"Move through, look at, smell, feel joy in and excitement at"
An investigation of Loose Space and commoning, engaging marginalised
actors of the periphery in the Tolka Valley.

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Thank you to my family and friends for all your support and understanding. In particular my Dad, thank you for the lifts and the printing, I'll clean it all up now.

And finally to Sean. There are no words explain how grateful I am. I couldn't have done it without you.
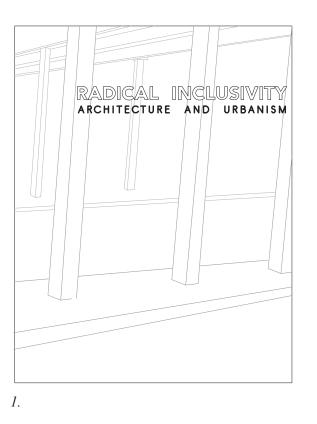
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Introduction

This thesis began with a study of the Tolka Valley Region, with an agenda of Radical Thinking, Transformative Action. The primary group investigation of the site concentrated on Loose Space and dereliction, forming the foundation for this thesis. This investigation was carried out through means of photography, videography, observations, and writings. Interviews were conducted with important human 'actors' to gain valuable insight into local perspectives following these site visits. These discussions became a specific interest for this paper.

This thesis aims to explore the existing fabric of the Tolka Valley, identifying loose and unprogrammed spaces. Research is centered around the human actors that activate these spaces and examines how to encourage participation by them, and empowerment for them. Through studying already established concepts about the human body and our perception of spaces, a basis will be established to test these ideas through design processes.
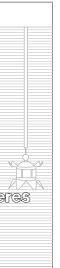
This research consists of three interconnected themes. The first theme is atmosphere, continuing on to Loose Space and radical inclusivity. And thirdly, commoning and radical democratic participation.

Lastly, the thesis is tested using a set of objectives that emerge from this research and is concluded with a reflection on the findings..

1.

1. Written texts and theoretical research

Within the group investigation of Loose Space my role was to investigate the atmosphere of the Tolka Valley. This led to questions around what atmosphere is, what influences the atmosphere of a place and why spaces feel a certain way.

Until the end of the 18th century, the term 'Atmosphere' referred primarily to the scientific gases in that surround earth. It has since evolved a more abstracted meaning, a "sense of surrounding influence, mental or moral environment" (Harper, 2022).

Professor in the College of Creative Arts, Massey University, Julieanna Preston, describes atmosphere as something which evades definition. Stating that as human actors we have an "ability to both recognise and create atmosphere" (Preston, 2008), that it can be "sensed in a fraction of a second" (Zumthor, 2006). Senior lecturer at RMIT, Dr Malte Wagenfeld's 2007 study examines the "body as a perceptual instrument at its center", his idea about centering the body can be applied to centering both the human and non-human actors and their perception of atmosphere. Wagenfeld describes atmosphere as something "formless and invisible", with a reliance on site and place (Wagenfeld, 2008), an opinion seconded by Architect Mark Wigley. Wigley states that atmosphere is "dependent on building and context", that sound, light, temperature, smell and moisture, all intangible qualities create an atmosphere (Wigley, 1998), an important

consideration when documenting the Tolka Valley. Helen Castle, publishing director at RIBA describes in her writing a refocusing of the senses, "a new era in which the eye has lost some of its ground, and the joy of touch and feeling in a space has gained a new value". This concept provides us with the "potential to create spaces that call on all our sense and seduce us" (Castle, 2008). Emphasis on multiple senses can be seen in designer Petra Blaisse's projects. Blaisse employs tactility in her work whilst considering sound and visual qualities. Blaisse says "there are no inside outside spaces, there is only the illusion of inside outside spaces" (Weinthal, 2008).
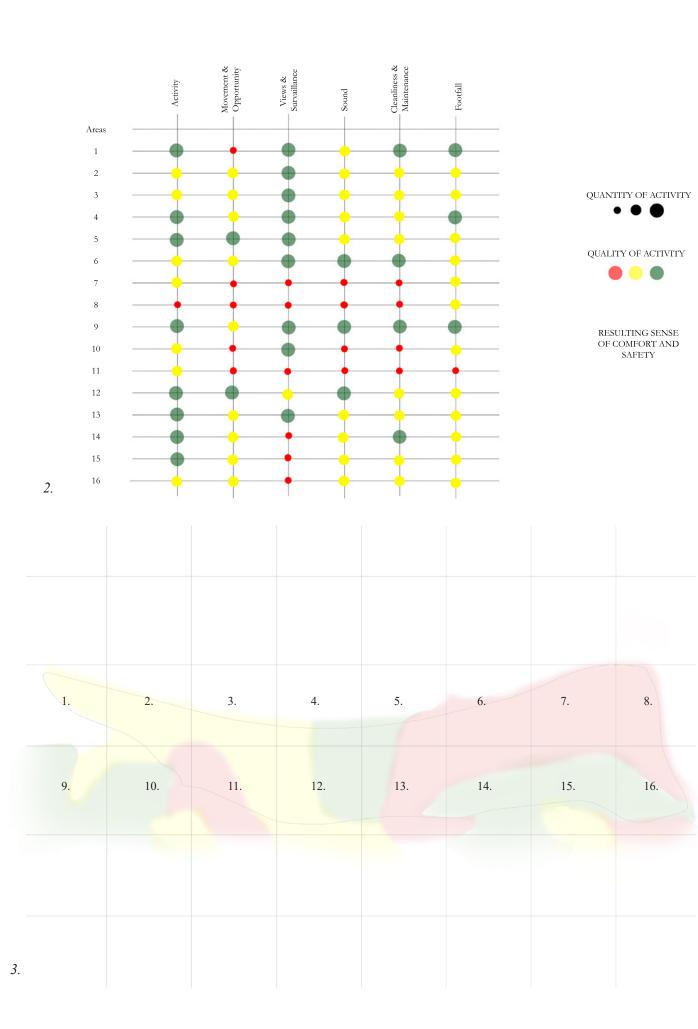
These ideas are explored architecturally in Illinois Institute of Technology (OMA), housing a variety of uses, with the intention of catering for "a range of users at different times of the day, week and year", allowing for radical inclusivity. Movement allows for surveillance and views, providing users with directional choices, revealing more as you progress. Relying on natural illumination creates spaces which are visible and invisible, encouraging or deterring use actors from certain areas, "some areas appear in twilight, others in an even daylight, and others in a kind of nocturnal glow" (Rice, 2008). These "place-bound events" (Leatherbarrow, 2009), along with the use of the existing site and natural conditions help create a specific atmosphere, revealed momentarily (Rice, 2008).

"atmosphere is created by the particular subject matter or place… and corresponds to it like a sort of spirit that float around, revealing, betraying a certain essence of the place or subject matter, but remaining ever visible" (Orsoni, 1998)

The Atmosphere of the Tolka Valley
The Initial Investigation

Taking this theoretical research and on-site recordings, photos, videos, and writings, I began to represent my understanding the atmosphere of the Tolka Valley.

This diagram categorises areas of the site according to levels of comfort and safety. Quantifying the findings from the initial site study began to provide answers to the primary question around the influences on atmosphere.

Overlaying these emotions onto a site map identified the areas of maximum opportunity and potential, areas that were most uncomfortable or unsafe.

2.

QUANTITY OF ACTIVITY

QUALITY OF ACTIVITY

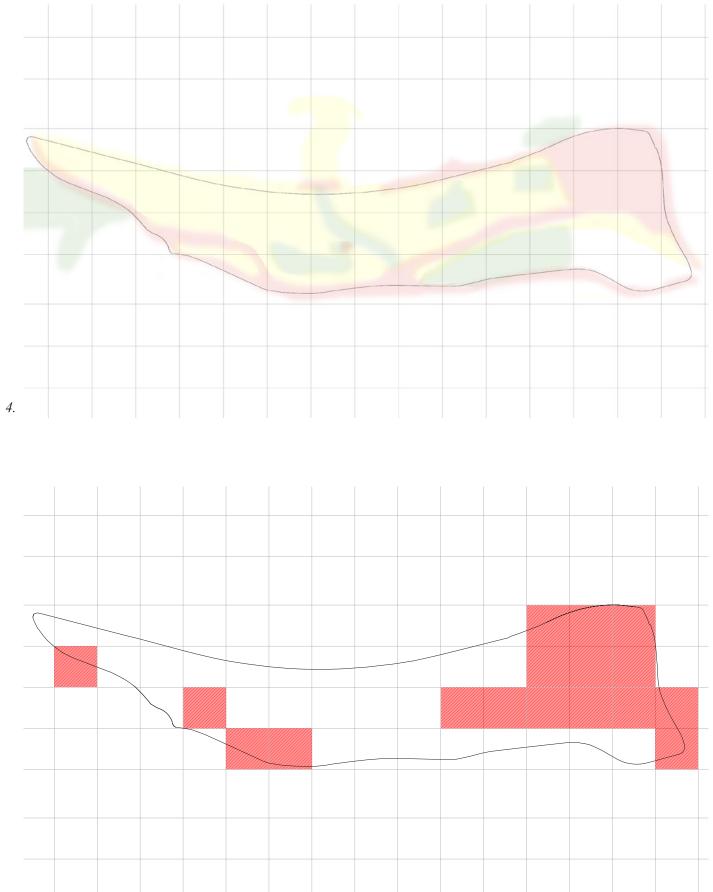RESULTING SENSE
OF COMFORT AND
SAFETY

3.

The Atmosphere of the Tolka Valley
Revisiting the Investigation

Based on the atmospheric analysis conducted in semester one, the Tolka Valley Park was chosen as the site where I would best test my thesis. Based on it's large scale are variety of spaces, it provide the most opportunity to explore architectural ideas.

Building on the existing atmospheric analysis, a revised map was created with specific attention to the park. The initial 100x100 meter grid that was used to cover a large area in semester one was reduced to increase the accuracy of the findings. Analysed using the same method, areas of various levels of comfort and safety were recorded. Investigating these results, there was a correlation between programmed spaces and surveillance and a higher sense of comfort safety, and a lower sense of comfort and saftey in unsurveyed or loud spaces for example.

The result of this research highlighted areas within the park with maximum potential and opportunity for intervention.
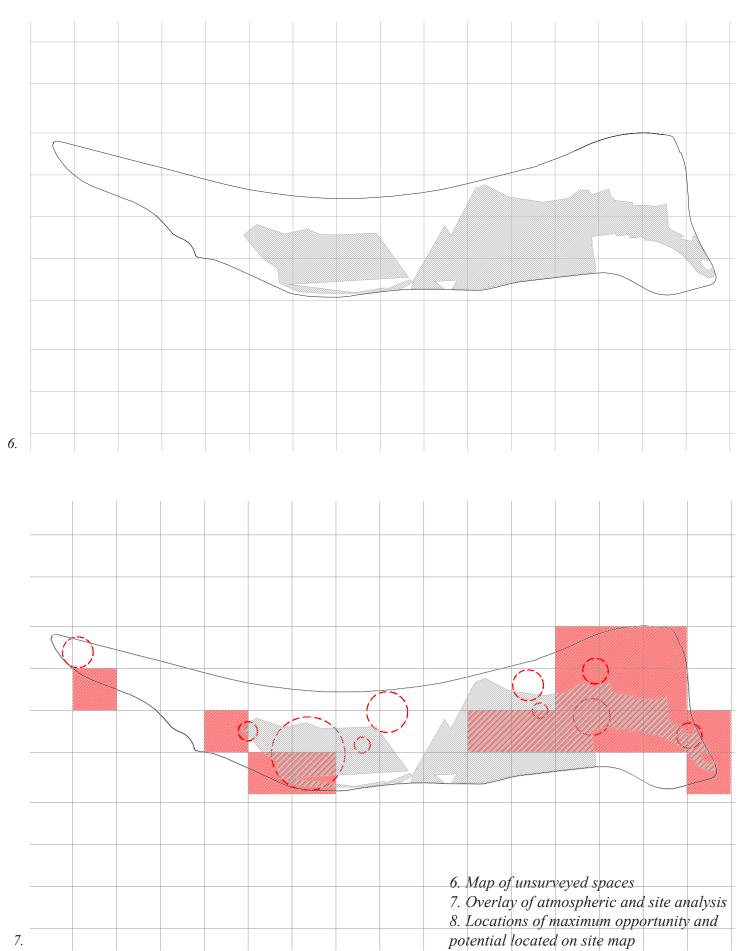
2. Atmospheric and emotions diagram
3. Map of semester one site atmosphere
4. Map of Tolka Valley Park atmosphere
5. Areas of maximum potential and opportunity

4.

5.

This atmospheric and emotional research was paired with physical recordings from site. Examining the visibility and sight lines from the park's perimeter, a map was created showing the surveyed and unsurveyed spaces within the park.

By overlaying these surveyed and unsurveyed spaces onto the concluding atmospheric and emotional maps, a correlation could be drawn between the level of safety and comfort felt, and the level of surveillance.

This exercise highlights specific areas with the most potential and opportunity to test my thesis.

6.

7.

6. Map of unsurveyed spaces
7. Overlay of atmospheric and site analysis
8. Locations of maximum opportunity and potential located on site map

8.

Meeting The Tolka Valley

In order to obtain a current understanding of the Tolka Valley from a community perspective, conversational interviews were set up. The interviewees were categorised to establish a multiplicity of voices within the community. Phil O'Reilly, an Irish rail employee, acts as the Performer. Noeleen Reilly, a local independent councillor for the Ballymun & Finglas West areas, acts as the Politician. Lastly, Ciara McGrath, a Community Garda in the Cabra area, acts as the Protector. The purpose of these semi structured conversations was to establish from the human actors that live and work in the area, what their opinions are, what they feel needs to change and how they envisage these changes becoming reality. The approach to each interview and additional details are available to read in appendix (1).

9.

10.

11.

9. Noeleen Reilly, Politician
10.Phil O'Reilly, Performer
11.Ciara McGrath, Protector

Loose Space & Radical Inclusivity

Loose Space is categorised by architect and professor Thomas Juel Clemmensen, as areas with "alternative uses or just leaving spaces open to the imagination". This challenges ideas in urban planning, the desire to "control" and plan more and more aspects of our built environments. The concept of Loose Space leaves room for "unanticipated activities and the unexpected", which are allowed to develop naturally over time (Clemmensen, 2010).

Feeling separate from society and the environment in which they find themselves, human actors make use of these unprogrammed spaces. The Loose Spaces can occasionally be dormant, not surveilled and are accessible and open to all. Being dormant refers the apparent suspension of activity and potential of a space (Press, 2023). The users of these spaces are those whose "norms deviate from common norms". Consisting of groups or individuals who are made feel "alienated from their environment" (Clemmensen, 2010). People are placed in the margins and "alienated" due to various reasons, "race, gender, occupation, ethnicity, and religion" (Collective, 2022).

The human aspect of space and activating space is an important thread in architecture. Clemmensen proposes an alternative to programming these Loose Spaces, activating them with a "minimum of architectural intervention or just temporary installations, or it could be self-organising spaces"

(Clemmensen, 2010). Philosopher Henry Lefebvre's 'Concept of Architecture' discusses ideas of "the transformation of the human space by human actors" and emphasises the importance of the human in the environment (Nawratek, 2015). Pierre Bourdieu's view similarly is of urban space consisting of the relationship between the actors that contribute, preserve, and transform it, aligned with their interests (Nawratek, 2015). Taking the idea that the users whose interests are not met in traditional spaces, gravitate towards this unprogrammed or imaginative space.

Building on Clemmensen's thoughts on planning and programmed spaces, Dr Krzysztof Nawratek describes how the possibilities of modern urban spaces have been made "undeniably restricted" by human and material obstructions. These constraints rule spaces and create spaces of social or physical exclusion (Nawratek, 2015). When spaces which are designed within tight constraints or with the wrong intentions, the human actors suffer. These design constraints could also be viewed as a way to exclude certain actors. Professor and scholar, David Leatherbarrow describes how breaking down these barriers should be seen as a "victory", allowing architecture and space to function freely (Leatherbarrow, 2009). Consideration for minor social interactions in the design process could be included if a political process was established (Nawratek, 2015). As all human bodies are different, there are specific

abilities and body types which "do not fit the master plan" or the "norm" (Sennett, 1994). Reinforcing the importance of architecture being radically inclusive.

Architect Juhani Pallasma discusses the importance of the periphery. Noting that as humans, we feel more comfortable in natural and historic settings, opposed to urban settings of our time. He contributes this to "their poverty in the field of peripheral vision". This peripheral vision influences our spatial and bodily experiences. Within this perception of setting, Pallasma comments on the importance of tactility, and the ability to interact physically with objects. "Peripheral vision integrates us with space" while focused vision "pushes us out…making us mere spectators" (Pallasmaa, 1996). Taking Pallasma's idea of the focus and the periphery, and relating it to Loose Space, the socially acceptable norms are the focus, and anything or anyone outside of that are in the margins or the peripheries. It is these actors and subalterns, who have been placed in the peripheries and made feel inferior (Voculary.com, 2023), that activate these Loose Spaces within the physical and social constraints of the site.

Similar to Pallasma's view of the peripheries in urban environments, writer and Senior Fellow at Columbia University, Richard Sennett, discusses how our senses have become "desensitized" in modern settings; "sensory deprivation which seems to curse most

modern building; the dullness, the monotony, and the tactile sterility which afflicts the urban environment." Highlighting the importance of engagement and radical inclusivity in our communities. Sennett too highlights the expansion into the "peripheral space" and the stigmatisation of people in these areas, "contact with outsiders". Suggesting physical barriers between communities and geographies are an attempt to minimise and "avoid conflict" (Sennett, 1994). However, Chantel Mouffe, Belgian political theorist, explores ideas around conflict. While barriers may be an attempt to eliminate conflicts, in a radically inclusive society, Mouffe argues that it is inevitable (Olson, 1999).

This theme attempts to highlight areas where architecture can be inclusive and unintentionally exclusive, and how we should be aiming for a more radically inclusive approach to design while utilising the existing fabric.

Aligning with ideas of radical inclusivity, the commons is about "social organisation" creating "social processes" in a "culture of mutual involvement and negotiation". The idea of "the commons" is a well-trod area within architecture. In modern terms, the commons have a political agenda and specific ideas around "care and collaboration". Commoning is particularly relevant to tackle climate change, to radically question the way we "live together in the natural world" (Collective, 2022).

To facilitate urban commons within a community, there must be a shared resource, a collection of people that use and produce resources, and rules and values to be shared among the group, in this case, the Tolka Valley Park is the resource. Commoning refers to the creation of these processes, defending these processes and identifying these processes. De Angelis and Harvie are described in 'Urban Commons Handbook' as using "shared governance" and democratic rule decide how to use the shared resource (Collective, 2022).(2)

Examining issues associated with commoning and human actors specifically, Mouffe, focuses on democratic revolution and efforts to move towards radical democracy. Within her thinking, Mouffe acknowledges "the impossibility of a completely harmonious society", that conflict and exclusivity are inescapable (Olson,1999). This can be seen in Gabi Heindl's Inter Sekitonales Stadthaus in Vienna. Within this environment there are spaces for "cooperation".

Inhabitants must negotiate with "less willing" members. As previously mentioned, constraints rule spaces. By providing public and private spaces for cooperation and "mutuality", there is an attempt within this scheme to create inclusion and participation whist allowing actors to retreat and avoid conflict. Although there are constraints within the house and the actors who reside there, consideration has been given to all humans equally (Collective, 2022).

Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée (AAA) are a multi-disciplinary practice located in Paris. They initiated the R-Urban strategy, a network of hubs in housing estates in suburban neighbourhoods. Creating spaces to share skills, knowledge, work, and creativity around areas such as recycling and eco-construction by putting in place the practice of eco-commoning. Eco-commoning is an idea about living and respecting the planet, "de-centering the human" to live with plants and animals. Similar to how they are currently in the peripheries with humans at the focus. Returning to Nawratek, his idea that architecture is based on the human and non-human actors, filled with information called mediation. Information creates knowledge and action which "enables the common". Mediation is a network of shared information and allows us to engage with people and empower them. It is dependent on communication and is embedded in political aspects of life (Nawratek, 2015). This project was successfully run by its citizens in a self-
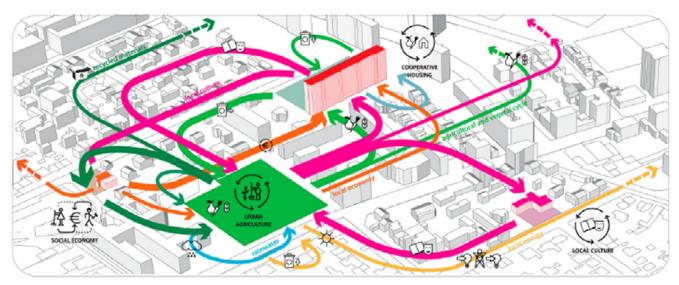

12. Inter Sekitonales Stadthaus. Highlighting collective and private spaces created through their minimal intervention (Collective, 2022).

sustaining way, an example of enabling a community using this new knowledge. Within five years, these hubs allowed the community to produce their own food, set up businesses, collect rainwater and urban waste. By locating these projects in specific locations, they repaired "destitute" land in the town. Designing these hubs as "mobile and flexible building systems" that are easily transportable and allowing them to be relocated, practises "cradle to cradle" design. AAA described the flexibility aspect as an idea that the project could be continued elsewhere, while "strengthening" the community around it. When these three hubs were relocated, 95% of the original materials were reused. Due to its strong relationship with the local community, original members were involved in its reinstallation in the new setting and encouraged new members to get involved, with desires to see the project survive (Collective, 2022) (3)

These projects begin to showcase the benefits of commoning and shared resources for the natural environment and human actors, and how we can do so though radical democratic participation, utilising available technologies. .
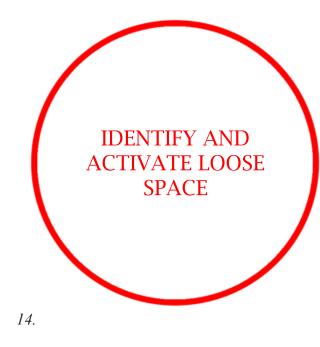

13. R-Urban participation and ecosystems strategies implemented in AAA's project (Doina Petrescu, 2016). Availing of bottom-up approaches through community led schemes, encouraging community participation to create resilient neighbourhoods. This project helped combat issues such a crime and unstainable practices. Educating the community about circular economy, ecological systems and civic governance through the introduction of three hubs – Agrocite, Recyclab and Ecohab – had a successful outcome. Each hub's functions are explained in the appendix (4).
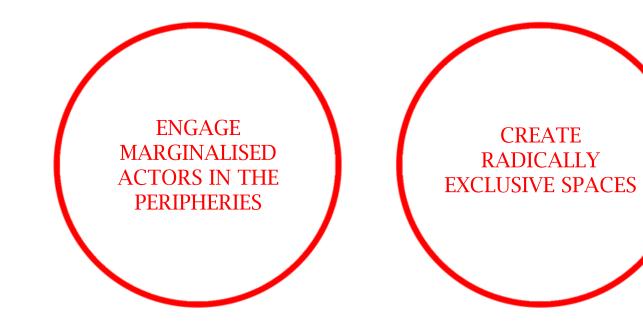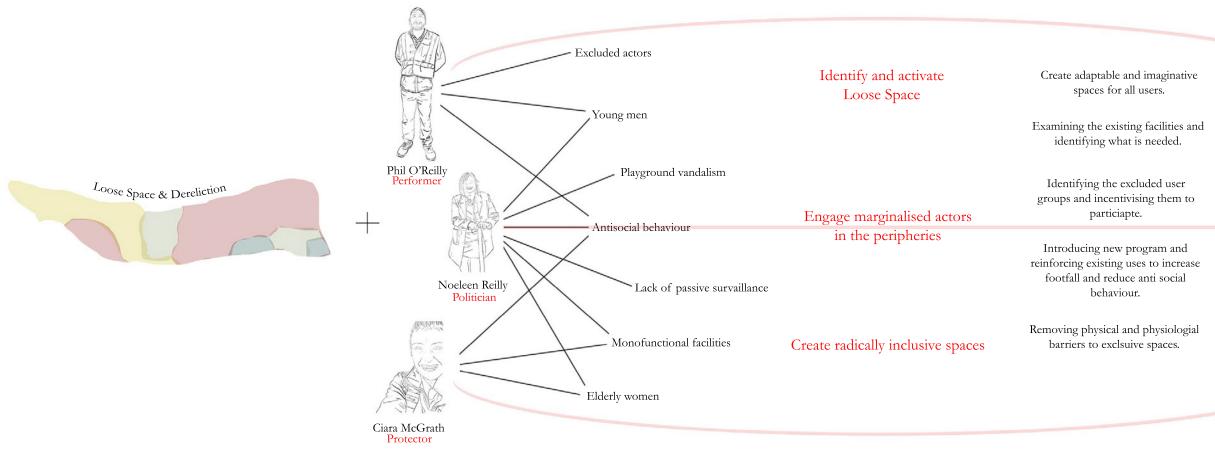
Progressing the theoretical research and site analysis into an architectural idea, the three interviewees were abstracted, creating personifications of what they represent within the community. This brings them from acting as individuals to representing larger user groups or pillars within the community, achieving a radically inclusiveness thesis.

Phil, the Irish Rail worker on the ground, acts as the performer. This represents play spaces for imagination and distraction. Noeleen, the local councilor, acts as the politician. Representing political spaces for congregation and discourse. And thirdly, Ciara, the community garda, acts as the protector. This represents care and maintenance spaces.

Using what each individual said, along with what their title (performer, political and protector) represents, uses of spaces were mapped onto the highlighted spaces for intervention. The intention is to create a space or spaces for each pillar, which would tackle the observed and recorded issues alongside what these individuals identified as issues or needs. This process practices another objective, radical democratic participation, something I wish to encourage further in the design project.
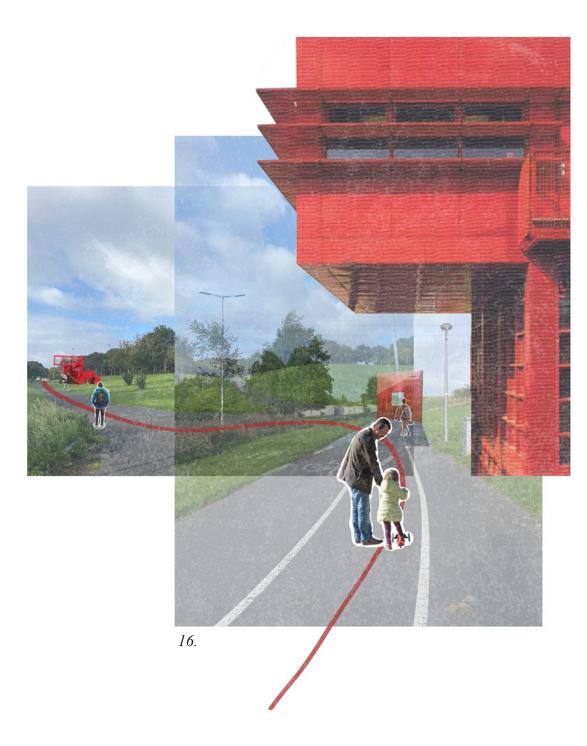
14.

IDENTIFY AND ACTIVATE LOOSE SPACE

ENGAGE MARGINALISED ACTORS IN THE PERIPHERIES

CREATE RADICALLY EXCLUSIVE SPACES

14. Thesis Objectives

Loose Space & Dereliction

+

Phil O'Reilly
Performer

Noeleen Reilly
Politician

Ciara McGrath
Protector

Excluded actors

Young men

Playground vandalism

Antisocial behaviour

Lack of passive surveillance

Monofunctional facilities

Elderly women

**Identify and activate
Loose Space**

Create adaptable and imaginative
spaces for all users.

Examining the existing facilities and
identifying what is needed.

Identifying the excluded user
groups and incentivising them to
participate.

**Engage marginalised actors
in the peripheries**

Introducing new program and
reinforcing existing uses to increase
footfall and reduce anti social
behaviour.

Removing physical and physiologial
barriers to exclsuive spaces.

Create radically inclusive spaces
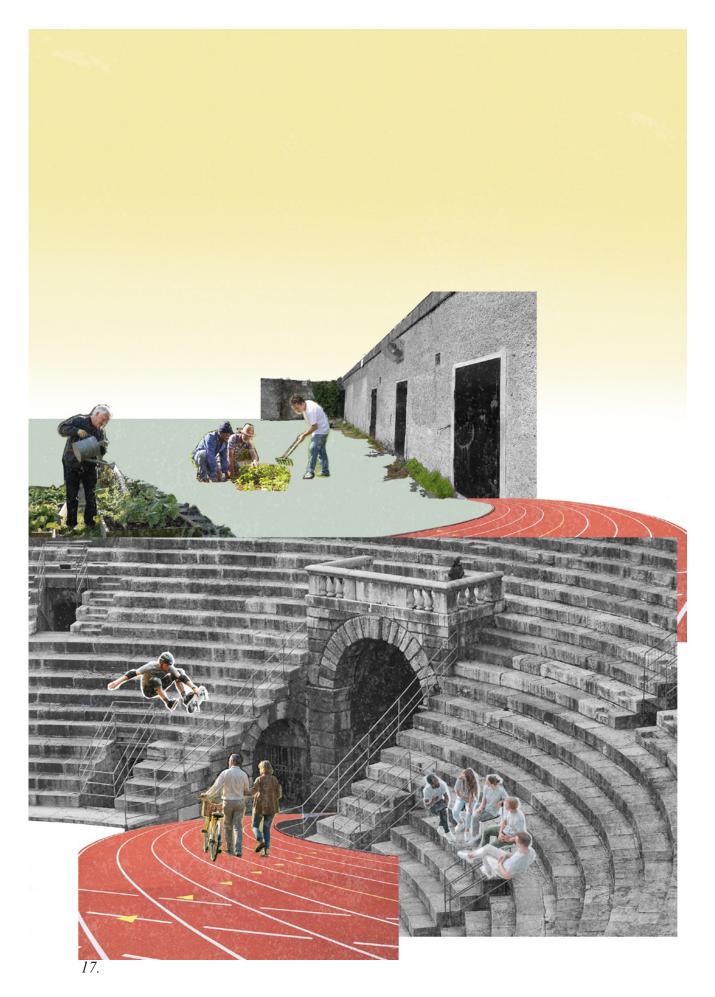
Sharing talents and
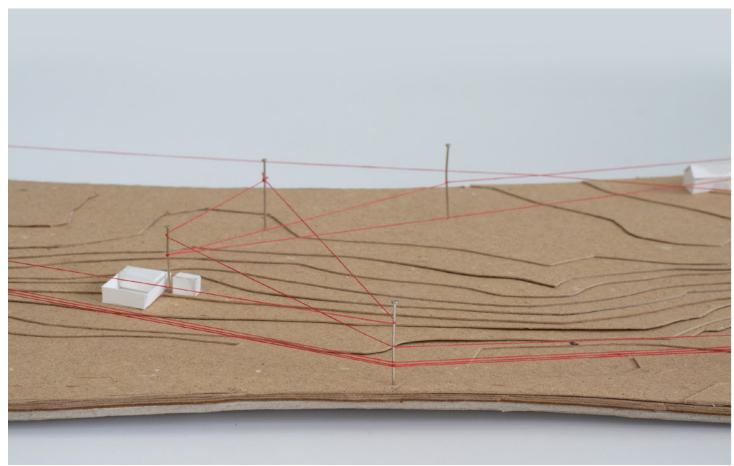skills

Sharing knowledge

Sharing
responsibility and
ownership

15.

16.
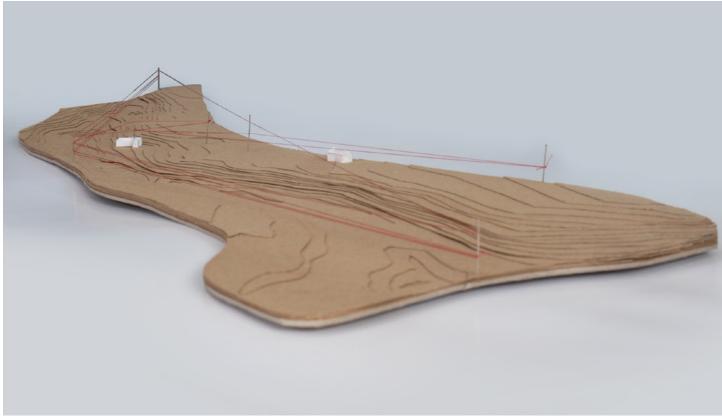
15. Thesis objective diagram representing the
evolution of research to and architectural idea
16. Early idea around connecting spaces
17. Speculative atmospheric demonstrating the
connection of each type of space; play, protec-
tor and political, within the context of the park

17.

18.

19.

20.

18-20. 1.1500 Speculative model showing
proposed route along which all interventions
would be located, connecting to existing facili-
ties and creating new focuses within the park.

Radical Thinking, Transformative Action
Introduction to the interventions

Progressing from semester one with site analysis, interviews and theoretical research conducted, an architectural methodology was developed to test the objectives. Having a comprehensive strategy of needs that were required within the community, spaces that possessed opportunity and potential, a radically inclusive program emerged which would encourage commoning and radical democratic participation.

By creating adaptable and imaginative spaces, examining the needs within the community, identifying excluded user groups, incentivising users to participate, introducing new and reinforcing existing program and removing physical and psychological barriers to exclusive spaces, these objectives will be tested through the creation of play, political and protector spaces.

The scale of interventions within the Tolka Valley Park varies. From pathways and bridges, to restoring an existing building, all tied together in a new political beacon on the hill. The range of proposals highlights the broad impact architecture can have within an existing context, whilst considering the environmental effects. It is this radical thinking, inspired by the community, which will lead to transformative action through architecture.
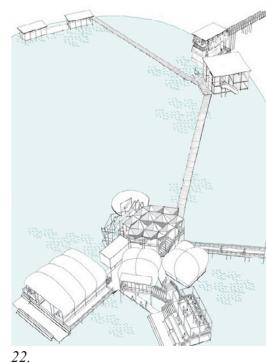

21.

21. Speculative drawing showing connecting interventions, the temple on the hill resulting in a reimagined the park in its entirety.

Precedents

Progressing from theoretical ideas to architecture, inspiration came from a series of precedents.

The most influential were Floating University Berlin, Park Villette in Paris and Pope Sixus V plan for Rome. The scale and impact of these schemes assisted in the thinking towards Tolka Valley Park and its 350m2 area.
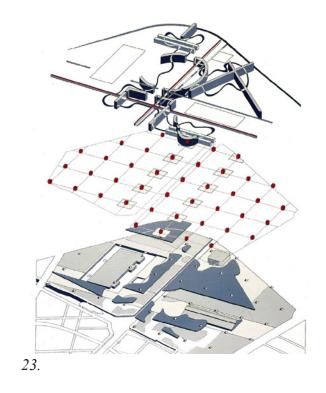
Consideration in these examples was given to the idea of central spaces and activity radiating from them, concepts emerging of beacons and visibility. They also exercised the impact minimal interventions can make on a variety of scales.
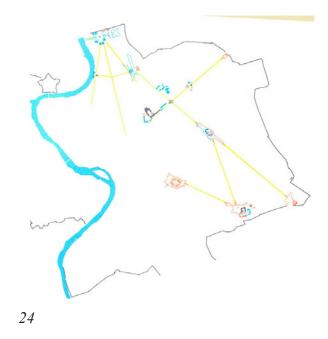

22.   *23.*   *24*

22. Floating University Berlin
23. Park Villette in Paris
24. Pope Sixus V plan for Rome.

The Skatepark

Skatepark located in a "safe and accessible area", designed with beginner, intermediate and advanced tracks to cater for all abilities. Mounds made from excavated soil act as noise barriers. "We're hoping to build a skateboard park in the future like in Balleyfermot" - Noeleen Reilly.

Elevating the proposed Luas route creates a feature within the park on the ground and from above on the pedestrian route. Using timber to create a penetrated structure allowing for views, light and connectivity.

Luas Viaduct

The amphitheatre allows for play and political activites, creating a meeting place for the people. Designing adaptable and imaginative spaces void of physical barriers to ensure that spaces are "designed for everyone" - Noeleen Reilly.

The location of the new built space adjcent to the existing playground will allow it to remain in its current location by reducing "antisocial behviour" through increased "passive surveillance" - Noeleen Reilly.

Boules pavillion designed with consideration for all ages. Locating this program on level ground allows for minimum disturbance to the existing site, whilst creating opportunities to enjoy views and observe existing sporting activites .

A new bridge, artistically lit, allows for new movement through and to the park. Creating an accessible route over the Tolka River which was previously isolated, "not enough connections and paths" - Mick Burke.

Boules Pavillion

Red Sticks Crossing

The Amphitheatre

The Wild Terrace

Forest Playscape

The Depot

Entrace Pavillion

Imaginative play spaces located along an existing route to encourage footfall, combined with height elements for views and connectivity, Pavillions for shelter and seating along a currently underutilitised and undersurveyed path.

Creating connective and reflective moments to observe the existing beauty along the ICW. These pavillions are adaptable in times that are "constantly changing" - Ciara McGrath.

Removing physical barriers to allow the community to care and maintain the park, encouraging the sharing of trades and knowledge. Maximising the "purpose built depot" (Mick Burke) instead of its planned demolition.

Embedding an existing onsite container into the site to extend maintence functions throughout the park, connecting the depot and existing allotments. Choosing "low maintenance" (Mick Burke) vegetation and maximising the slope for terraces to overlook the golf course.

Signifying a new park entrance with a pavilion to encourage the community and the "increasing population" (Ciara McGrath) to avail of the space. Providing practical functions for park users such as shelter, bins, bike storage and wc's.

The Skatepark

The first intervention is that of the skate park, designed to fulfill the community need for a play space. Using examples like Ballyfermot, Noeleen Reilly and community could see the benefits Le Fanu Skatepark provided for all.

The chosen site for this program is an elevated area with an existing high level of passive surveillance and footfall. Having been identified as a space that is "safe and accessible for people" (Noeleen Reilly) it helps to achieve the radical inclusivity objective.

Designing the skatepark with beginner, intermediate and advanced zones, encourages actors of all abilities and skill levels to avail of this facility. The "young fellahs" (Phil O'Reilly) can activate this space whilst learning new skills and teaching other members of the community, sharing their talents in an imaginative way.

Using the excavated soil from the skate bowls construction, mounds have been created. These act as sound barriers for existing houses and as natural playscapes for younger members of the community.

Retaining existing paths throughout the design, alongside the introduction of seating and covered spaces, maintains and encourages additional surveillance. These spaces to observe and enjoy can be used by all, parents supervising children and the "elderly womens walking group" (Ciara McGrath) as a rest stop for example.

This underutilised space in the west periphery of the park has been activated through the introduction of new and radically inclusive program.

25.

26.

25. 1.1000 Model, view of skatepark
26. 1.1000 Model, plan view
27. The Skatepark Atmospheric

27.
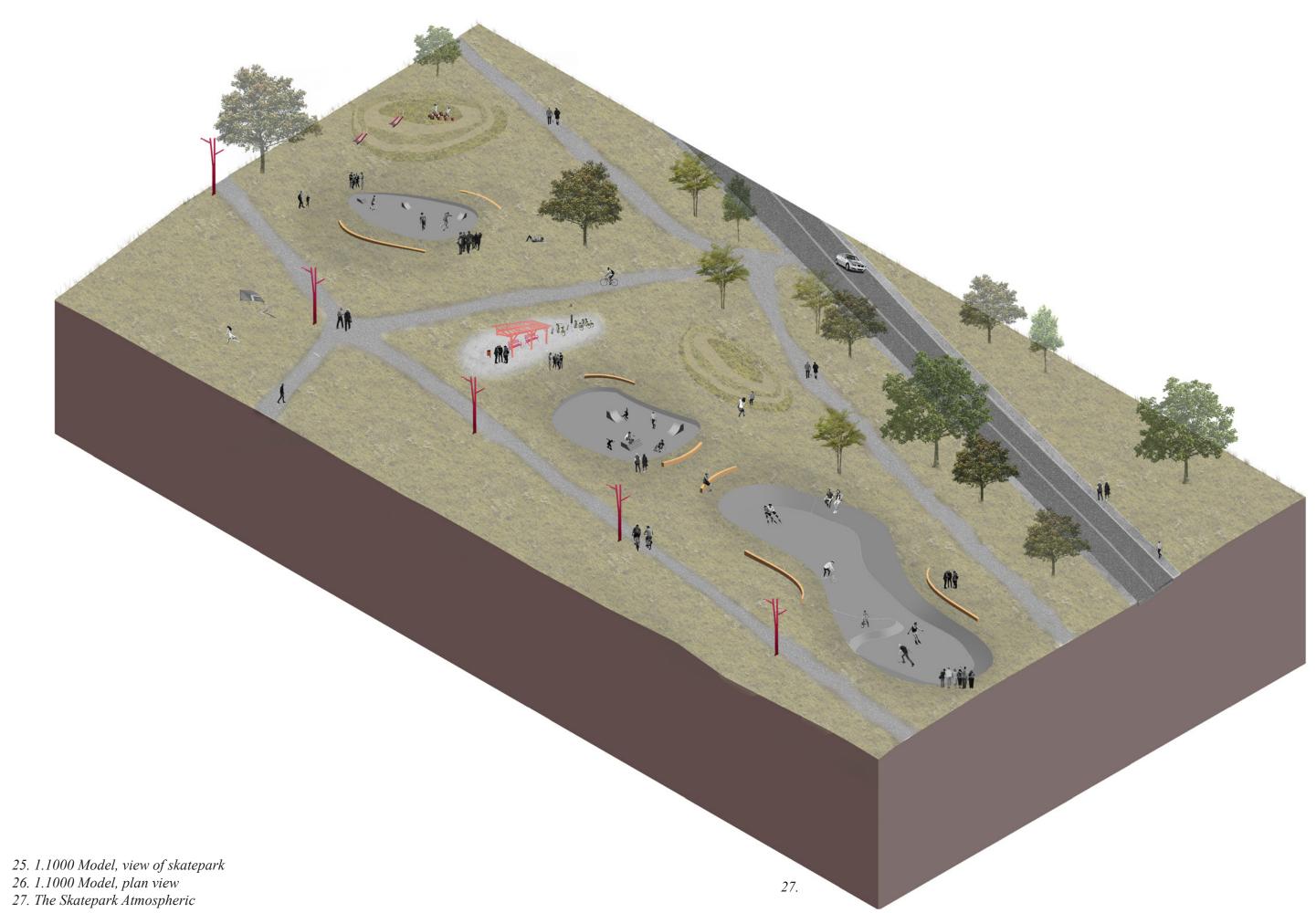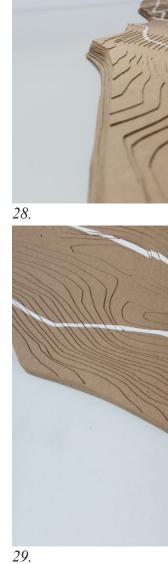
The Forest Playscape

Created alongside an existing path, this natural playscape attempts to draw different user groups to this currently underutilised and undersurveyed space. Bringing attention to the beautiful Intergrated Constructed Wetlands, this minimal intervention maximises the existing park facilities.

Locating the play spaces beside the path, creates a connection with the trees and the parks natural landscape as well as allowing users to bypass. Consideration for all actors, new and existing, was a priority for this thesis. Importance was given to those who currently activate these spaces, together with the new users who will be drawn to interventions.
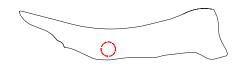
Creating a viewing platform stems from initial ideas about connections, availing of the parks topography to allow moments for views between interventions. The platform concept was to emerge from the trees, revealing views of the skate park, the next playspace along the primary route.

A new bridge connects the north and south of the park across the Tolka River, visible in the model to the north of the playscape. The introduction of North-South connections was an evident necessity for the community arising in several conversations.

28.

29.

28. 1.1000 Model, view of playscape &
connection to skatepark
29. 1.1000 Model, plan view
30. The Forest Playscape Atmospheric

30.

The Luas Viaduct
Proposal

Currently, there is a proposal to extend the Luas Green Line through the Tolka Valley Park, connecting Broombridge to Charlestown.

There are many benefits that come with the extension of the Luas Line, environmentally reducing the demand on cars and integrating walking and cycling routes for example.

However, this route will divide the park in two, creating a physical and mental barrier for human and non human actors. Along the Broombridge Road, the proposal is to demolish two buildings and encroach on other properties to provide a walking and cycle track.
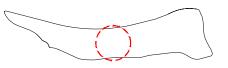
Investigating an alternative route tackles these issues, while benefiting from the positives that the Luas will provide. Rerouting the line over a vacant site and elevating it above the roads and park, removes any obstructions to local traffic. Designing a viaduct above the park increases passive surveillance and creates a new feature within the site.

Integrating the cycle track and walkway into the bridge design, allows the community to view the park from a height. Giving new perspectives of the existing park and an understanding of the new interventions before descending down to the ground.

31.

31. TIA and NTA Green Line route (Project Ireland 2040)
32. 1.5000 Site plan of proposed route with current proposal and demolished buildings highlighted in blue
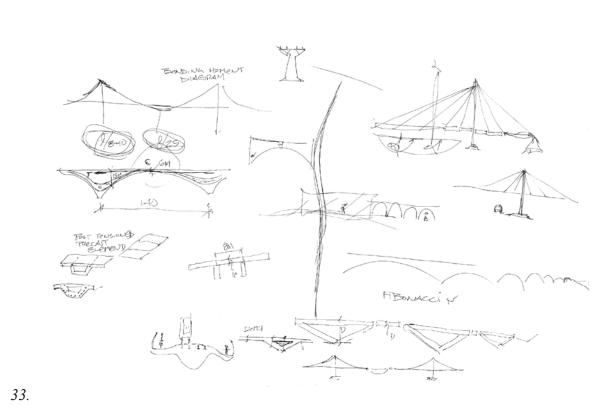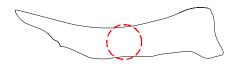
The Luas Viaduct
Structure
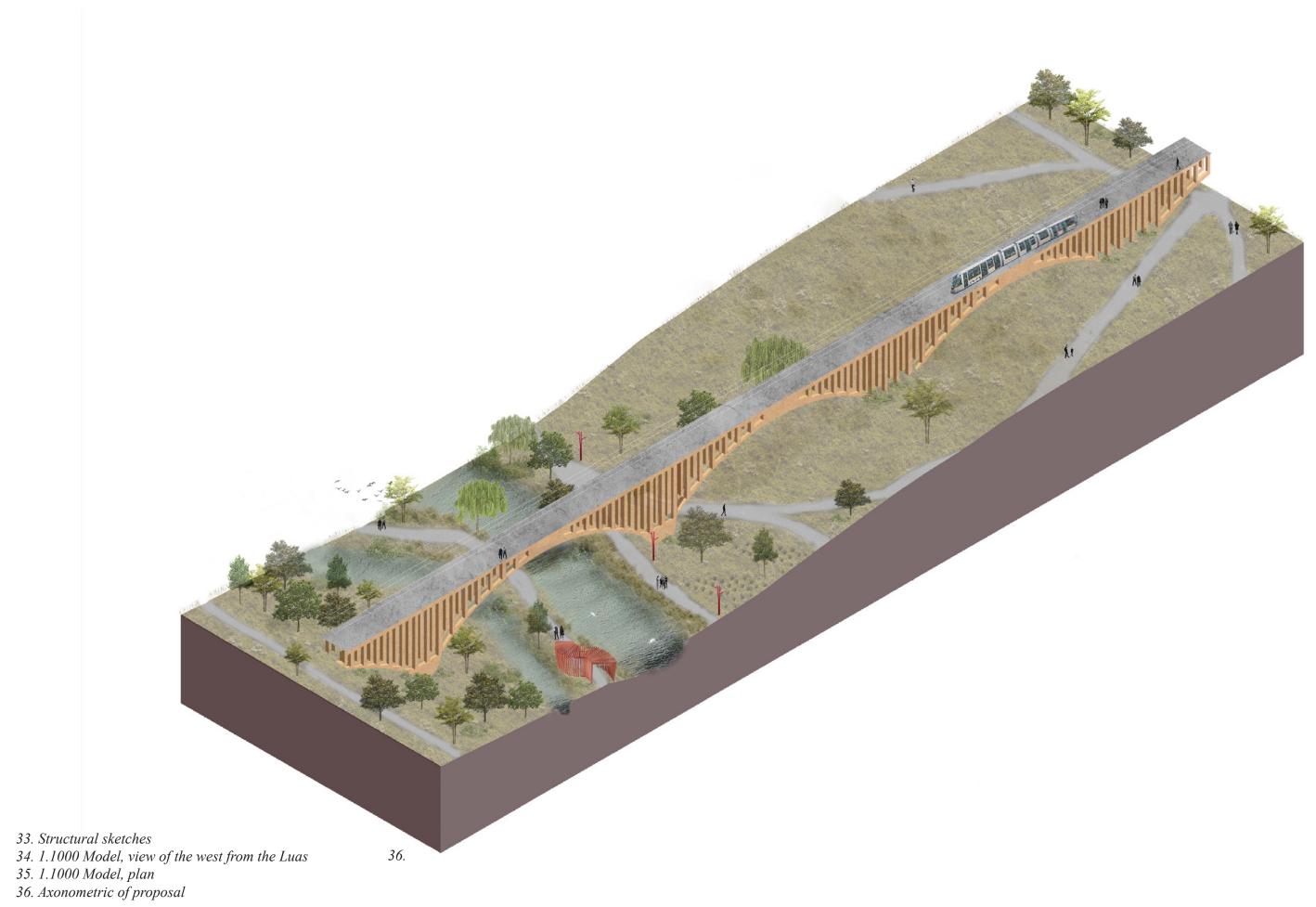
Extensive work was carried out with structural engineer, Chris Bakkala, to achieve an efficient bridge design. Timber was chosen as the most appropriate material based primarily on its environmental qualities. Constructing a framed structure allows connections for humans and non humans in the Tolka Valley Park and allows light through, lessening the shadow effect on existing spaces.

33.

34.

35.

33. Structural sketches
34. 1.1000 Model, view of the west from the Luas
35. 1.1000 Model, plan
36. Axonometric of proposal

36.

Constructed over 50 years ago, DDC depot acts as the primary maintenance facility within the park. This facility has run into disrepair and is scheduled for demolition. Currently employing a declining number of people, there was opportunity to revive this amenity by inviting the wider community in.

This purpose built structure houses variety of spaces, shown in the photos opposite and plans below. The primary space is used for storage of machinery and repairs. It was this function that inspired the development of the space for education and trades, radically inclusive functions that will activate the space.

Adjacent to the depot is the original changing rooms for the park, which are unused and inaccessible. This building has been replaced by the construction of new dressing rooms in the North of the park. No longer fit for purpose, it is also to be demolished.

Connecting this maintenance and care function with spaces of similar uses within the area, lead to the development of allotments. An interview with the supervisor of the existing allotments, Greenview Community Garden located to the North of the site, provided me with necessary information to progress in this direction.

Run by Tus, the land is rented from DCC. These allotments are used all year round and rented by the members on an annual basis. The owners of the 54 allotments share tools and work together to maintain the site. Alongside growing fruit, vegetables and plants, workshops and educational resources are available for those wishing to return to education.

The principles demonstrated in this existing community garden were applied within my proposal on a wider scale to create a radially inclusive maintenance and education space.
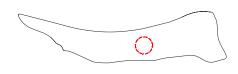
The outcome is intended to create a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community by allowing them to care for the Tolka Valley Park. Architecturally this proposal tests how the existing fabric of these buildings can be retained, activated by opening up to the community and radically inclusive and beneficial for all the community.

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37. Approach to depot
38. Front elevation
39. Relationship to existing changing rooms
40. Storage yard
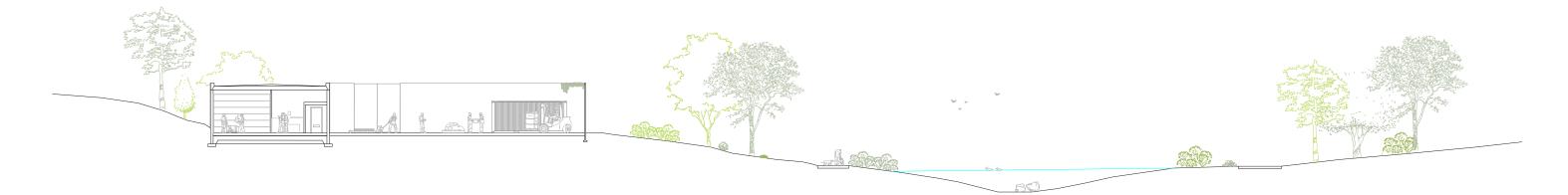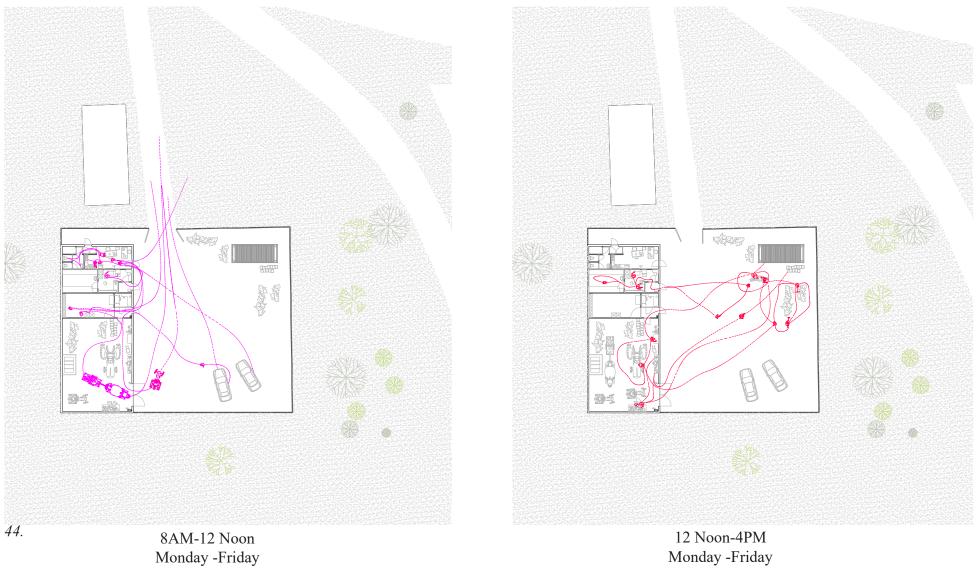41. Canteen
42. Workshop

The Depot
Existing Fabric

Understanding the existing location and condition of the depot demonstrated how isolated it is from the park, as shown in the section below. The steel gates and high walls act as a physical barrier to the park, the integrated constructed wetlands (ICW) particularly, and as a mental restriction to the human actors in the community.
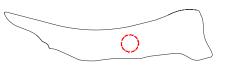
Through the documentation of movement on the site and an interview with the depot foreman Mick Burke, the opportunity and potential to expand the activity on the site became clear. The plans opposite show the current movement within the site. This study highlights how the site becomes dormant and inactive outside of working hours.

Speaking with Mr. Burke, it was evident the passion and the enthusiasm the he had for the park and the biodiversity that exists. Testing the thesis on this site provided opportunities to share this appreciation with the community.

43.

44.

8AM-12 Noon
Monday -Friday

12 Noon-4PM
Monday -Friday

Saturday - Sunday
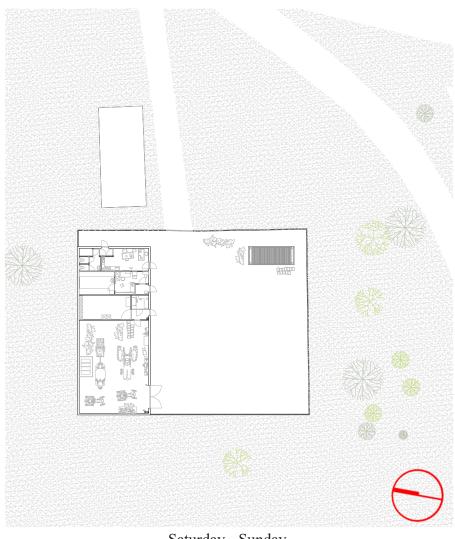
43. Existing section through the depot and ICW
44. Existing depot movement maps

The Depot
Proposal

The proposal consists of repairs to the currently dilapidated and leaking roof, restoring it to it's full potential. Opening the depot up physically by removing the existing walls and gates, allowing the blocks to be used as recycled aggregate in the main political space. Making minimal interventions adheres to the theme of transformative action through radial and environmental thinking.

Programming the space to allow the community to work with their hands and nature, draws connection back to the ICW, contrary to the existing relationship between the spaces.
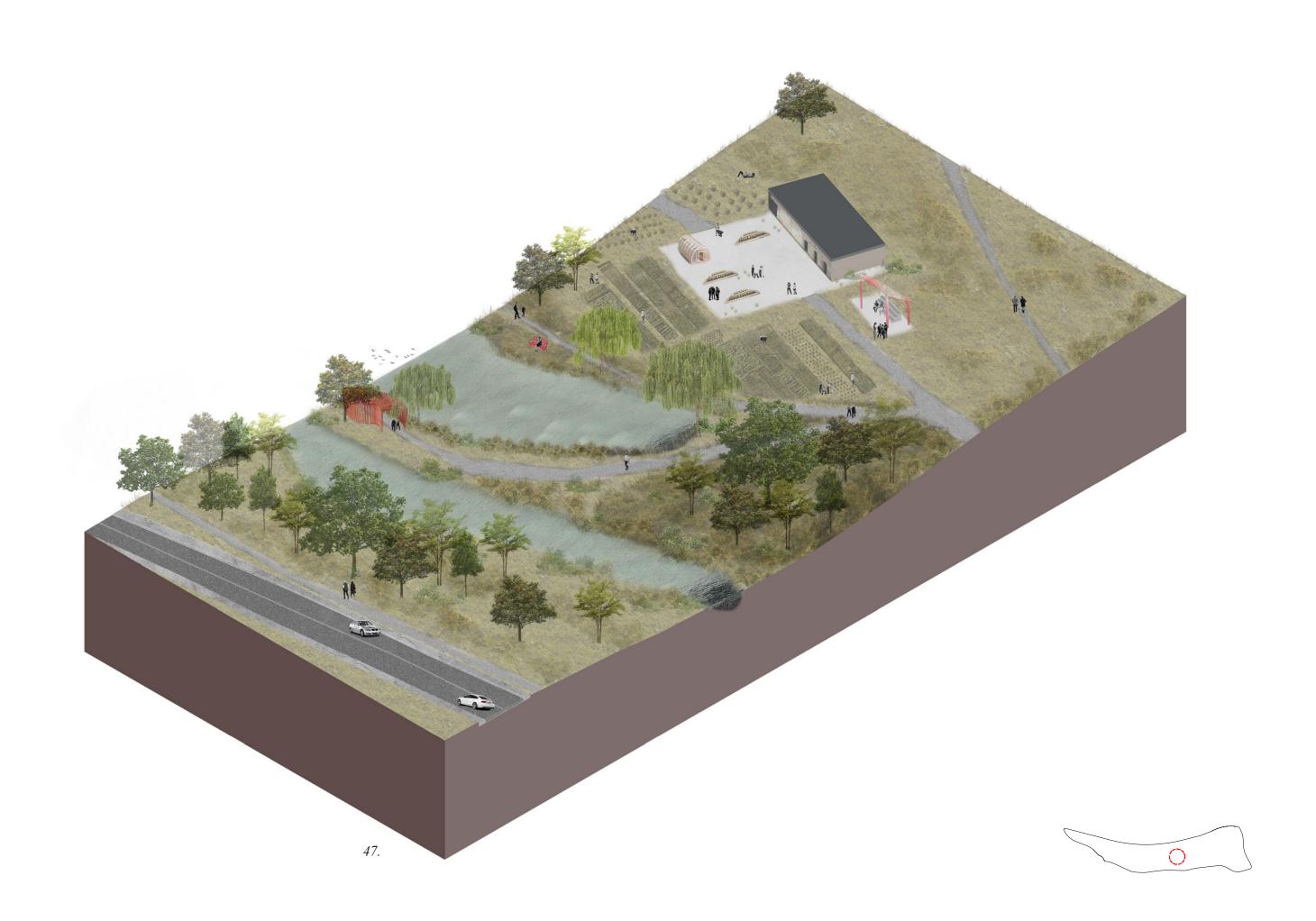
Locating the allotments and growing functions around the depot, allows for the activation of the space during and outside of the current working hours. The proximity of the new activity to the built space makes the use of the existing facilities available, wc's and workshops for example, and creates integration of the DCC workers and the community.

The existing changing rooms are reimagined as a sheltered space for rest and observation for all those activating the park.

45.

1. Workshop & Storage
2. Storage
3. Lockers
4. Foreman's Office
5. Storage
6. Canteen
7. WC's & Shower
8. Storage Yard
9. Sheltered Seating

46.

45. ICW south of the depot
46. 1.200 Proposed depot plan

47.

47. Axonometric of proposal
48. Perspective of activated depot

48.

The Amphitheater
Site Selection

The chosen site for the main political space was the site of the Finglaswood House. Originally used as a tannery, the house was demolished in the 1970's. The site is denoted on the drawing opposite, although no remains are evident to date.

Located on an elevated plane, the site has views spanning across the park. Developing this space provides opportunities to increase passive surveillance and to activate a formerly significant site within the area.

Inspired by conversations with Noeleen Reilly, the main function of the political space to provide a space for the community to gather, to share knowledge and discourse. Research gathered from the community highlighted a need for a central space, a flexible facility that could house large numbers.

A key consideration for the site selection was its proximity to the existing playground to the East. Councilor Reilly expressed concerns for the children's playground as it "keeps getting destroyed" by antisocial behaviour, they intend to move it. Increasing the footfall to this currently underutilised space will result in more passive surveillance for the playground, retaining it in its current location. This demonstrates the positive result of creating radically inclusive spaces.

The site is universally accessible using the existing paths within the park and the Tolka Valley Road.

The Greek agora helped to spatially develop this idea of the main gathering space, accommodating the masses, with other uses radiating from it, similar to the smaller interventions within the park.
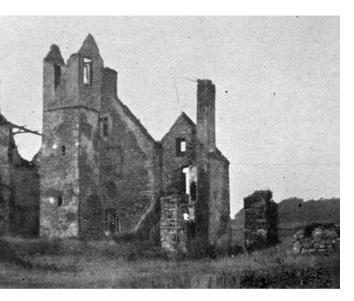
Retaining the three key objectives at the core, the political space was explored on this prominent site.
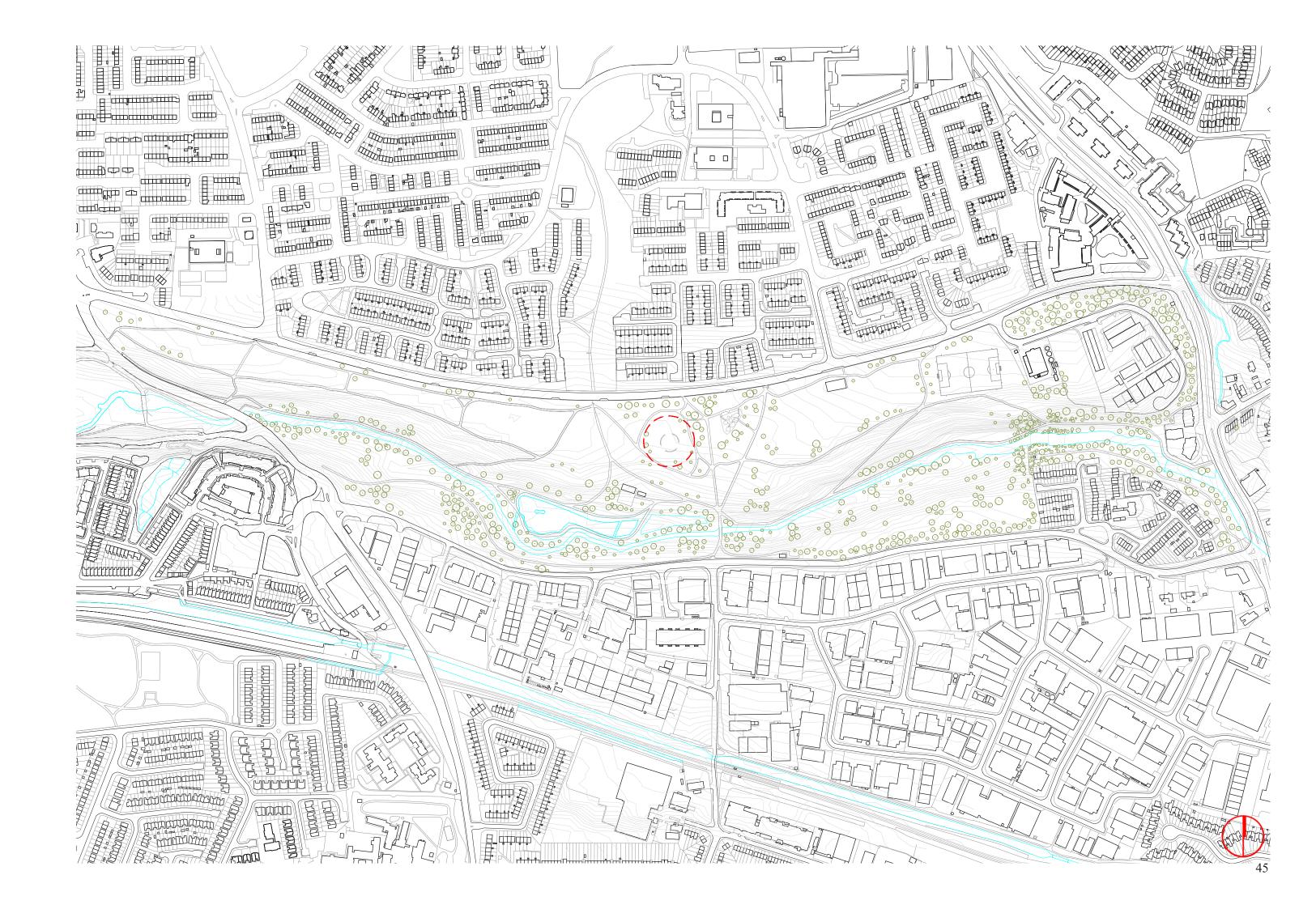

49.

50.

49. Finglas woodhouse
50. Finglaswood House
51. 1.5000 at A3 Existing site map

The Amphitheater
Existing Fabric

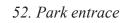52.

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The Amphitheater
The Proposal

The building concept began with the idea of an amphitheater. An multi functional, open structure, void of physical barriers, which could be incorporated into the existing topography to avail of views as well as primarily fulfilling political functions.

The program for the intervention is radially inclusive, providing functions for all users of the park. Toilet's and rest areas, a cafe and flexible market space, a library and the main political space, an interior extension of the amphitheater.

The central, meadow space is served by the cafe and library, as well as having the ability to act independently as a lightly programmed space.
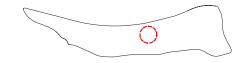
The intention as shown in the diagrams, was for the buildi,ngs to provide for the open spaces, acting as an extension of them when necessary.
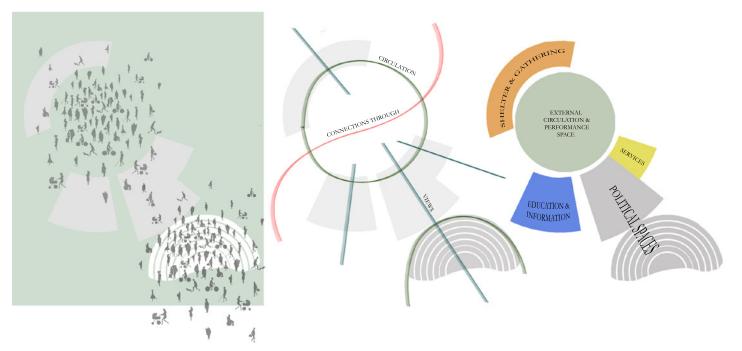
52. Park entrace
53. Main path junction
54. View from depot
55. View from Tolka Valley Road
56. View from site
57. Entrance from North side of park
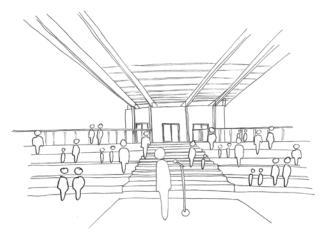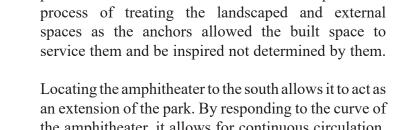58. Diagrams
59. Sketch of interior political space

58.

59.

60.

Initial ideas about form were explored through sketch models, shown in a timeline opposite. Beginning the investigating with ideas of the 'temple on the hill', and the exclusivity that accompanies that. This progressed to curved forms, more inviting spaces which also maximised views and surveillance. Exploring various heights and separating forms raised questions about connectivity and program.

Simultaneously, these forms were tested on the site model to understand them in context.

Exploring the building in model form, examining specifically the approach and the threshold between interior and exterior spaces, helped to progress the placement and overall form of this main space. The process of treating the landscaped and external spaces as the anchors allowed the built space to service them and be inspired not determined by them.

Locating the amphitheater to the south allows it to act as an extension of the park. By responding to the curve of the amphitheater, it allows for continuous circulation, universal access and movement up through these built spaces, and beyond. The radial form flows with the landscape and is open in specific locations to provide views and connections to the depot and playground.

60. Various scaled models used as a tool to develop building form
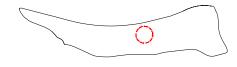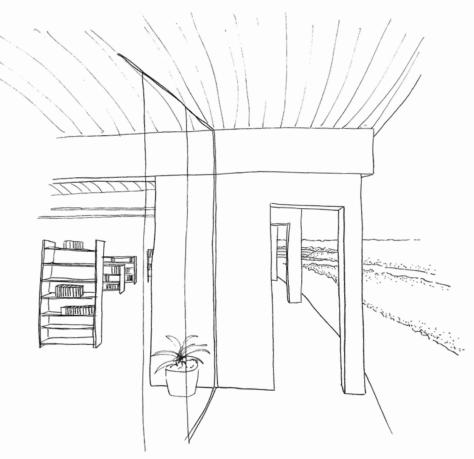*61. 1.500 Models tested on chosen site*
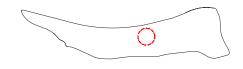*62. 1.500 Completed model*

61.

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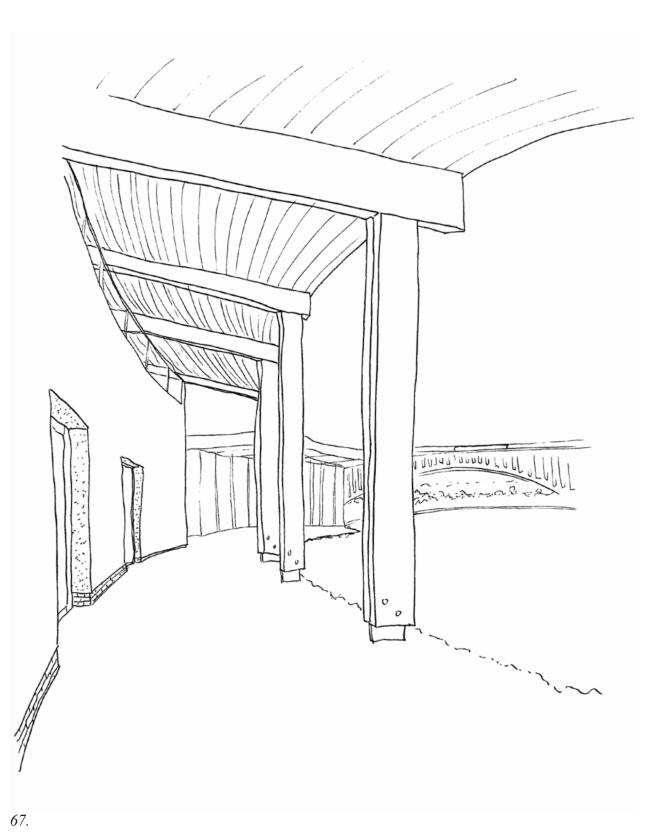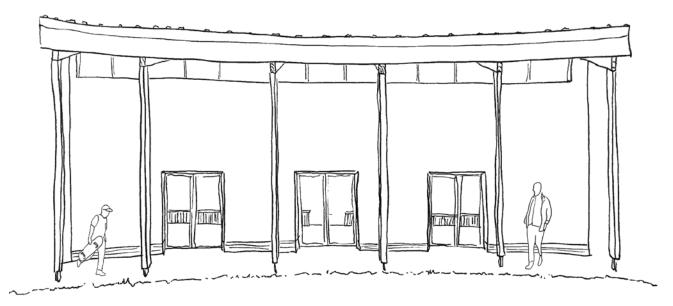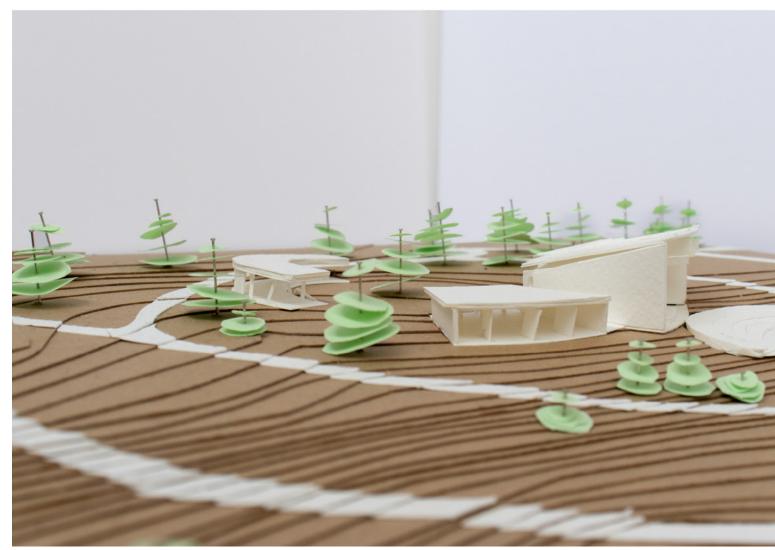

67.

63. 1.500 Model, view of proposal from South
side of the park
64. 1.500 Model, view of proposal from north
side of park
65. 1.500 Model,view through proposal to cen-
tral space
66. Sketch of library space opening to land-
scape
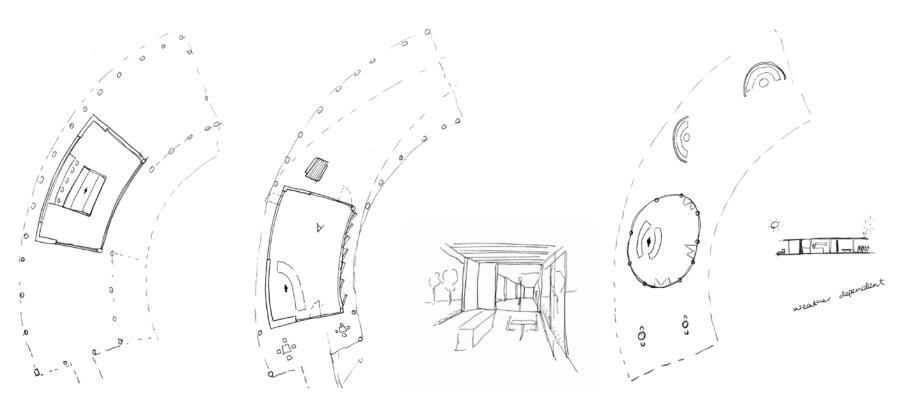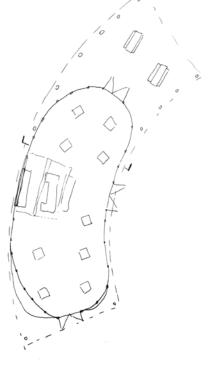67. Sketch of colonnade concept connecting
spaces

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71.

68. 1.500 model showing external space
69. Sketch of approach to political space
70. 1.500 model showing connections through
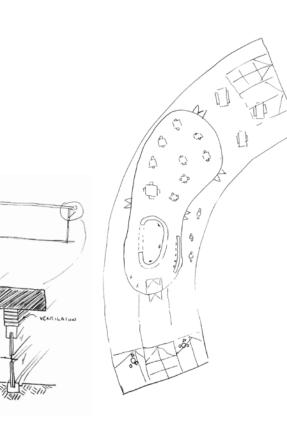71. Sketch of views and relationship of spaces

Using structure as cover for outdoor areas

Materiality allowing views and connectivity to the park
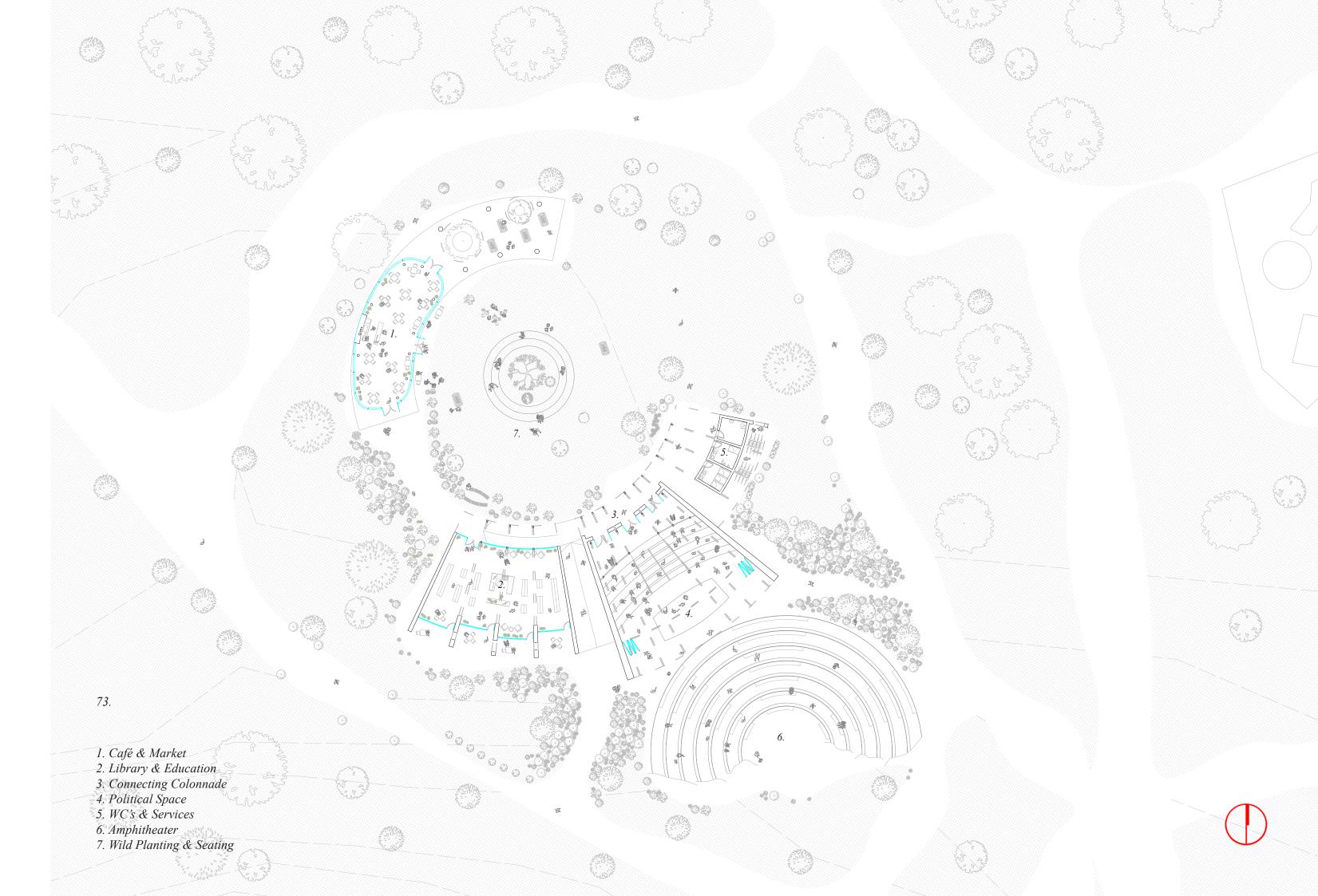
Programming external spaces & considering weathering conditions

Creating a free flowing flexible structure & incorporating services

Consideration for universal access and radical inclusivity

72.

73.

1. Café & Market
2. Library & Education
3. Connecting Colonnade
4. Political Space
5. WC's & Services
6. Amphitheater
7. Wild Planting & Seating

72. Sketch as a tool to develop ideas
73. 1.200 at A1 GF plan

74.

76.

75..

77.

74. Interior view of cafe space
75. Exterior view of market space
76. Approach to political space
77. View from built space to park

Roof
Zinc roof
Decking
150mm Insulation
Vapour control
100x25mm T&G boards
150x100mm Timber joists
Timber beams

Columns
225x150mm Timber

Wall
20mm Lime render
450mm Hempcrete cast insitu
150mm Timber frame at 400 c/c
20mm Lime Plaster

Floor
22mm Polished concrete
75mm Screed
150mm Insulation
DPC
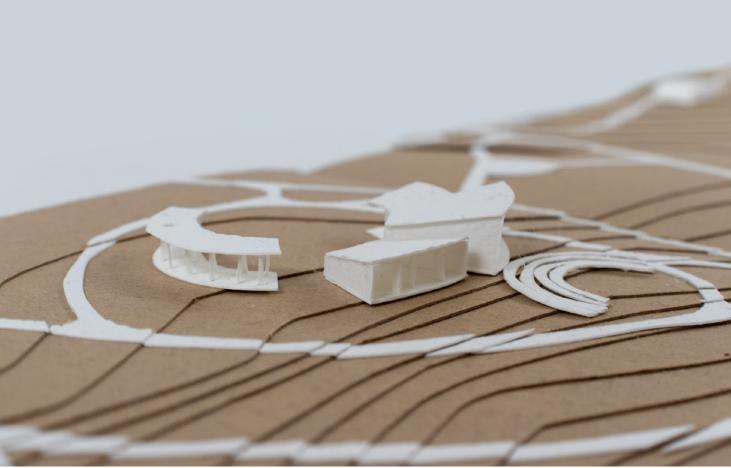*150mm Concrete sub floor*
Hardcore

78.

78. 1.25 at A1 Structural detail
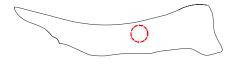*79. Axonometric of proposal*

79.

81.

82.

80. Proposed elevation of political space
showing materiality and scale
81. 1.1000 Model, South elevation
82. 1.1000 Model, North elevation

80.

The Boules Pavilion

The inspiration for the Boules Pavilion stemmed from Community Garda Ciara McGrath. During our conversation, McGrath spoke of "mono functional facilities" not meeting community needs, and particularly the need for more age appropriate amenities for the "elderly".
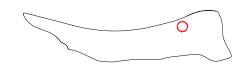
This need is reinforced in Dublin City Council's 2021 Finglas Strategy. Boules is highlighted as an "accessible" sport which can promote community engagement.

Locating the proposed boules playing surfaces in an elevated space with primarily flat ground, allows for minimum disturbance to the existing land and habitats. Its proximity to housing on the north was an advantage for the proposed demographic, as advised in DCC's strategy, allowing for more accessibility and incentives to activate the space.

Utilising the primary site research conducted, integrating this proposal adjacent to the existing sporting facilities creates opportunities for integration and socialising between users. Availing of the positive atmosphere radiating from the existing pitches.

The opposing image demonstrates the intention for the use of this space to be unrestricted and flexible. Creating a continuous flow throughout the day and evening in these sporting areas.

83.

83. Activation of the Boules Pavilion by actors of various demographics

The Wild Terrace

The wild terrace site is an extension of the allotments proposed in the depot. Located between the depot and the existing community gardens, it creates another radically inclusive space with a large area of influence along the main route of the park.

Embedding the existing shipping container from the depot into the land, availing of the steep slope, provides a space for tool storage and shelter. As well as the environmental benefits of reusing the existing container, it acts a feature within the landscape, signifying to other users that the space is activated. Lightly programming the sloping site provides moments for rest and observation over the golf course and Dublin Mountains. The minimal landscaping proposed creates routes with a 1.50 gradient, making the site accessible for all users, practicing radical inclusivity.

The planting proposed here is inspired by Mick Burke. Low maintenance planting is desirable in the park as care and maintenance is voluntary in these interventions. Following the same principles as the depot, encouraging the community to care and maintenance the park will activate these spaces which are open to users of abilities.

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84. 1.1000 Model plan
85. 1.1000 Model persepctive
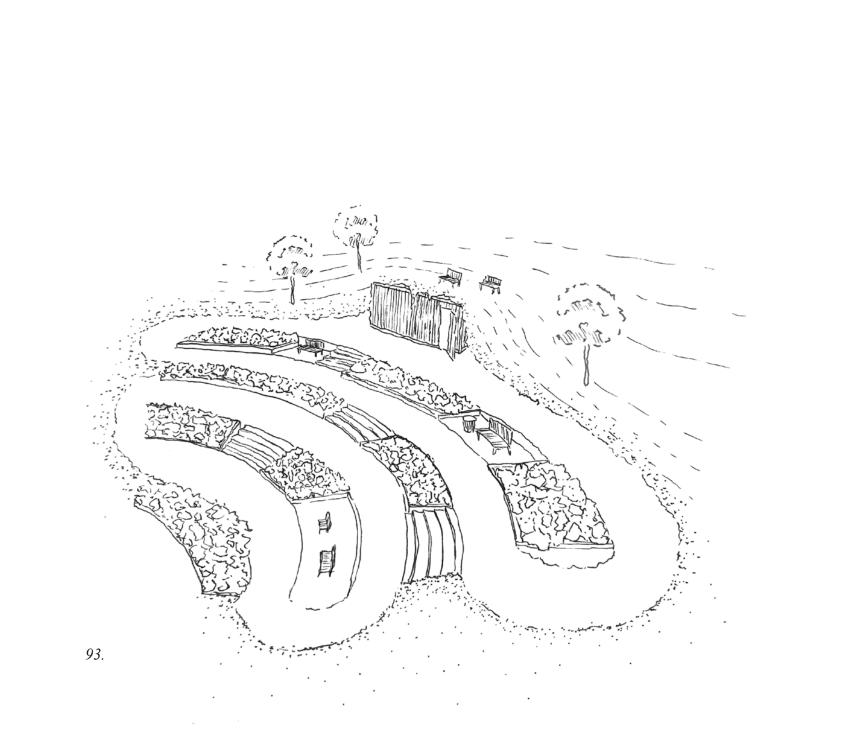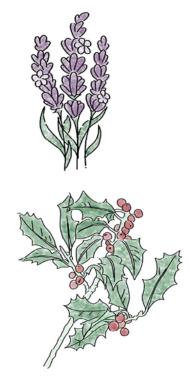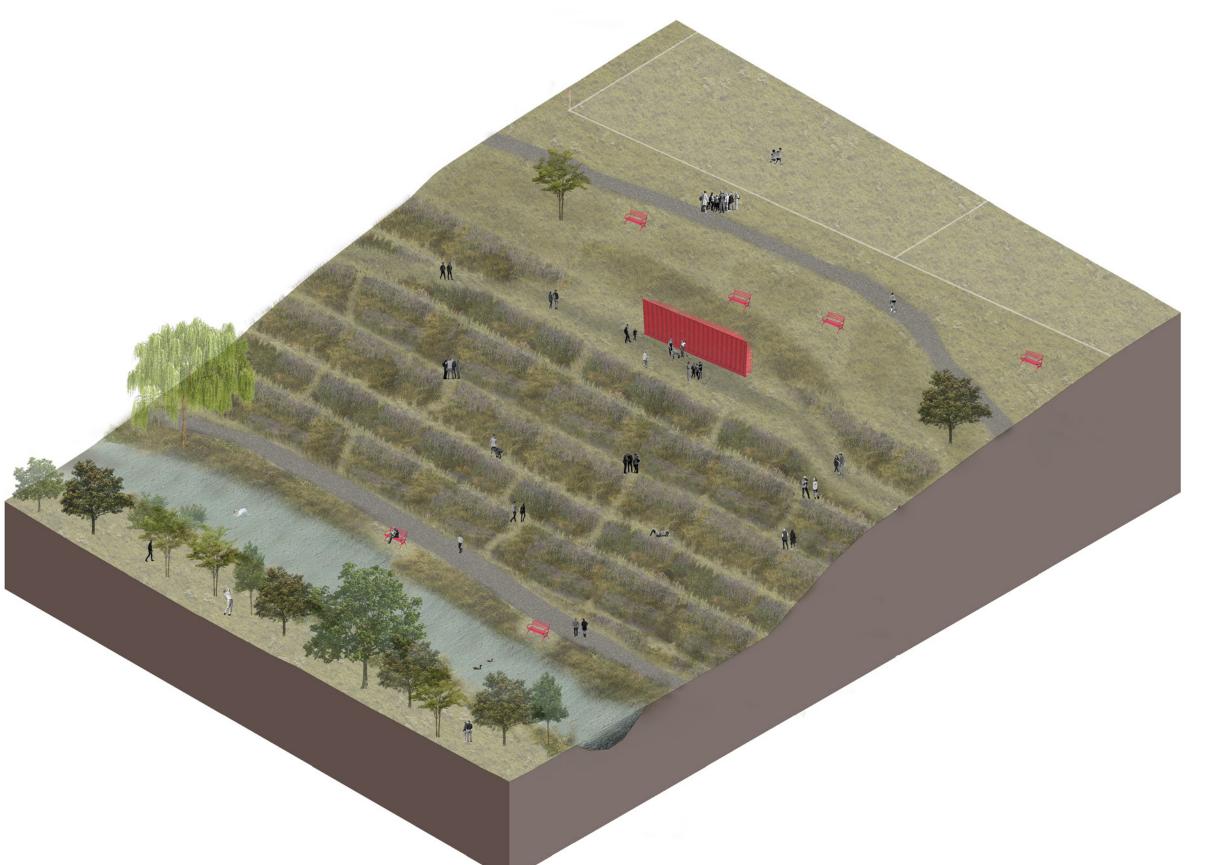86-91. Existing site photos

92.

93.

94.

92. *Minimal planting examined*
93. *Sketch proposal of terraces with lavender*
94. *Axonometric of proposal*

The Red Sticks Crossing

Based on site analysis, this area was identified as one that needed more movement and access. Currently, there is one entrance to the park in the East. This proposal activates a cul-de-sac. The existing route serves a water pumping station and provides access to the adjacent residential area.

By creating a lightweight timber bridge spanning over the Tolka River, the North-South access within the park is increased, and another entrance to the park is provided. Combining this new access with a proposed pathway from the south, footfall and passive surveillance in this area will be increased.

This new East entrance will be signified by an entrance pavilion. A space to enjoy the river and the new activity.

95.

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95.- 100. Existing site photos
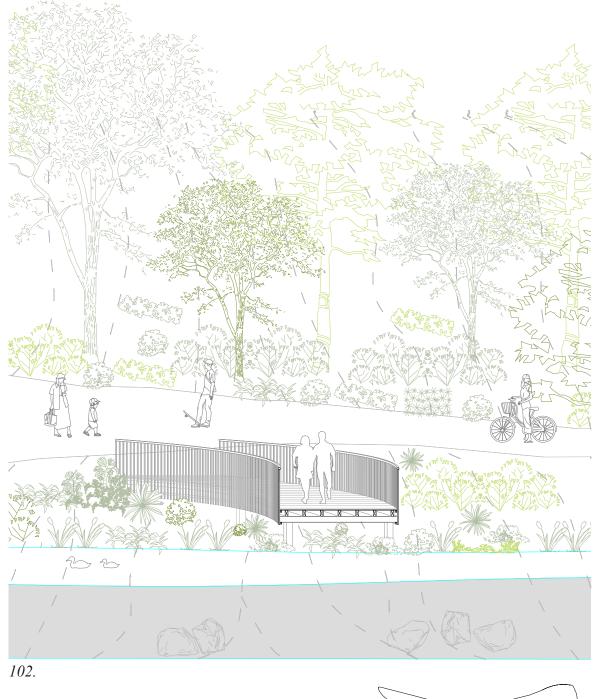
Following from the stage four crit, conversations centered around issues with the variability of atmosphere and how each person's perception of comfort and safety is different. Although Iwas aware of this, we discussed how that could translate into design. Ideas around allowing spaces to be less surveyed or varying the lighting.
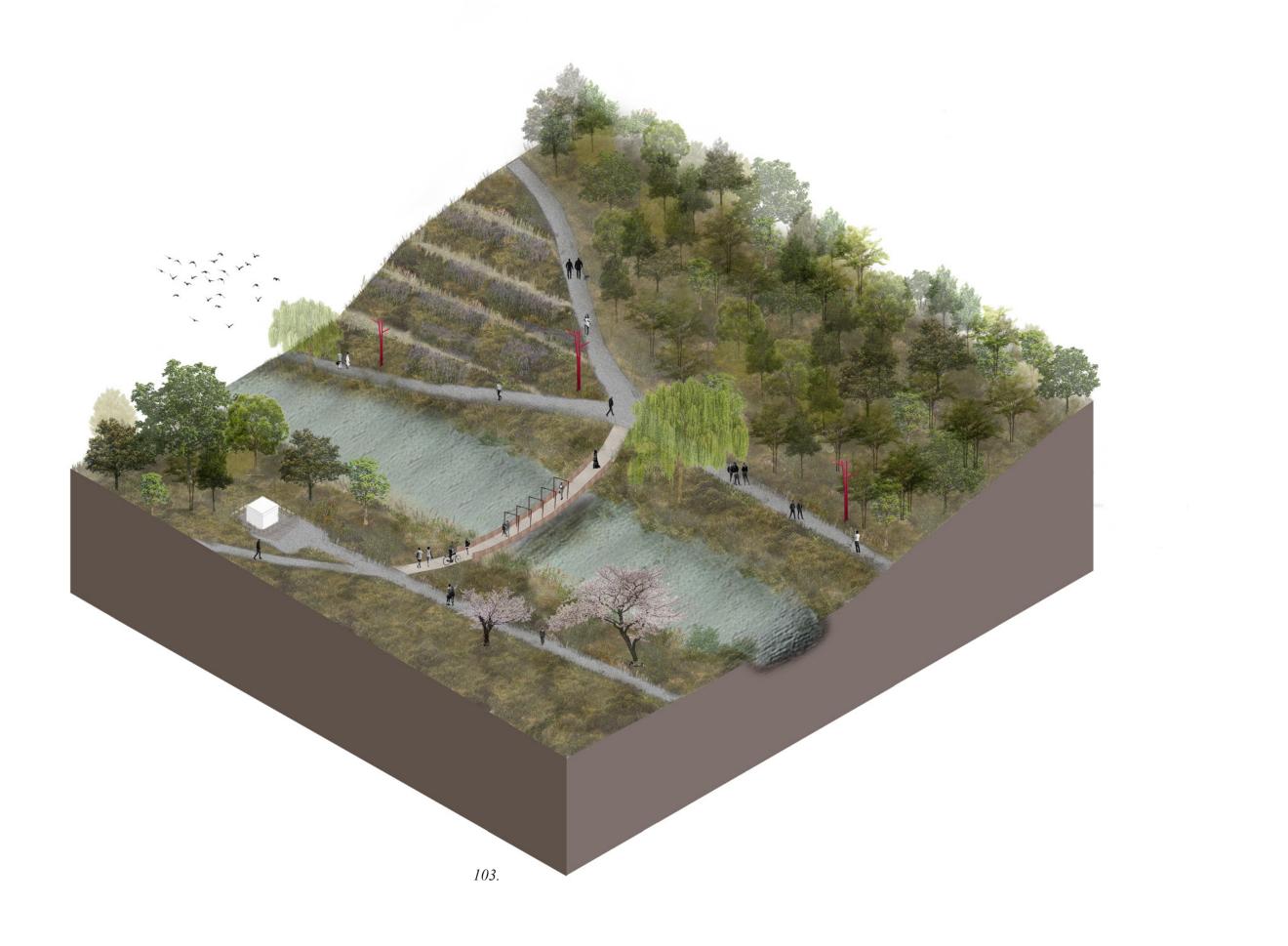
The three images (figure 94) demonstrate an acknowledgment of this variety of this perception, whist still activating spaces for a range of user groups. Understanding that not all paths need to be lit equally, artistically lighting routes to add elements of creativit, and lighting the primary route.

101.

102.

103.

101. Lighting and atmospheric ideas
102. 1.25 Detail
103. Axonometric of proposal

105.

104.

106.

104-106. 1.1000 Model photos

Reflection

As discussed in the Red Sticks Crossing description, consideration was giving to the different user groups who activate the park and an understanding that perception of atmosphere is unique to every individual. This could have been explored in more detail, investigating more topics, exploring the other senses for example. These considerations were all made from a human perspective. The impact of light and sound that result from these proposals is something I would like to explore, as the non-human were of great interest during the earlier thesis research.

Models were made to explore these ideas in section and in 3D. Although 1.2000 was a practical scale to capture the entirety of the park and the relationship of spaces to each other, 1.500 scale of the main space proved much more useful to understand the scale of spaces and topography.

The objectives set out from my research attempted to cover a variety of uses and scales over a large area. These tackled the real issues within the community and time was dedicated accordingly. The opportunity to further develop the main political space, resolving particular construction details, would advance the architectural ideas further.

Reflecting on the project, I am most intrigued by the scale of interventions and scale of their corresponding impact. The smallest architectural proposal can have a widespread impact. This links back to the years theme of Radical Thinking, Transformative Action. By radically doing less or refurbishing an existing structure where possible for example, the result can be transformative.

Conclusion

Investigation into the Tolka Valley Park highlighted various the issues faced by the community. Through community engagement, solutions to these issues could be resolved architecturally. It was the radical thinking, the abstraction of the actors from the community, that the solutions evolved.

The research showed the influence that architects have to strengthen the existing fabric of spaces, reduce exclusivity and create imaginative and adaptable architecture.

This thesis identified underutilised and unprogrammed spaces, engaged the marginalised actors, "young fellahs", and created radically inclusive spaces. As well as achieving these objectives, this research has resulted in an overall strategy for the park.

107.

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Image References

All images / drawings / site photographs are by the author unless otherwise specified. See the below for all referenced images:

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Appendix

(1)

Interview Approach:

Each interview, began with an introduction of myself, and a brief explanation of our studio project. By describing our research into the Tolka Valley Area and the specific quest for atmosphere, it challenged me to explain what I was attempting to quantify and verbalise the work I was carrying out. The performer, the politician, and the protector were all asked the same questions. These questions were broad to avoid biased answers. Inquiries about problems in the area, any positives they wished to highlight, any ideas they had to solve problems or improve the area, and finally any changes they've noticed.

Interview Details:

The first of these informal interviews took place on the 3rd of October 2022, with the Performer, Phil O'Reilly (2). Our conversation began with Phil's observations about the area, for example the Ashtown Road becoming increasingly busy. The quantity of new builds appearing in the area, particularly the "17 storey high apartment blocks" will only continue bringing an influx of people to the locality.

In response to the changes in the atmosphere of the area, Phil stated that the "area has changed for [the] worse". He contributes much of this negativity to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Over lockdown periods, Mr. O'Reilly observed an increase in antisocial behaviour around the trains and the stations, affecting those who were still availing of essential public transport. With little else to do, he stated the trains had become "a playground for youngfellahs". These comments surrounding antisocial behaviour and Covid-19 were corroborated by the next interviewees, Noeleen Reilly and Ciara McGrath.

On the 4th of October 2022, a phone interview with the Politican, Noeleen Reilly, took place. Noeleen began the conversation by acknowledging that "social issues have increased", particularly those of "addiction". Councillor Reilly described how certain "people in the area prey on young men" and have a negative influence over them. However, reflecting on the past and specifically pre-Covid times, Noeleen admits that there has "always been antisocial behaviour in the area". The open parks seem to be involved in such behaviour with their lack of "passive surveillance" she remarked. Reilly spoke of the plans to "move the playground" within the park because it "keeps getting destroyed". She described such amenities as "targets within parks". They have not yet selected a new location, due to financial issues and difficulty finding a space where it will be "safe and accessible for people".

Noeleen described how there has been efforts to improve the area. New tennis and basketball courts have been recently constructed to "broaden facilities". They are "designing new changing rooms" and hoping to build a "skateboard park in the future like in Ballyfermot". Reilly believes there is "loads to do for young people in the area" and does not think this accounts for the amount of antisocial behaviour recorded. We discussed the positive outcomes from Covid-19. Noeleen observed that the "parks were used a lot more" during Covid-19 for physical exercise. The local councillors are using this increased usage as "an objective now" to maintain the "rafters of people" in such facilities. They believe that this increased footfall will help "reduce antisocial behaviour". One example we examined was that of an elderly women's "walking group" that started during Covid-19 and have retained their weekly walk since. Reilly emphasised the importance of ensuring "the parks are designed for everyone". Finally, she spoke briefly about the Dublin Industrial Estate. She questioned if that was an "effective use of space" being located where it is, so close to the Dublin City Center. Without denying the "need for employment", she queried how long into the future would it be used.

The closing interview was similarly carried out by phone on October 5th, 2022, with Ciara McGrath, the Protector. We began by discussing some of the area's problems. Ciara indicated these were primarily relating to Covid-19. Garda McGrath stated there were "groups of people antagonising people getting off the trains" and "groups hanging around" as there was "nothing to do". She spoke of how these issues seem to have ceased since "Covid culture changed". Ciara spoke of how life is still returning to normal after Covid-19, that "resident meetings have not resumed". She compared this to Pre-Covid-19 times, where there were numerous initiatives within the community, involving "schools and elderly" for example, so many that you "couldn't list them". Garda McGrath estimated that all activities would be fully recommenced by 2023. Ciara welcomed the "changes yet to come" in relation to the new builds underway in the Ashtown area. She discussed how the "population will double" in an environment that is already "constantly changing".

Different methods of commoning investigated:

Contrary to this organised method, others believe commoning to be a more "spontaneous process of sharing and doing in-common". For ideas like this to be successful, there is an emphasis on the importance of relationships. It is these human relationships that contribute to ecological repair, providing a site-specific solution. There are difficulties associated with the idea of shared goods and ownership. Boundaries are needed to "lay claim to common goods without privatizing or exercising public control over them" (Collective, 2022). Lefebvre similarly discusses this difficulty of human actors claiming ownership or privatising spaces, "communal or shared spaces, the possession or consumption of which cannot be entirely privatized, continue to exist" (Lefebvre, 1991). As with any idea of radical inclusivity, urban commons faces challenges. In a urban context such as the Tolka Valley, challenges consists of close proximity, the mixture of the built and natural environments and social and cultural differences among others.

Radical Inclusivity and radical particpation case study:

Following the use of politics within architecture and empowerment of communities, the next case study represents a large-scale attempt at this. Kongjian Yu discusses the advantages of radical inclusivity and empowering the actors in a community to help drive a more sustainable architecture in 'The Sponge City; Planning, Design and Political Design'. Yu shares the work being done by Turenscape, another multidisciplinary firm consisting of architects, landscape, urban and environmental designers, and engineers. In 2014, the practice set out to create a 'sponge city' on Hainan Island. 'Sponge city' is a term used to describe a natural landscape constructed to "catch, store and clean water" which in turn will create "beauty and spiritual nourishment for local communities". Political campaigns were needed to convey the benefits and potential of nature-based solutions. To achieve this, they availed of the "top-down" political system that was in place. Making presentations with mandatory attendance for political officials. To explain the idea to the wider community, widespread media coverage was deployed and over "50 hours" of television broadcasting occurred. This helped to "build broad community-level support" for this project. This project proved successful to both human and non-human actors in its repair of the existing landscape, but also in its methods to raise awareness and engagement for an alternative solution (Yu, 2021).

AAA Hub functions ((Doina Petrescu, 2016).
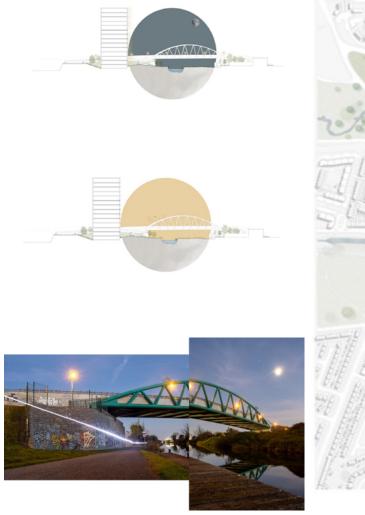

Table 1 Agrocité, Recyclab and Ecohab functions (2015)

R-Urban hub	Components	Users	Governance	Location	Design and building	Date
Agrocité Urban agriculture unit Building 150 m², plot 3000 m²	Agrolab: ecological building hosting a local market, workshop, greenhouse space, community café/canteen local shop and educational and cultural space Experimental micro-farm: including cultivation plots, beehives, chicken farm and compost facilities Community gardens	Three organizations: Agrocité, École de Compost and AMAP + 400 citizens	Hybrid structure: user organization (NGO) (e.g., the community garden, cultural and educational spaces) + social enterprise (e.g., micro-farm, market and café)	Plot issued from the demolition of a small local industry in the core of the social housing estate Fosses Jean Temporary lease on the land that belongs to the city; planned for development in 10 years	Integrated ecological devices, built through participative workshops: compost heating system, wormery, compost toilets, hydroponic growing system, grey water plant filtering system Eco-construction with raw or reused materials: reused windows and cladding elements; recycled drying panels; straw for insulation from local farmers Local labour (i.e., local eco-construction company) partially self-built (interior insulation, outdoor facilities, cladding, fences)	Built 2013
Recyclab Recycling and eco-construction unit Building 120 m², plot 700 m²	Facilities for storing and reusing locally salvaged materials, recycling and transforming them into eco-construction elements for self-building and retrofitting Co-working workshops for makers and designers and a participative workshop open to residents for repairing and small DIY sessions	Four organizations: Recyclab, Simone de Colombes, Colombes a Velos and Repair café; one carpenter + 200 citizens	Social enterprise	Existing road that was closed to be transformed into a car park Temporary lease on land that belonged to the city, planned for development in 10 years	Designed to be quickly dismantled in order to access the public infrastructure in the road for maintenance or repair (sewage, electricity, etc) Built with small companies; partially self-built (interior insulation and cladding) Eco-construction with raw or reused materials: built with reused containers and prefabricated wooden huts on top and clad with salvaged wood Integration to context: geometry informed by the shape of the street tree canopies	Built 2013
Ecohab Cooperative eco-housing Building 600 m², plot 1100 m²	Seven flats + two temporary residential units for students and researchers + one civic or commercial space Shared facilities: food growing collective, energy, rain water harvesting, car sharing	Seven families + one organization/local business; two researchers in residence	Cooperative	Plot issued from the demolition of one family house Planned to be pursued by the cooperative	Planned to be built with small companies + partially self-built (partition walls and cladding with salvaged wood)	Unbuilt. Construction licence blocked (May 2014)

Locating an existing Loose Space, adjacent to a community gardens, highlights the successful potential of programming a leftover space for the community.

The intention for this project was to lightly program the space, doing as David Leatherbarrow describes, retreating from "prominence in order to accommodate everyday life". Creating an "eventmental" space for actors to linger and observe the momentary wonders of the site (Leatherbarrow, 2009). Encouraging this movement and attraction to the site would increase the surveillance for a previous quiet space .

Utilising the existing site specificity to create a unique atmosphere, involved reinstating the support stone wall in the form of stone gabions. Designing a permeable feature for biodiversity and light penetration to engage multiple senses. Consideration for light and time of day, like that of OMA discussed previously, requires further investigation.