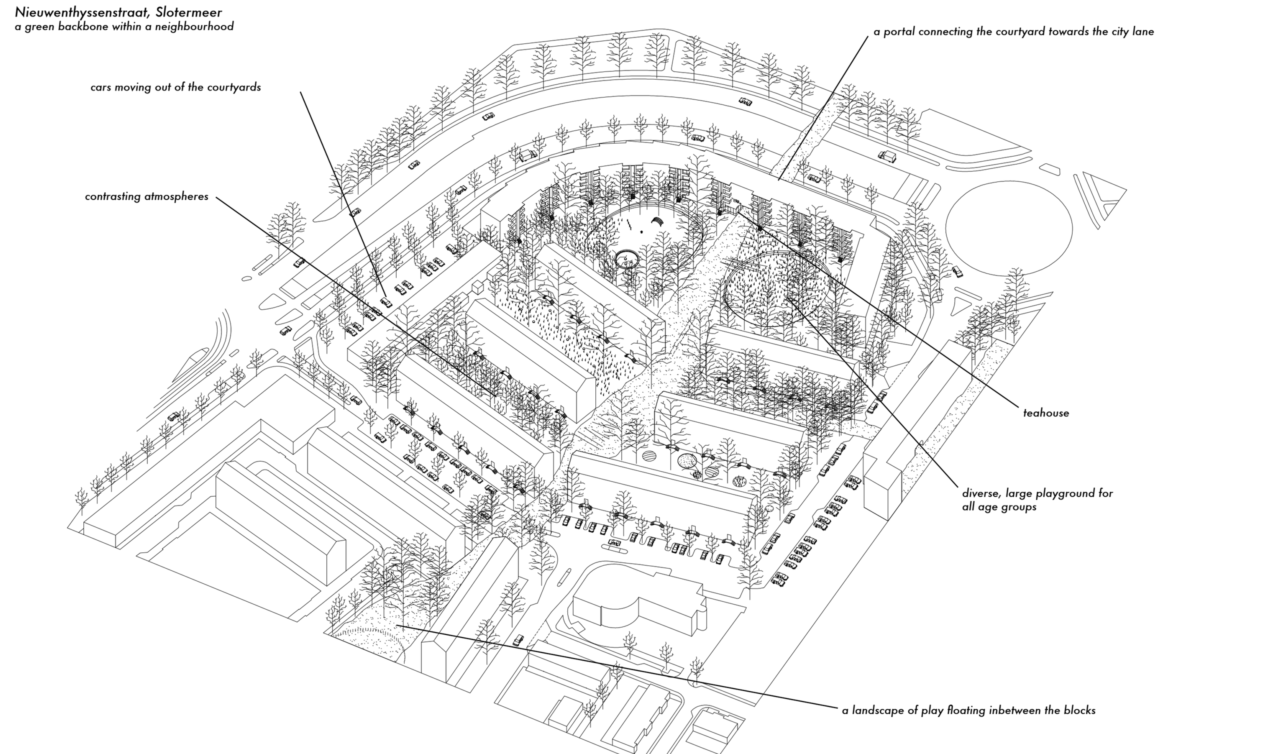
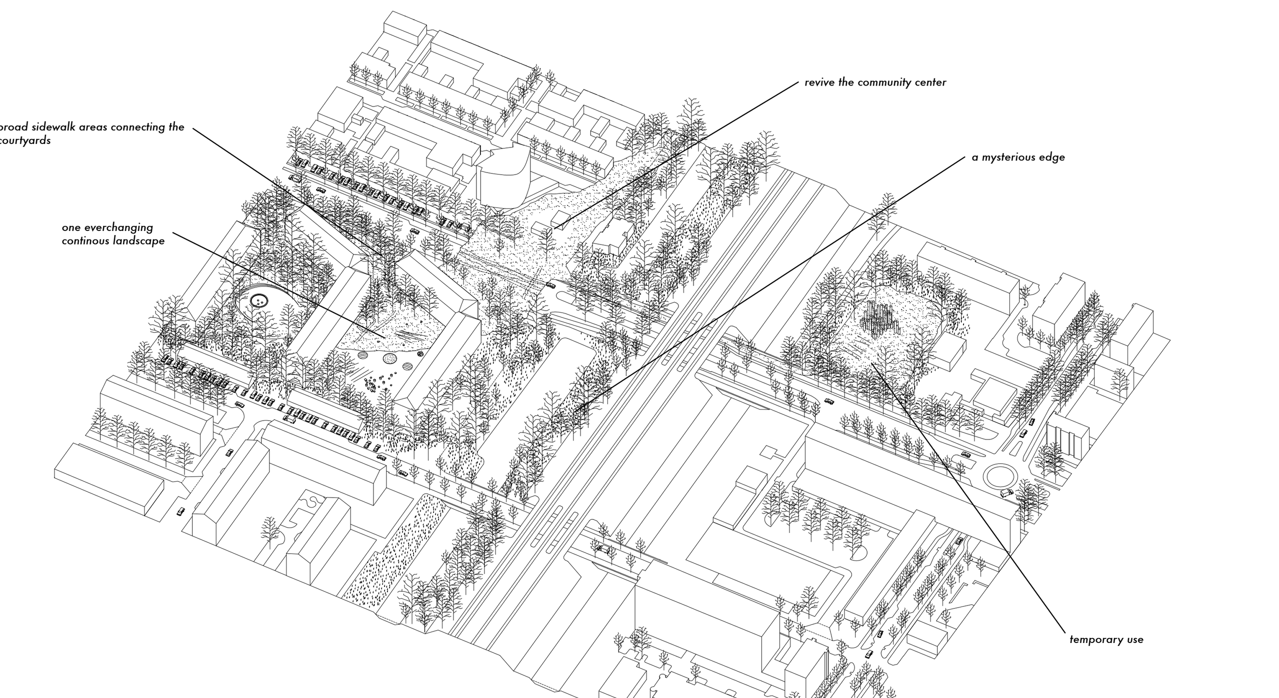
forgotten backside



mysterious edge

2 STUDIES

Nieuwenthyssenstraat, Slotermeer
a green backbone within a neighbourhood



Postjesweg, Overtoomseveld
clustering city and natural dynamics