

Making kin with pigeons

multispecies design of urban spaces beyond anthropocentrism



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2026

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Master's Thesis Spring 2026
Society, Justice, Space
Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability

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Abstract

The relentless attempts to maintain the division between nature and culture have resulted in a loss of connection to the natural environment for urban dwellers, leading to a loss of knowledge and empathy for nonhuman species. Reinforcing the problematic belief that human beings are above nature and its ecosystems, this dichotomy also dictates which species belong in our cities, and which do not.

Pigeons. Our companions, collaborators, and allies for centuries, bred, trained, and cared for, are now considered a nuisance that our buildings and public spaces must be protected from. When architects and planners consider the birds, it is often in the form of exclusion. However, emerging approaches such as more-than-human design show promising potential in contributing to a shift in the architecture practice, proposing strategies and solutions to design for and with other species.

In the spirit of Donna Haraway's concept of *Making kin*, this thesis explores the potential of architecture as an interspecies mediator and how spatial interventions in Brunnsparken, Gothenburg, can encourage mutualistic connections between humans and pigeons. The long-term aims being to (re)build our relationship with pigeons, to reconnect with nature, and to sustain our empathy for nonhumans.

The process builds on more-than-human design theories and methods. Through three phases called context analysis, making kin, and multispecies placemaking, the thesis explores the spatial and social entanglement of pigeons and humans, and how design can be used as an interspecies mediator.

The outcome of this thesis is four spatial interventions: multispecies fika tables, bathing fountains, stringfoot assistance benches and observatory walls, that all benefit both humans and pigeons. Together, these interventions transform Brunnsparken into a multispecies park that encourages humans and pigeons to share space and facilitates real interspecies connections.

This thesis is about accountability and what we owe to the species that our anthropocentric worldview has negatively impacted. It is about taking responsibility for (re)building a relationship with pigeons, instead of blaming them for being exactly what we bred them to be.

Keywords: More-than-human design, mutualism, interspecies, entanglement

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Glossary

Beyond anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism is the belief that humans are the most important and essential species in the universe (Cambridge University Press, n. d.). This thesis follows an approach that goes beyond anthropocentrism, aiming to design for a post-anthropocentric world, as suggested in *Living together: More-than-Human Ecologies for Architectural Thinking* (Sonal & Gajjar, 2025). This entails acknowledging and advocating for the other species that we share spaces with and considering their perspectives and needs in the design process. It challenges the current human-centred practice that does not recognize the multispecies character of our cities.

Nature/culture divide

The dichotomy of nature versus culture in this thesis refers to Bruno Latour's writings, specifically *We Have Never Been Modern* (Latour, 1991). He argues that the distinction between nature and society is itself a modern construct and that humans and nonhumans are always interconnected in hybrid networks. The nature/culture divide emphasizes the fact that humans have separated themselves from the natural world, denying that they are part of nature rather than above it.

Response-ability

This thesis assumes the definition of response-ability as defined by Donna Haraway. Unlike responsibility, which builds on guilt and moral duty, response-ability - the capacity to respond - is about attentiveness and accountability. It acknowledges the entanglement between humans and nonhumans and implies cultivating sensitivity and reciprocity with the natural world, instead of control and domination (Haraway, 2016). Practicing response-ability entails being attentive to the needs and agency of nonhumans, and engaging in fostering mutual respect and care. It means being accountable for other species and acting for change.

Mediator

In this thesis, the concept of mediator is inspired by the approach and projects of architects like Joyce Hwang and Studio Ossidiana, and design engineer and artist Natalie Jeremijenko, where architecture and design bridge the gap between human and nonhuman users. Whether it is in the form of shared spaces or structures allowing interactions between species, those projects work as mediators in the way they enable interspecies connections. Learning to know each other through sharing spaces and finding ways to communicate becomes a way of sustaining convivial relations with nonhumans. The projects from Joyce Hwang, Natalie Jeremijenko and Studio Ossidiana are presented on pages 40-41.

The pigeons of Juan-les-Pins



Fig. 1. *The pigeons of Juan-les-Pins and the author* (2003).

Parc de la Pinède, Juan-les-Pins, France, 2003.

A sunny morning in the south of France. As per tradition, grandma takes us to the park to feed pigeons with nuts and the old bread that she had been saving for this occasion. The pigeons there are so comfortable with humans that they perch on our shoulders and hands, sometimes even on our heads. "I recognize this one from yesterday!" I say. "I think it recognizes you too." Grandma answers. At that moment, I feel a certain bond with this bird, as it pecks between my fingers to reach a small piece of nut.

I think it felt special, somehow, to feel a connection with a feral animal. And I didn't see them as dirty critters, I saw them as friends that I was looking forward to meeting again the next morning. I did care about them deeply. It was so natural, so effortless to care. They were an essential part of the park, and I was more excited about interacting with them than spending time at the playground. Everyone in the town knew about the pigeons in that park and it became an essential part of its identity.

To the pigeons of Juan-les-Pins: thank you for the special memories tied to visiting you. The idea behind this thesis would probably not have crossed my mind without our encounters.

"Modern architecture has prioritized human exclusivity to such an extent that ecological interrelationships have become obscured. [...] A renewed urgency is emerging that calls on us to reconsider this distancing and imagine human and nonhuman worlds as coinciding" (Sonal & Gajjar, 2025, p. 17)

Introduction

This section of the report contains an introduction to the thesis, a description of the current problem that is addressed and the author's positioning. It also includes the purpose of the work and its delimitations. Finally, the aim, research question and operational questions that define and guide the project are stated.

Introduction

Since the beginning of their domestication over 10,000 years ago, our relationship with pigeons has followed the needs and trends of different centuries - at different degrees of reciprocity and care (Peplow Powell, 2023). They have been our collaborators in research and art projects, allies in wars and devoted messengers, and their droppings (guano) were for a long time used as a fertilizer (Allen, 2009).

With the development of new technologies like communication devices and synthetic fertilizer, we now seem to have forgotten our past companionship with pigeons, although it had a permanent impact on them. As a result of their past domestication, feral pigeons are synanthropes, namely animals that have evolved to thrive in human-made settings, living in close association with humans and benefiting from these conditions (Allaby, 2010). However, they are rarely considered as legitimate co-users of the urban spaces that have become their habitat.

We strive for order and cleanliness and despise unpredictability, messiness and things that we consider as dirty, giving ourselves the right to decide what belongs to the city and what does not. Nonhuman species are either pets that are welcome in our homes, or wild animals that should stay in nature areas outside of the city. Liminal species that are neither domestic nor wild, like pigeons, challenge the dichotomy and get attributed the status of a nuisance, or even pests (Jerolmack, 2008).

Architecture influences our relationship with other species and those species' use of the built environment. Unfortunately, when nonhumans are considered in the planning and design of urban spaces, it is mostly in the form of exclusion, as bird spikes and other deterrent measures demonstrate. Even though architects, planners and citizens are increasingly aware of the importance of biodiversity in urban environments, it often translates into designing specific zones for nonhuman species, instead of welcoming them in "our" spaces (Hwang, 2013).

More-than-human design offers a more radical and promising approach, challenging the current architecture practice and the assumption that the built environment is exclusively used by humans and should be designed considering their perspective only. Perhaps it is time to stop blaming pigeons for being in public urban spaces and start envisioning multispecies futures for our cities. What happens when architecture is used as an interspecies mediator instead of a tool for exclusion?



Fig. 2. Pigeons, sun and oatmeal.

Problem setting

In today's cities, pigeons are considered dirty pests, sometimes called "rats with wings", that do not belong to the urban landscape. They are excluded from public spaces with deterrent measures such as spikes, metal wires or netting. Their acidic droppings are not praised for their fertilizing qualities anymore but criticized for deteriorating the built environment. The fear of the diseases they transmit to humans is often used as an argument to justify this treatment, even though the actual risk is significantly lower than suggested by the discourse (Jerolmack, 2008).

As a consequence of the division between nature and culture, urban residents are losing their connection to the natural environment, and as the American architect and expert in multispecies design Joyce Hwang (2013) writes, "we as a society have become less conscious of our interdependence on animals." (p.351). This phenomenon leads to less knowledge about pigeons and less empathy towards them, which facilitates the diffusion of negative preconceptions about the birds.

What does our attitude towards pigeons say about us? The lack of consideration for pigeons in urban spaces reflects the anthropocentric worldview that is prominent in today's Western society. The belief that human interests are above everything else drives the need of asserting control over public spaces, but also a passivity that exempts humans from taking accountability for their actions. Yet, we live in a time where human needs must be balanced with nonhuman needs, and we cannot continue to ignore our interdependence with the natural world (McGuirk, 2024a).

Deterrent measures and strategies of exclusion are part of the design and planning of urban spaces, which gives architecture a role to play in our relation to pigeons. In the introduction of the *Future Observatory Journal Issue 2: More-than-Human*, Justin McGuirk writes "More-than-human thinking has a decade or more of articulation in theory but is still utterly nascent, marginal and avant-garde when it comes to practice." (2024a, paragraph 3).



Fig. 3. Bird spikes on the roof of a building in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Purpose

Exclusion may not be the solution to solve the conflicts arising between humans and pigeons in public spaces. By including the perspective of the birds and considering their needs in the process of designing elements for urban parks, shared spaces for multispecies coexistence can be created, as the project Multispecies Lounge by Double Happiness (Feliz, 2023). The thesis follows this approach aiming to encourage a more convivial relation between humans and pigeons in the park, resulting in multispecies design elements symbolically criticising deterrent measures.

Restoring a connection to nature is essential, as it provides us with the knowledge and empathy necessary to care and respectfully interact with the nonhuman species that we share our planet with, and advocate for their preservation and their rights (Wolch, 1998). Pigeons are ideal nonhumans to help us sustain this connection, as they are the closest to a wild animal that many urban dwellers encounter regularly (SVT, 2024). They can thus be considered as representative of nature in our daily lives.

This thesis explores more-than-human thinking as a design approach challenging anthropocentric architectural practices. It exercises response-ability, following the assumption that it is time to take accountability for domesticating pigeons and making the first step towards (re)building mutualistic relations with them.

Positioning

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, the same question came up multiple times:

How is this architecture?

The following text is my own definition of architecture, reflecting what role I believe the architect can and should take on.

Architecture is the creation of spaces. It is about who influences the space and who gets to be part of shaping it. It is about spatial elements that affect social dynamics. It is about choosing which perspectives to consider and which narratives to highlight. This implies taking into account the interest of nonhuman users as well. Beyond function, architecture is constantly redefined by and redefining the way we understand and experience the world.

Sometimes, architecture is about challenging the current practice and who gets to influence, define and use a space. In this case, it is about designing multispecies spatial interventions and sharing a square with our nonhuman cohabitants.

Aim

The long-term aim is to make kin with pigeons. To (re)build a relationship between our two species and sustain real connections. To find ways to move on together in our damaged world.

More specifically, to reconnect with nature through pigeons and letting their liminality challenge the dichotomy of nature versus culture, through the design of spatial interventions that encourage mutualistic relations between humans and pigeons in urban spaces.



Fig. 4. The multispecies environment of Brunnsparken, Gothenburg.

Delimitations

This thesis is not focusing on finding solutions for nesting, even though supervised urban dovecotes have proved to be a successful way of mitigating conflict between humans and pigeons in some cities in Germany (Weyrather, 2021). Instead, the project focuses on the daily activities of both pigeons and people on the chosen site.

The methods used to analyse the spatial and social context are conducted on the chosen site, and for a specific species. The results of these investigations, that the design is based on, are thus specific to the context and may not be relevant when applied to other locations or situations. However, the approach of the research as well as the methods can be used in other contexts and for other species.

Research question

How can architecture act as a mediator between human and synanthropic species in urban spaces, and what spatial interventions could encourage mutualistic relationships with pigeons in Brunnsparken, Gothenburg?

Operational questions

- What characterizes the spatial and cultural relations between humans and pigeons in the chosen context?
- How could architecture be a mediator and encourage interspecies kinships?
- What spatial interventions could redefine Brunnsparken into a multispecies park where interspecies connections are encouraged?

Methodology

In this section, the methodology guiding the process of this thesis is presented, and the different methods used are described and motivated. The process is illustrated in a diagram to give an overview of the different phases.

Methods

The methodology used in this thesis is based on a more-than-human approach, decentring the focus from human needs and acknowledging the multispecies character of urban spaces. The process is divided into three phases called context analysis, making kin, and multispecies placemaking, as illustrated in Fig. 5. The methods used in the different phases are described below. However, the method of desk research was used throughout the whole process. Biological and cultural knowledge about pigeons was collected to learn about their abilities, characteristics and life cycle, and hence better understanding them as a species.

Context analysis - page 19-36

The first step of the process was an analysis of the site and context, focusing on investigating physical onsite dynamics and social relations between pigeons and humans. The methods used in this investigation consist of site-based observations, interviews and discourse analysis.

Site-based observations were conducted to study the flows and movement of people and pigeons, the spatial dynamics between the two species, how they use the space, and how the built environment influences and is influenced by each species. The observations were conducted at Brunnsparken, through walking and sitting in the park, while photographing and documenting the monitored behaviours, activities and the built environment.

Interviews were a way of gathering the different perspectives of the actors of the site and their relation to pigeons. A formal interview with the landscape architect in charge of the restructuring of Brunnsparken in 2017, together with email conversations with managers at the city of Gothenburg's Urban Environment Department (Stadsmiljöförvaltningen – Utemiljö och stadsliv) provided an understanding of the city's planning and design process of urban spaces and the maintenance routines at the site. Informal interviews with an artist, as well as a designer and professor who both have worked with more-than-human projects in other parts of the city, provided insights into their approach to more-than-human thinking and how to design beyond anthropocentrism.

Moreover, a discourse analysis was carried out to get an overview of how pigeons are positioned in the local discourse and what vocabulary is used by the local actors to describe them. This was done through categorizing the words used to describe pigeons and

reflect on what the vocabulary reveals about the position of the actors towards the birds.

The results of the context analysis are presented in the form of intervention points that were identified throughout this first phase. These points can be positive findings to enhance or conflicts to mitigate and are the ground for the design interventions. Moreover, a relationscape (Fig. 36) illustrating the connections between the different human and nonhuman actors of the site is presented to summarize the analysis section.

Making kin - page 37-46

The second step of the process was an investigation of multispecies design and partnership. The aim of this phase was to define tenets for *Making kin* with another species. The methods used consisted of case studies and literature study. The cases studies analysed on the one hand, projects conducted in collaboration with pigeons through history and showing the evolution of pigeon-humans companionship, and on the other hand, contemporary multispecies projects where architecture assumes the role of a mediator between human and nonhuman species. The analysis resulted in take-aways, meaning aspects that are essential to interspecies kinship and mediation. Those take-aways, as well as findings from the literature study were the grounds for defining *Making kin* tenets, which are the outcome of this section and are presented as a manifesto (Fig.44).

The *Making kin* tenets were then translated into design principles, that are listed page 44-45. These principles are meant to guide the design process and assure that the created spatial interventions encourage mutualistic relations between humans and pigeons in Brunnsparken.

Multispecies placemaking - page 47-60

In this step of the process, the design principles from the previous steps were combined with the intervention points identified throughout the context analysis to develop design strategies that are grounded in the context of this thesis. Four spatial interventions were then designed and iterated. The methods used were sketching and 3D modelling.

Process diagram

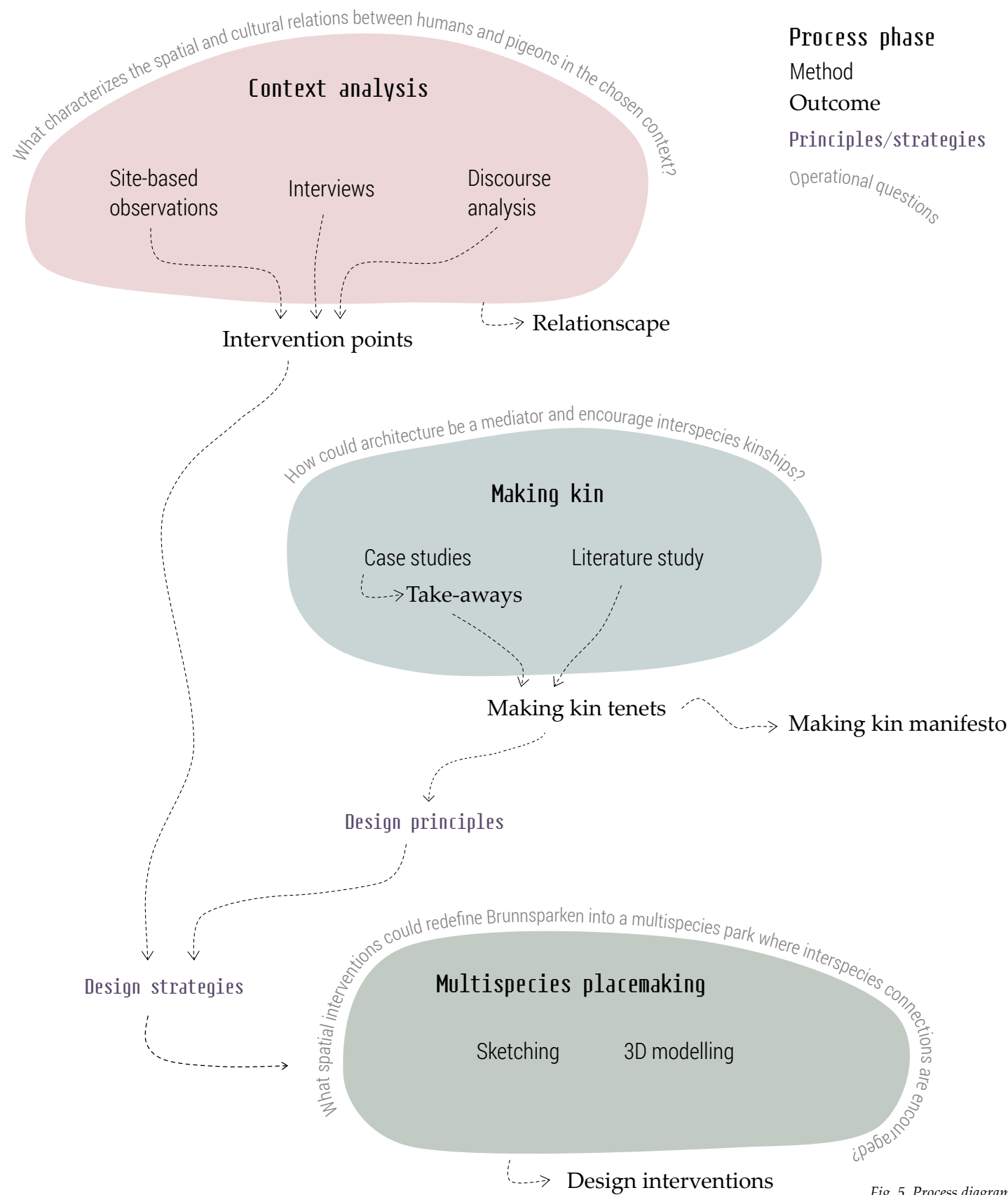


Fig. 5. Process diagram

Background

This section introduces the background in which the thesis is grounded. First, the theoretical landscape is presented, followed by facts about pigeons, and a presentation of the site and context.

Theoretical landscape

The three main concepts presented below form the theoretical and ethical framework that this thesis is built on.

More-than-human

More-than-human is all that is human, nonhuman, and everything in between. In architecture, more-than-human design is an approach that recognizes other species as co-inhabitants and co-creators of spaces. It challenges the nature/culture dichotomy and contradicts human-centred design practices (McGuirk, 2024). It encourages architects to shift perspective and dare to listen to voices that are commonly ignored, and to include them in the design process. In the words of the writer, artist and technologist James Bridle (2024), "More-than-human design is political, ethical and embodied. It matters, and it is mattering: it is fundamental to our co-construction of the world" (last paragraph). More-than-human thinking suggests a methodology that challenges architects to design beyond the human-centred worldview that is currently prominent in the architecture field. In practice, it implies considering the needs and interests of nonhumans and letting them influence the design process, in the same way as human needs and interests usually do. Imagination then plays an essential role in envisioning multispecies futures and being creative beyond the anthropocentric way of doing architecture (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2024).

Making kin

Making kin is building meaningful and caring connections across species, fostering mutual survival to sustain life together. Cross-species kinships, as encouraged by Donna Haraway (2016), are based on care and reciprocity and represent our best allies to meet the ecological crises and go on together on a damaged planet. Care is central in the pursuit of *Making kin*, as it is an essential element to build reciprocal relationships with nonhumans. The master's thesis *Rat-ical Justice* by D. Davis and L. Säfödal (2024) demonstrates how practices of care could change our relations with urban rats. The authors argue that "We must start with small acts of care, of compassion, driven by empathy and understanding" (p.74) in order to feel for the rats and consider them as equal urban cohabitants and take their needs into account while planning our cities.

Making kin also resonates with the concept of *Becoming with*, which implies a shift from human exceptionalism and the dualism of nature versus culture. It means to resituate humans in nature, recognizing the entanglement that exists between all beings and the accountability that comes with this relation (Doucet, 2022). It highlights the urgency to recognize that we are part of ecosystems

and that, "We become with each other or not at all." (Haraway, 2016, p.4).

In this thesis, *Making kin* is seen as the long-term aim of the project, as real connections take time to build and because Haraway's concept of kinship "emphasise[s] co-evolutionary and ongoing dynamics" (Desai & Smith, 2018, p.44). However, the concept guides the analysis and the design process, putting the focus on the relationship between pigeons and humans and investigating what positive aspects could be enhanced and which conflicts could be mitigated. *Making kin* with pigeons is about (re)connecting with the birds and sustaining an interspecies relation of care and reciprocity.

Symbiotic relations - mutualism

Symbiosis describes any relationship between two different organisms. There are four types of symbiotic relations: commensalism, competition, mutualism and parasitism. Commensalism is when one of the organisms benefits from the relation, while the other is not benefiting from it, but not harmed by it either. Competition describes a relation where there is a contest between organisms for resources, recognition or status. Mutualism has the highest degree of reciprocity and implies a relationship between organisms in which both species benefit from the association. Parasitism is the most harmful relation type, namely when one organism lives with, on, or in a host species, at the expense of the last (National Geographic Society, 2023). In the context of a more-than-human design approach, mutualism is a key concept. Multispecies design should strive for mutualistic relations, to make sure that no species is neglected in the design, and that all actors' needs and interests are considered. As James Bridle (2024) writes "To fully embrace the more-than-human, we must seek more than commensualism, and become mutualists, wherein our actions, and designs, become a form of reciprocal altruism. Under mutual relations, all participants benefit." (paragraph 17).

This thesis strives to reorient the human-pigeon relation towards a more mutualistic kind, as this type of symbiotic relation resonates with the concept of *Making kin*. Mutualism does not require that every individual gets something out of an interaction, but rather that the relationship between two species has positive implications for both, in the bigger picture. A. River Jackson (2024) writes about a Mutualistic design methodology that balances the needs of humans and nonhumans in the process of designing furniture, creating objects that benefit both target species. This is an example of how mutualism can be applied to the field of architecture and design that has inspired the interpretation of mutualism in this thesis.

Pigeons

The pigeons that can be observed in cities today, called feral pigeons, are descendants of the blue rock pigeons (*Columba Livia*) that were living on cliffs and nesting in crevasses or edges (Dobraszczyk, 2023). They live in cities as they now depend on humans to find food.

Historical companions

First kept as food, they became our agricultural partners when the fertilizing qualities of their droppings (called guano) were discovered. They were later bred for their homing abilities, which made them the perfect messengers, and competitors in the sport of pigeon racing. Through history, they were also our allies in wars, as dispatchers of encrypted messages or spies for reconnaissance missions, and guano, source of saltpetre, was used to produce gunpowder. Furthermore, they have been our collaborators in scientific studies, rescue missions at seas and art projects (Allen, 2009).

Homing abilities

Homing pigeons are domestic pigeons that have been selectively bred for their highly developed sense of direction. Thanks to a great memory and sensitivity to different smells and to the Earth's magnetic field, they can find their home from any location; an ability that has motivated humans to collaborate with them. This homing instinct, together with their high level of endurance, made them the perfect means for dispatching letters or encrypted messages during wars (Dobraszczyk, 2023). It also makes them great competitors in a sport called pigeon racing, where the birds are released from various distances and are timed to race back to their loft. Millions of people participate in the sport worldwide and in Sweden, several competitions are held every year, according to the Western Sweden Pigeon Racing Association (Västsvenska Brevduveförbundet, 2026).

Intelligence

Pigeons, contrary to popular beliefs, are very intelligent birds, and researchers estimate their cognitive abilities to be similar to those of 3-year-old human children. They can recognize faces and even remember which humans have treated them well or on the contrary, hurt them. A study by the Keio University team showed that they were able to differentiate between Monet and Picasso paintings, even in monochrome, and a research project by Donald Blough demonstrated that they could recognize the letters of the English alphabet (Allen, 2009). Moreover, they are one of few nonhuman species able to recognize themselves in a mirror (Haraway, 2016). Scientists, led by Richard Levenson from the University of California, have even trained pigeons to spot cancer cells, by distinguishing microscope images of cancerous and non-cancerous tissue. As a flock, pigeons reached similar accuracy as professional pathologists (Bohannon, 2015).



Fig. 6. Pigeon on a bench in Brunnsparken, Gothenburg.

"Stringfoot"

Feral pigeons spend most of their time in squares or avenues, close to humans and the food that they accidentally drop or deliberately give away. However, being close to humans is both a blessing and a curse for the birds. As pigeons walk a lot, hair and threads from clothes get tangled around their feet, cutting off the blood circulation and leading in the worst case to the loss of toes or feet (Stringfoot Pigeon Help, n.d.).

Biological and social facts

Pigeons mate for life, or at least have the same partner as long as it is alive. They share parental duties and both males and females produce crop milk to feed their young. They are very social birds that live in flocks and enjoy hanging with each other. They lay two eggs at a time and can reproduce several times a year (SVT, 2024). Pigeons have specific mating rituals, where one partner does a little "dance", spinning around and cooing. If they manage to impress the other partner, they will engage in a "pigeon kiss", where they rub their beaks and give each other pigeon milk. Contrary to what many urban dwellers assume, pigeons are very clean birds, bathing daily (Allen, 2009). They also have very good vision and can almost see at a 360-degree angle. They see more colours than we do and researchers suspect that they can see ultraviolet light.

Summary

Pigeons are social, smart and clean birds who are stigmatized by prejudices that are most of the time not justified. Their past companionship with humans, today often ignored, has left a mark in their behaviour, and the breeding of their ancestors has influenced the abilities observed in current-day pigeons.

Historical timeline of pigeon-human companionship

The history of pigeons and humans has been intertwined since the beginning of their domestication, that is estimated to 3000 BC (Allen, 2009), or even as early as 10, 000 years ago (Peplow Powell, 2023). This timeline summarizes the companionship that has existed between the two species through highlighting collaborations, milestones, and turning points in their relationship. The sources used to create this timeline are the book *Pigeon* (Allen, 2009) and the *Secret World of Pigeons* timeline made by CBC-radio Canada (CBC, n.d.).



Fig. 7. Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) (*Birds of Gilgit-Baltistan*, 2024). CC-BY-SA-2.0



Fig. 10. A pigeon leaves a trench, His Majesty's Pigeon Service (*BiblioArchive/LibraryArchives*, 1917). CC-BY-2.0



Fig. 12. 1978-83 Project Sea Hunt (USCG Historian's Office, n.d.). Public Domain

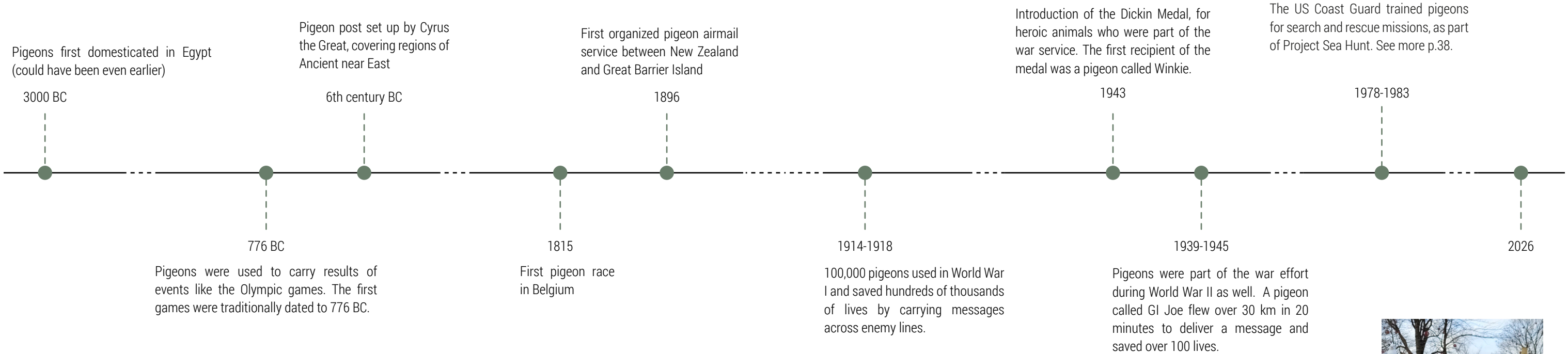


Fig. 8. House of the Faun, mosaic floor, Pompeii (Raddato, 2014). CC-BY-SA-2.0



Fig. 9. Great Barrier Island Pigeon-Gram stamp 1899 (Great Barrier Pigeongram Agency, 1899). Public Domain



Fig. 11. GI Joe Pigeon (United States Department of Defense, 2012). Public Domain



Fig. 13. Feral pigeon in Brunnsparken, Gothenburg (2026)

Site & context

This project focuses on Brunnsparken, a dynamic park located in the centre of Gothenburg, Sweden. Brunnsparken is a crucial hub in the public transport network of the city, strategically situated in proximity to the central station and one of Sweden's largest shopping centres, Nordstan. This location results in a constant movement of people going between tram stops and in and out of the mall. However, despite the significant flow of people walking through Brunnsparken every day, few are using it as an actual park, sitting, meeting with friends or playing.

Pigeons are also fervent users of the space, and Brunnsparken counts as one of Gothenburg's most famous pigeon spots. The birds do not nest in the park; however, they spend most of their day there, pecking on the ground looking for food, and socializing. They presumably nest on the surrounding buildings, as the concrete structures resemble the cliffs they were originally nesting on (Allen, 2009).

In 2017, the city of Gothenburg did an assessment of Brunnsparken, which then laid the ground for its restructuring, that was completed in 2020. The focus of the renovation was to improve the sense of safety and making the place more attractive so that people would spend more time enjoying the park, instead of just walking through (Park- och naturförvalningen, 2017). The spatial improvements

included laying a hard ground surface for better rainwater draining, removing the kiosks that were obstructing the view from outside of the park, changing the tree arrangement to get a lighter environment, creating a better structure and walking paths with flower beds, and adding varied sitting spaces, says E. Sjögren, a landscape architect working on the renovation (personal communication, February 23, 2026). The last addition to Brunnsparken was a small café, run by Viktors Kaffe, which opened in the beginning of 2026, introducing an additional reason for people to spend more time in the park.

This location was chosen for its lively and dynamic character and the abundance of pigeons visiting the site daily. Additionally, the fact that it is called "park" is an interesting aspect, as it is not a place where people intentionally go to spend time, but mostly stop by on their way to the public transport stops or the mall. The central location of the park could also give a potential project more visibility, as well as the fact that most of Gothenburg's residents have a relation to Brunnsparken.

The main actors at the site, that this thesis focuses on, are the human and nonhuman users of the park, the city of Gothenburg Urban Environment department (Stadsmiljöförvaltningen) and Viktors Kaffe.



Fig. 14. Brunnsparken, Gothenburg.

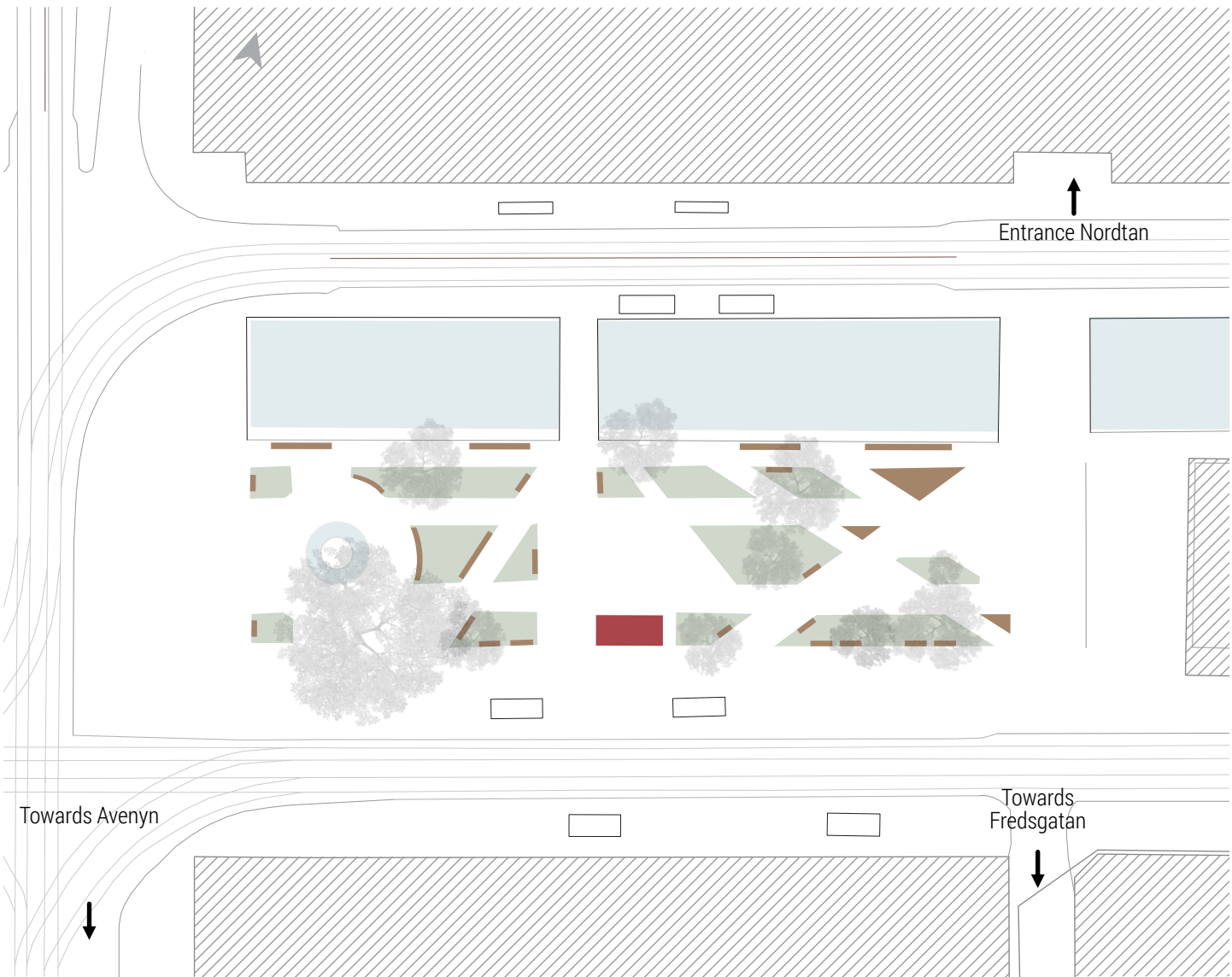


Fig. 15. Site plan of Brunnsparken, Gothenburg. Scale 1:700.

- Water
- Flower beds
- Benches
- Café
- Bus stops
- Buildings

Context analysis

The aim of this section was to understand how people and pigeons use the space, and how their relation influences and is influenced by the built environment at the site. Through site-based observations, interviews and discourse analysis, the physical and cultural context of the site were studied. Each method resulted in the identification of intervention points that are listed throughout this section, and a relationscape was produced to illustrate the complex relations at the site. The intervention points are either positive observations that should be enhanced, or conflict elements that should be mitigated, and are the base for the development of the design interventions.

Site-based observations

Site-based observations were conducted at seven different occasions, through walking in the park and taking the time to sit and observe pigeons and humans. As Anna Tsing suggests in an interview with Justin McGuirk for The Observatory Journal (McGuirk, 2024b), *the art of noticing* was used as a tool to study pigeons- and humans - at the site, by slowing down and paying attention to specific encounters and interactions and observing with an open mind. The aim was to understand what humans and pigeons do in Brunnsparken, how they move and use the space, and what spatial

elements influence their behaviours, facilitate interspecies interactions or are the source of conflicts.

The observations were documented through notetaking, plan annotating and photography. The results are presented in the form of an inventory (Fig. 16-23) to present the built elements mentioned in this chapter, an observation map (Fig. 24) to illustrate the monitored flows and spatial dynamics, as well as pictures and notes (page 24-25) to show the witnessed social behaviours and activities.

Table 1. Observation data

Observation nr	Date	Time	Temperature	Weather	Pigeon activity	Human activity
1	2025-10-08	15.15-16.00	14	Sun, wind	High	High
2	2026-01-30	10.30-11.30	-2 (feels -8)	Dry, wind, clouds	Very high	Low
3	2026-02-05	10.30-11.00	-4 (feels -8)	Dry, wind, sun	Medium	Medium
4	2026-02-19	13.00-13.30	-2	Dry, cloud, wind	Low	Low
5	2026-03-08	15.45	6	Rain	Very low	Very low
6	2026-03-26	14.30-15.30	7	Puddles, wind, sun	Very high	Very high
7	2026-03-31	16.00-17.15	10	Dry, sun, wind	Very high	Very high

General observations

Pigeon and human activity seem to be correlated, which is consistent with the fact that pigeons are usually found around humans, as it is their best opportunity to find food (SVT, 2024). The time of the day and the weather influence quite a lot the amount of people and pigeons present at the site. During the night and heavy rains, no humans and almost no pigeons are observed in the park, and sun is the factor that seems to bring most visitors to the site.

Nature is contained in the flower beds, and the rest of the park is covered with hard ground. This shows the city's efforts to incorporate natural elements in urban spaces while confining it in specific areas, in a way that can easily be maintained and controlled. Defining such boundaries between nature and the built environment strengthen the categorization of pigeons as "out of place" in urban spaces, as they are seen as unpredictable critters that do not fit in the planned and controlled natural environment of the city (Jerolmack, 2008).

The city of Gothenburg's strategies to deal with birds in public spaces can be observed in Brunnsparken in the form of spikes and feeding ban signs. Although pigeons are resilient and still manage to appropriate spaces like trees and benches, the elements we build in response to their presence in public spaces testify of our attitude towards them and of the city's efforts to keep them out of the spaces that they are not considered to belong to (Hwang, 2013). Design elements like bird spikes and feeding ban signs become evidence of an anthropocentric vision and planning of urban spaces.

Inventory of built elements in Brunnsparken



Fig. 16. Feeding ban sign.



Fig. 20. Fountain.



Fig. 17. Bench.



Fig. 21. Trees.



Fig. 18. Flower bed.



Fig. 22. Bird spikes.



Fig. 19. Viktors kaffe.



Fig. 23. Viktors kaffe's outdoor serving area.

Observation map

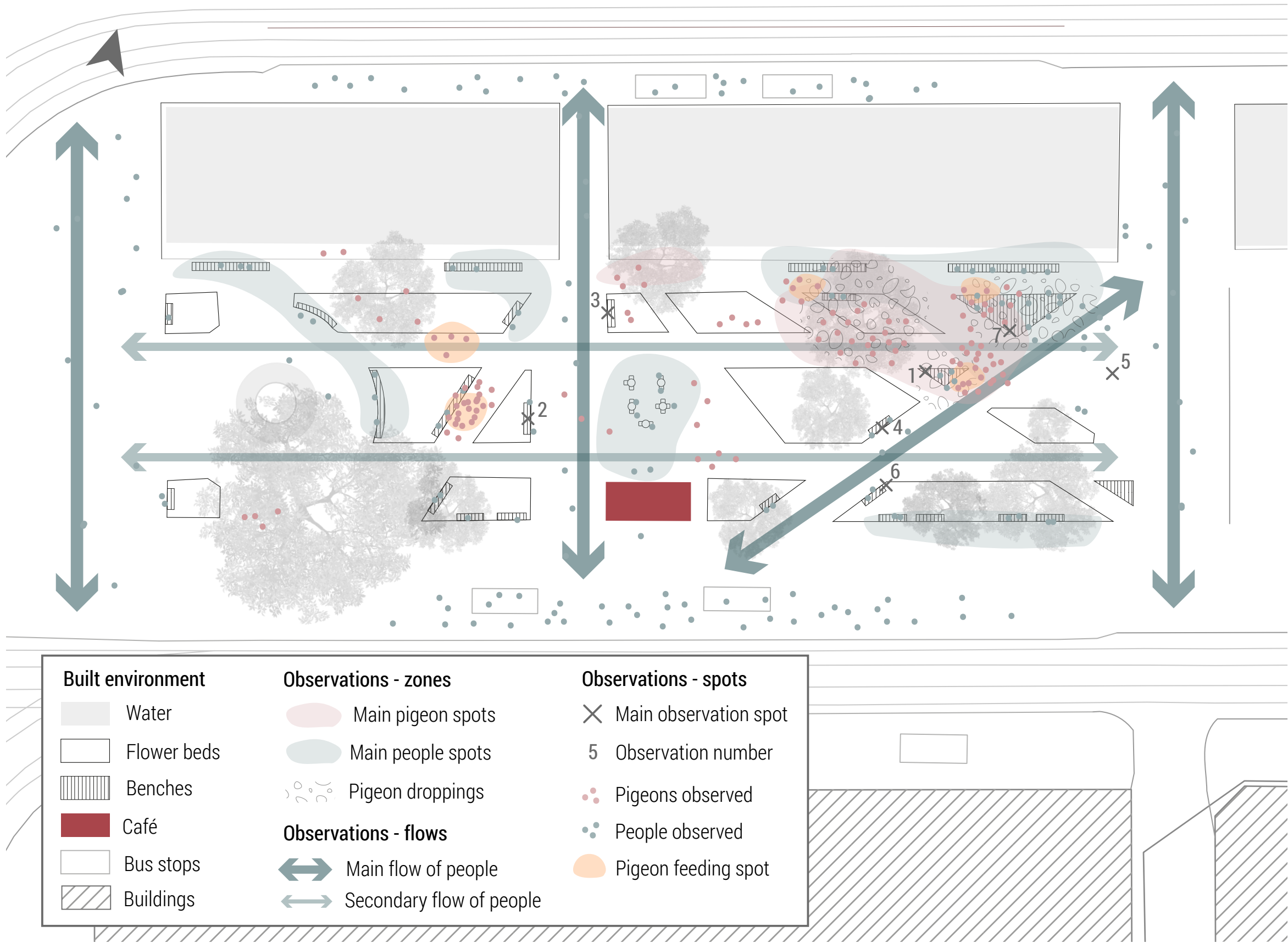


Fig. 24. Plan showing the results of the observations - scale 1:350.

Spatial observations

The flower beds, as intended, guide the movement through the park, creating clear paths that both humans and pigeons follow, as the birds mostly walk on the ground, and only fly when they sense danger or need to get to a food spot fast.

Most of the humans visiting the park are only walking through. However, the newly opened café seems to change the dynamic of the place, and occasional performances in the park create an attraction worth staying for a somewhat longer period. The people who stay in the park are essentially sitting on the triangle shaped benches or on the benches integrated into the flower beds. At the periphery of the park, people stand still, waiting for buses and trams.

Pigeons often stay together in bigger groups. When they are not wandering around, they rest on one of the trees, or on the ground close to the benches.

People feed pigeons in proximity of benches, and this is also where most of pigeon droppings are observed. The most active area is the same for both species, showing that our activities on site are intertwined.

Conclusion

The positive interactions with pigeons happen essentially when humans are sitting, or when bird feeders give them food, while in motion, the relation between the two species is not as positive. People walking too close to pigeons scares them and forces them to scatter, and pigeons flying too close to people's faces provokes fear reactions in many of the observed humans. However, the benches are subject to conflicts, as they often are covered in pigeon droppings, making them less comfortable for humans to sit on. As the specific area that is the most pigeon and human dense is also the area where most conflicts happen, it could be concluded that interactions between the two species cannot take place without conflicts at the current site and context, confirming the need for an interspecies mediator.

Activities



Fig. 25. Pigeons drinking and bathing.



Fig. 26. A pigeon taking shelter from the wind.



Fig. 27. Pigeons kissing.



Fig. 28. Pigeons eating.

Pigeon watching

I observed pigeons at the site at different dates and times of the day. Here is what I noticed:

- Pigeons spend time in Brunnsparcken during the day, but at night they go elsewhere.
- The weather influences what pigeons do during the day. When it rains, they are less present in the park and sit more in trees and under benches. When the sun is out, they sit on the ground, benches and flower beds. They seem to enjoy sunbathing.
- They use the angled edges of the flower beds as a wind shelter.
- Most of the time, they walk around in the park and peck at the ground looking for food. I also saw them doing so in the flower beds several times. When someone comes and gives them food, they all gather and fervently eat.
- After the rain, they seem to enjoy bathing and drinking from rain puddles. I wonder if they also do so in the fountain when it is filled with water during spring and summer.
- They flirt a lot. I observed countless mating rituals - the male spinning around, like "dancing" in front of the female, wiping his tail on the ground and making a specific sound, that I could recognize from the SVT documentary Duvornas Revansch (SVT, 2024). Most of them were unsuccessful, but sometimes, it works! The pigeons on the left presumably just became life bond partners, as they engage in a "pigeon kiss" where they rub their beaks together and the female feeds the male from her beak (Allen, 2009).
- For short distances, they seem to prefer walking rather than flying, but they will fly right up if they sense danger.
- They have a favourite tree, where they like to rest on branches. At most I have counted 30 of them in this tree at the same time.
- I estimate their number to be around 60 in total on the days with the most activity.



Fig. 29. Humans passing by the park.



Fig. 30. Humans sitting on benches.



Fig. 31. A human feeding pigeons.



Fig. 32. Humans eating and drinking at the café.

People watching

I observed people at the site at different dates and times of the day. Here is what I noticed:

- The main activity that humans do in Brunnsparcken is sitting on benches, whether it is while waiting for someone or for public transportation, talking with each other, drinking coffee or eating ice cream. There is not so much else to do there.
- I saw at least one person feeding pigeons during each observation session. When I asked a woman why, she answered that they need food. I could see that she cared.
- A man was playing music one day, and many people were sitting and listening to him. A woman started to dance, and everyone smiled.
- The mood of the park varies a lot depending on weather conditions. When the sun is out, the park comes to life and many people are sitting and enjoying the place, but when it rains, as well as when it is dark, there is no one sitting in the park at all. However, there always seems to be people walking by, no matter the weather or time of the day.
- Humans are not so often showing signs of hatred towards pigeons, even if I have seen a few. They mostly avoid them because of what seems to be fear.
- I saw many humans looking at pigeons while sitting on benches, and commenting on their behaviour, or laughing when they do something that is perceived as funny or cute.
- Humans pass by Brunnsparcken and sometimes stay for a while, but they do not seem to come specifically to the park.

Activities

Conclusion
Pigeons spend more time in Brunnsparken than most humans, but their respective activities are somewhat similar. Both species visit the park to rest, socialize, eat and drink. The weather influences their presence in the same way, the park being almost empty on rainy days. An important difference, however, is that humans do not seem to come specifically to the park but rather stop by while running errands in the surrounding areas, while pigeons are there intentionally. Thus, design interventions that give humans a reason to come specifically to Brunnsparken could be relevant.
From a more-than-human perspective, these observations show that pigeons are users of the park and should be considered as such. The fact that both species spend their time in the park in similar ways offers possibilities for multispecies encounters where a common activity would bring them closer. This activity could be related to the ones already practiced - rest, socialize, eat and drink - or new activities that are commonly present in parks. Moreover, the observed human behaviours were not as negative as expected towards pigeons, which makes multispecies design interventions seem like a concept that could be welcomed and enjoyed.

Intervention points

Rest, socialize, eat and drink
Reason for humans to visit the park

Maintenance

Email conversations with planning and operation managers at Stadsmiljöförvaltningen, Utemiljöer och stadsliv (Urban Environment, Outdoor space and city life) department of the city of Gothenburg provided an insight in the maintenance routines of Brunnsparken.
The park is heavily visited and thus regularly cleaned. The built elements need to be frequently washed due to bird droppings, leading to more wear and tear, especially on the wooden benches (E.-B. Kourtev, personal communication, April 9, 2026). The efforts to preserve the built environment from forces of nature are reflected in our maintenance routines (Hwang, 2013). This becomes evident when traces of animal presence, in this case pigeon droppings, are seen as repulsive. The division of nature and culture is once again visible in Brunnsparken, in the way the city's cleanliness is opposed to the assumed dirtiness of pigeons.

Intervention points

High maintenance

A matter of perspective

The perspective of the different actors of the site were gathered, focusing on their relation to pigeons. A formal interview with the landscape architect in charge of the recent restructuring of Brunnsparken revealed the perspective of the city and its priorities during the planning process. Informal interviews with bird feeders and commuters, and conversations with Thomas Laurien, a designer and professor at HDK Valand and more-than-human expert, and Ulrika Jansson, curator and artist exploring multispecies coexistence, provided other narratives. Finally, an article from a local newspaper gave insights in Viktors Kaffe's perspective.

In the assessment done by the city of Gothenburg in 2017, it is mentioned that visitors had complained about bird droppings that made the park dirty and uninviting (Park- och naturförvaltningen, 2017). However, the birds' perspective has not been considered during the restructuring, except for deterrent measures like spikes and signs stating that bird feeding is prohibited in the park (E. Sjögren, personal communication, February 23, 2026). People feeding birds in Brunnsparken risk being fined and the action is described by the manager of Viktors Kaffe as the largest source of conflict in the park (Ullman, 2026).

Didn't we get it all wrong when we criminalize practices of care?
As expressed by Thomas Laurien, our love for pigeons is still alive in some people, like a heritage of our past companionship (Personal communication, March 12, 2026). Bird feeders are an example of that, alike the independent organisation Fågelcentralen and its volunteers who assist injured birds in and around Gothenburg, or the "de-stringers" mentioned by James Peplow Powell in *Dovecote for London* (2023, p.103), going around and helping pigeons to get untangled from the threads that constrict their feet. Then perhaps it could be argued that the city of Gothenburg penalizes one of the few civil practices of care towards pigeons that can be observed at Brunnsparken.

In 2017, the city of Gothenburg experimented with a campaign against littering using humans' empathy for pigeons as a motivation. Signs humorously stating that pigeons are trying to quit smoking were installed to incite people to throw their cigarette ends in boxes instead of on the ground, and showed successful results (Expressen, 2018). It is interesting that in this context, the city could recognize the empathy people have for pigeons as a positive thing, as opposed to the measures taken against bird feeders.

Thomas Laurien and Ulrika Jansson both worked on a project in Frihamnen, Gothenburg, called the Conference of the Birds, that was part of a bigger project in the Nordic countries. For the Swedish Nest (branch of the project) in Gothenburg curated by Ulrika Jansson, the perspective of the birds living in Frihamnen was the focus. Through participatory workshops, art installations, and conversations, experts, artists, and the public explored interspecies coexistence in urban environments. A documentary film made by Ulrika Jansson and Kristina Meiton, called *The city with a bird's eye view*, documented the process and highlights the sensory workshops and experiences which were meant to deepen the participants' emotional connection and understanding of birds in cities (The Conference of The Birds, 2023). Ulrika mentions the importance of empathy and encourages humans to consider the perspectives of nonhumans. She argues that it is crucial to share spaces with birds in cities, but that it is not enough to feel that we must share these spaces, we need to feel that we want to (Personal communication, February 26, 2026).

Thomas Laurien, together with Kennet Öhlund conducted the participatory workshop *The council of all beings* (The Conference of The Birds, 2023). This exercise is based on embodiment and invites each participant to research facts about a given species and explore the area with the eyes of the nonhumans. After combining the findings and feelings, the participant becomes a representative for the nonhuman species during a multispecies council. The aim is to challenge the human-centred view of a site through seeing things from a more-than-human angle.

Conclusion
The way we choose to see a problem and whose perspective we choose to take on when trying to solve it matter. As Donna Haraway writes, "It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories." (2016, p.12). Bird feeding is a response-able act and maybe if we were willing to see things from pigeons' perspective or bird feeders' perspective, we would be able to design urban spaces that encourage and facilitate multispecies harmonic coexistence and mutualism.

Intervention points

Shift perspective
Practices of care penalized

Social discourse

Pigeons were not always considered as pests. C. Jerolmack (2008) went through *The New York Times* articles from 1851 to 2006, analysing the city's discourse and trying to figure out when and why pigeons started to be labelled as pests. He noticed that the discourse started to change in the 1930s, and by the end of the 20th century, the phrase *rats with wings** was well established. He states that a factor influencing this shift was the modern city definition and its ambition to have clear boundaries between nature and culture. Thus, "The catch phrase "rats with wings" neatly summarizes society's evaluations of, and anxieties about, this bird. This metaphor reflects a framing of pigeons by claims-makers that renders them out of place in the cityscape" (Jerolmack, 2008, p.72). Municipalities, media and pest control industry have all contributed to spreading the metaphor in the public discourse, which became furtherly negative by the discovery in the 1950s that pigeons could spread diseases. The fear of pigeons transmitting diseases to humans is still very common today, although this occurs on a very rare basis (Weyrather, 2021, p.29).

Inspired by C. Jerolmack's (2008) investigation, the current local discourse was analysed through interviews and study of Gothenburg municipality's and private actors' communication. Analysing the way pigeons are described and what vocabulary is used revealed the impact the discourse has on the relation between humans and pigeons in the context of Gothenburg. The results are illustrated in Fig. 33 in a collage of the different actors' communications and analysed page 30.

The student housing company SGS sent a message to all tenants titled "Information for residents with balconies - preventive measures against pigeons" and consisting of tips for keeping the birds from nesting on balconies (SGS, Personal communication, January 29, 2026). Like the feeding ban in Brunnsparke, those measures are justified by what is described as a need to avoid issues with pigeons. In the case where those measures are not sufficient, the city's advice is to contact the pest control company Anticimex, which webpage dedicated to pigeons is titled "varför är duvor ett problem" (why are pigeons a problem) (Anticimex, 2025).

*The translated expression "flygande råttor" is also used in Sweden, for example in an article from the website Gör det Själv (2025).

The local newspaper Göteborgs Posten published an article titled "Fåglarna tar över Brunnsparke – kaféet i kamp mot matarna" (Birds are taking over Brunnsparke – the café in battle with the feeders) including quotes from an interview with the site manager of Viktors Kaffe (Ullman, 2026). The article is about "aggressive birds" disturbing the café's guests and how the staff tries to hinder people from feeding birds in the park daily. When reading the text, it seems obvious that the problematic birds are seagulls, as they are known for stealing food from people's hands and adopting aggressive behaviours. However, of all the pictures chosen to illustrate the article, none is showing a seagull - only pigeons are represented. The introduction of the article is also worth studying, and is the following:

"Trots att det är förbjudet matas fåglarna i Brunnsparke flera gånger om dagen. Havregryn hålls ut på marken och duvorna blir allt mer närgångna.

- Jag tror inte att folk förstår vilket problem det här är, säger Alma Wennerblom, platschef på Viktors Kaffe i Brunnsparke." (Ullman, 2026).

In English (own translation):

"Despite it being prohibited, birds in Brunnsparke are fed several times a day. Oatmeal is spread on the ground, and pigeons are becoming more and more intrusive.

- I don't think people understand how big of a problem this is, says Alma Wennerblom, site manager for Viktors Kaffe in Brunnsparke."

The introduction seems to imply that pigeons are the mentioned problem. Nonetheless, when reading the entire article, it is disclosed that the quote from Alma Wennerblom is not about pigeons specifically, as suggested here, but about 'aggressive birds', the species not being mentioned.

General conversations with classmates and friends tend to confirm that people often associate pigeons with seagulls and thus blaming pigeons for the aggressive behaviours some seagulls can demonstrate. Pigeons are also described as being dirty and 'in the way', but even when asking following questions, the reason behind those accusations are not articulated.

Varför är duvor ett problem?

som skuggig på grund av trädens kronor vår- och sommartid och ofräsch då råttor och duvor är en sanitär olägenhet på platsen. För att kunna utveckla Brunnsparke till ett tryggt och välkomnande park och hållplats-rum i staden

keep an eye on your balcony and visit it regularly. Pigeons generally avoid places where there is activity.

Tips to reduce the risk of nesting on the balcony:

- Check the balcony regularly and protected areas.
- Pay extra attention to furniture, debris and crannies.

Mata inte fåglarna

Fåglar bajsar där de äter, vilket gör platsen otrevlig att vistas på. Mat som lämnas på marken lockar också till sig råttor. Att lämna mat på marken klassas som nedskräpning och kan medföra böter.



väldigt snabbt problemet kvarstår med aggressiva fåglar och fågelspilling.
Skyddsakt är bara en extremt alternativt, väldigt svårt att utföra just på Brunnsparke. Men har utförts undantagsfall för att komma åt problemfåglarna.

DO NOT FEED THE BIRDS

Information for residents with balconies – preventive measures against pigeons

Jan 29, 2026 08:49 - May 29, 2026 23:59

This message has been automatically translated.

We would like to draw the attention of those of you who have balconies to the fact that there are pigeons that are established in the area. Pigeons are birds that like to return to the same place year after year to build a nest and brood, which makes them difficult to get rid of once they have established themselves.

UNCLEAN

göteborgsstad duvor

Göteborgs Stad
https://goteborg.se › ... › Problem med djur i staden

Störande fåglar

Använd fröautomater och fågelbord som är anpassade för sm mata duvor och måsar. Lägg inte brödsmlur och fågelfrö direkt ...

Göteborgs Stad
https://goteborg.se › wps › portal

Åtgärder mot störande fåglar - Företag och or Vänd dig till ett företag som arbetar med skadedjursbekämpni och specialutrustning för att kunna klättra på branta tak och ...

olagligt att mata fåglarna, utan också förklara varför. Fåglarna matas flera gånger om dagen, har blivit skadedjur och drar till sig råttor.

By acting early, we can together make it more difficult for pigeons to build nests on the property and cause inconvenience.

KEEPING BIRDS AWAY

Fågelmatning gör att platsen fylls av fåglar som skitar ner och gör platsen ogästvänlig. Förbudsskyltar verkar inte vara en fungerande lösning.

UNINVITING

CONCERN

Duvor är uppskattade i naturen, men i våra städer kan de skapa en del bekymmer. Ett av de största problemen är att deras frätande avföring orsakar skador på fasader, tak och bilar. Spillningen och fåglarnas bomaterial kan också täppa till stuprör, hängrännor, ventilation och skorstenar, och då ökar risken för fuktskador i våra byggnader.

Fig. 33. Discourse collage.

The image above is made by the author, using print screens from: Anticimex (2025) Park- och naturförvaltningen (2017, p.15) Google search (2026) SGS (Personal communication, January 29, 2026) Ullman (2026) Xavier de Maupeou dAbleiges (Personal communication, April 8, 2026) White Arkitekter & Göteborgs stad (2022)

A more detailed reference list for this illustration can be found on page 73.

Discourse analysis

The most prominent finding is that the vocabulary used to describe pigeons in the local discourse is the one of risk, trouble and threat. It suggests that measures should be taken, whether they are preventive or reactive. It also problematizes pigeons in a way that is disproportionate to the actual risks. Moreover, the discourse is negative towards practices of care such as bird feeding, placing food at the centre of the municipality and the café's conflict with the birds and bird feeders.

The words characterizing pigeons were sorted in three categories. In purple, the terms related to problem, describing pigeons as annoying and disturbing, that are causing trouble and require action. The words in red remind of dirtiness, depicting pigeons as a sanitary hazard making the park messy and unwelcoming. Finally, the terms in green evoke a risk or a threat that must be prevented and that buildings must be protected from.

By framing pigeons as disturbing dirty threats, the local actors influence people's opinion and attitude towards them and participate in reinforcing stereotypes about pigeons that are not correct. For instance, the birds are described as dirty, when in reality they clean themselves a lot and present a very low risk of transmitting diseases. A lack of knowledge about pigeons could be one of the elements leading to such a negative discourse. In its turn, this could be the reason why people have trouble explaining why they do not like pigeons. In the same way as when *New York Times* readers were told how to discourage pigeons from coming to their feeders with no other reason given than the metaphor *rats with wings* (Jerolmack, 2008, p. 81), Brunnsparken visitors are being influenced by the general negative discourse without knowing exactly what facts it is grounded on. Perhaps learning about the birds would incite humans to develop more empathy for them and could challenge the misconceptions that are being spread in the communications.

This discourse, mainly influenced by the nature/culture divide and an anthropocentric worldview, reveals the local actors' lack of consideration for nonhumans. As Barbara Allen (2009) writes "The terms we use define and judge us, rather than the magnificent, yet humble, rock pigeon." (p. 194). Pigeons are problematized also because of what they represent. Their liminality challenges the nature/culture divide, and their unpredictability defies the idea of controlled urban environments. As stated by Jerolmack (2008), "the way the West problematizes pigeons exposes culturally derived modernist conceptions of proper, morally appropriate, spatial relations between animals and society." (p73). Thus, the way pigeons are described in the discourse reveals more about the authors of the analysed texts, than about pigeons themselves.



Visual answer to the discourse



Fig. 34. Collage about bird feeding practices being banned in Brunnsparken.

Are pigeons really the dirty ones? Are pigeons really the dirty ones?



Fig. 35. Pictures of trash found at Brunnsparken.

Relationscape

A relationscape at Brunnsparken illustrates the complex relations between the different actors at the site. This representation method is inspired by the relationscapes made by Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée for their project ECObox, as described by Doina Petrescu (2012). Here, the entanglement between human and bird species, institutions, and the built environment are made visible revealing social, cultural and decisional relationships. Through identifying which and how actors influence and affect others, the power dynamics at the site can be better understood, and the transformative potential of a new spatial intervention can be explored.

The yellow lines represent a decisional power, or agency. It implies that one actor in the relationship has the possibility to make changes at an institutional level or in a systematic way to influence the other.

The red lines picture conflicts between actors. The conflicts can have been expressed, for example during interviews, or observed at the site. A relation is illustrated as conflictual when at least one of the actors is suffering from it. The red lines are the relations that could need mediation to potentially be transformed into more mutualistic relations.

The white lines represent maintenance relations.

The green lines show beneficial interrelations. This implies that at least one of the actors involved benefit from the relationship. These relations could be commensualistic or mutualistic.

Conclusion

It is easy to assume that pigeons in Brunnsparken only relate to the seeds that bird feeders offer them and the trees they sit on. By studying the interrelations at the site, it becomes evident that the reality is more intricate than that. It is also worth mentioning that this relationscape is somewhat simplified, and every interrelation contains several nuanced layers of affect. While some human park users seem to enjoy watching pigeons and do not have a negative attitude towards them, others despise the birds and consider them a dirty nuisance hindering them from enjoying their time in the park. The relations that were identified as conflictual and that could potentially be improved by new multispecies spatial interventions are the ones of pigeons with: human park users, Viktors Kaffe, the city of Gothenburg, and maintenance workers. Additionally, the conflicts between bird feeders and the city of Gothenburg could also use mediation.

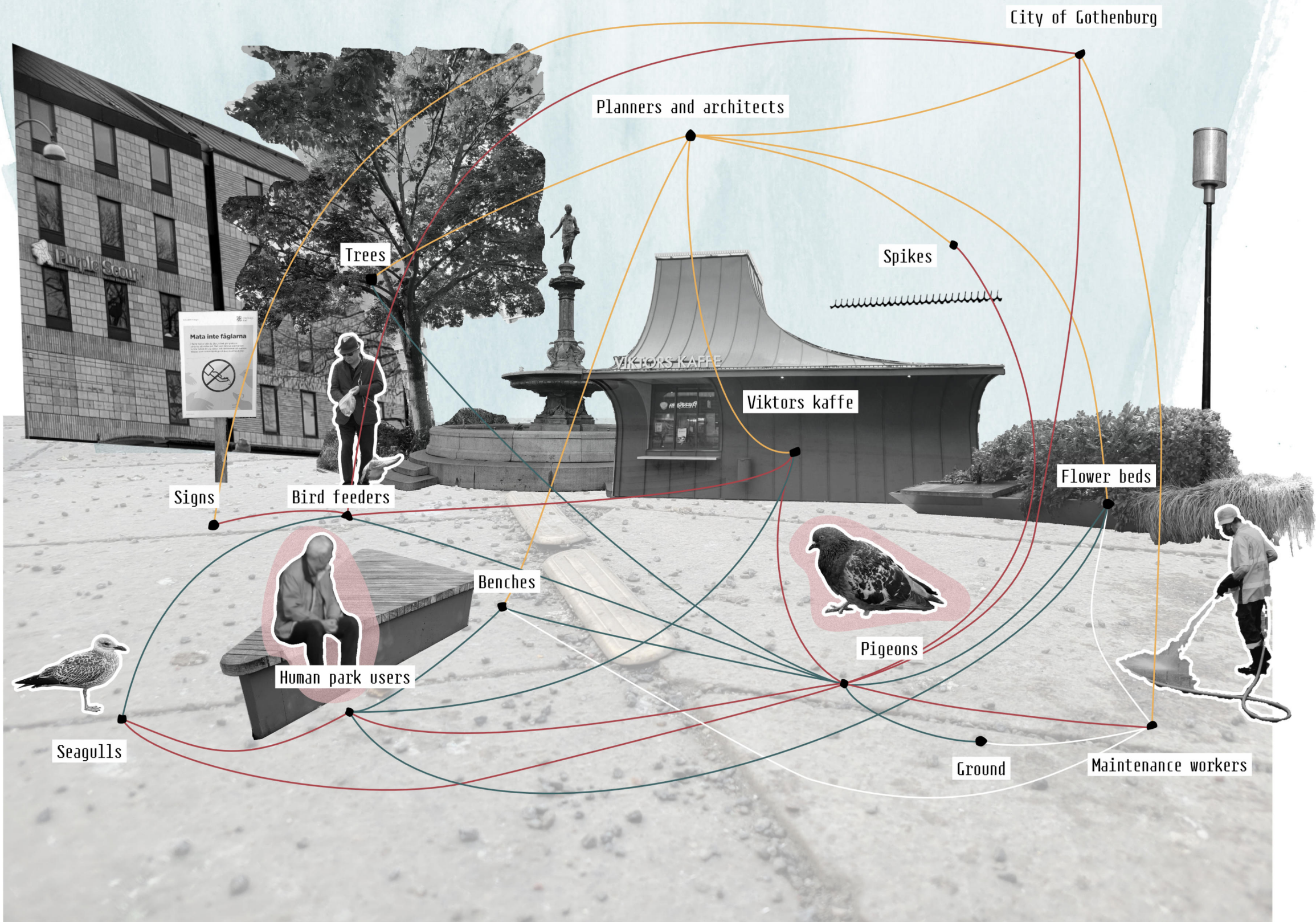


Fig. 36. Relationscape for Brunnsparken

Conclusion of context analysis

Pigeons and humans are already coexisting in the park. However, their relationship is negatively influenced by human misconceptions about pigeons, and by a built environment designed to exclude them.

Pigeons are stigmatized by a discourse that portrays them as dirty, and as a threat to the built environment of public spaces. This is reflected in the spatial and social conflicts observed at Brunnsparken. From the municipality taking preventive and reactive measures against them to Viktors Kaffe efforts to discourage people from feeding birds in the park, all with the argument that pigeons are disturbing the visitors of the park. James Peplow Powell (2023) writes, based on the anthropologist Mary Douglas' definition of dirt as 'matter out of place', that "pigeons, too, have become dirty: a species out of place." (p.107). The birds are not considered as co-users of the park, but rather as a risk that does not belong in public spaces.

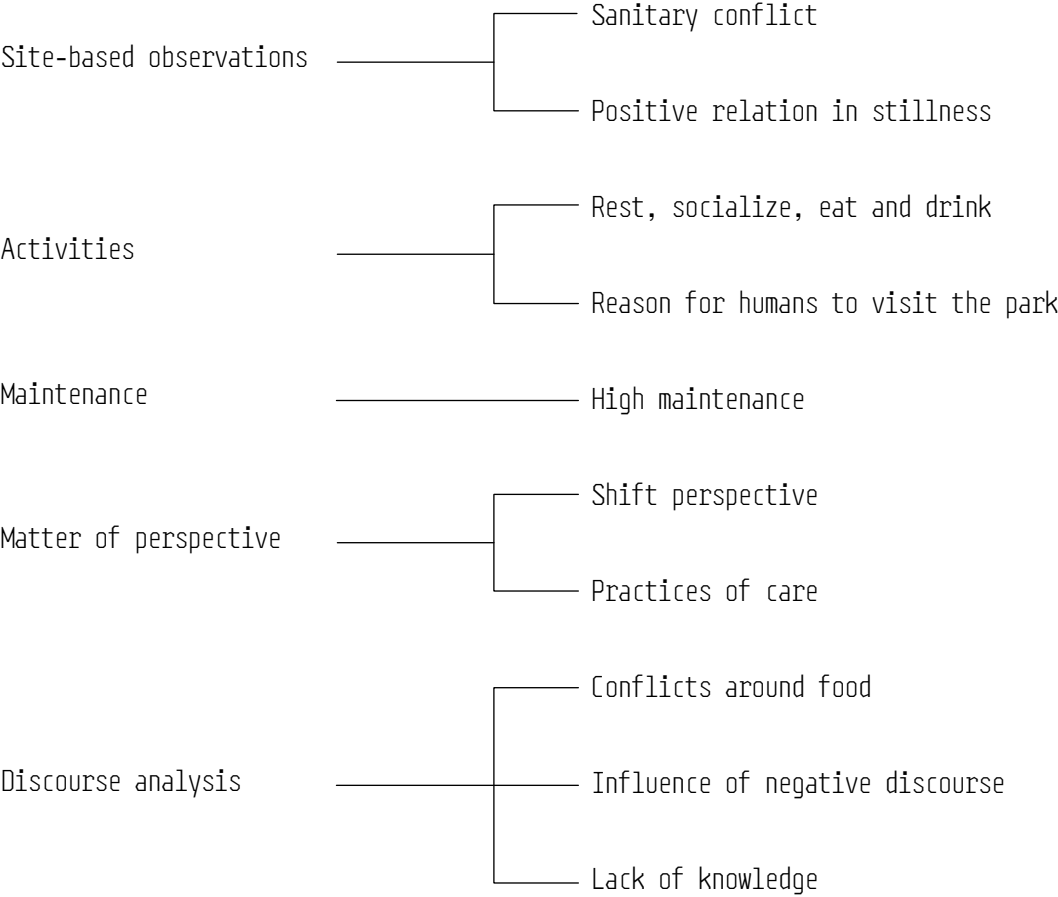
In general, the city of Gothenburg does not appear to have developed strategies to deal with the issues of birds in public spaces, apart from trying to deter and exclude them from those spaces. However, E. Sjögren (personal communication, February 23, 2026) mentions that designing public spaces is about mediating between groups and their different interests and needs, and even though the projects she has worked on so far did not include nonhuman actors in the equation, she seems somewhat open to hear about different approaches and perspectives.

Practices of care like bird feeding could be observed at the site, and many visitors were spotted smiling at pigeons, seemingly enjoying their presence in the park. All things considered, Brunnsparken shows some potential in becoming a multispecies park where pigeons and humans co-exist in harmony, and where mutualistic relations are built. Like in Juan-les-Pins, the park could then be a place that people visit with the intention to spend time with pigeons.

Summary of intervention points

Context analysis

What calls for a response?



Making kin

The aim of this process phase was to identify principles for making kin with nonhumans. Through a study of the historical companionship between humans and pigeons and how it influenced our way to design, and an analysis of contemporary multispecies projects following a more-than-human approach, combined with literature study, Making kin tenets were identified. They are presented in the form of a Making kin manifesto, and are then translated into design principles that guide the design process in the next step.

Historical companions

Exploring and analysing the history of human-pigeon companionship helped understand the current dynamics between the two species and was a source of inspiration to imagine how their relation could look like in the future. Through several short case-studies of projects where humans collaborated with pigeons, the way architecture and design followed and supported the different relations was studied.

Dovecotes

With the beginning of agriculture in the Middle East, humans started to keep pigeons and breed them for food and eggs, before realising that their droppings (guano) made an excellent fertilizer. Pigeon towers, also called dovecotes, were then built to host the birds and make it easier to collect guano. During the 17th century, the region of Isfahan in today's Iran counted 3000 pigeon towers, the largest one having the capacity to house around 14 000 birds. Dovecotes allowed farmers to diversify their plantations and protected the pigeons from predators (Bin Shabib & Bin Shabib, 2022).

The design of the towers takes pigeons' needs into consideration, like the size of the holes, big enough to fit a pigeon but small enough to keep predators away. Pigeon keeping was then seen as something honourable and building beautiful towers for the birds seemed to be evidence, as pictured in Fig. 37.

Project Sea Hunt

Between 1978 and 1983, the US Coast Guard trained pigeons for search and rescue missions, as part of Project Sea Hunt. The birds were safely attached in a transparent box under a helicopter (Fig. 39) and learned to spot orange items at sea (U.S. Coast Guard, n. d.). Pigeons were found to be more efficient at spotting the items than their human colleagues, and the best results were obtained when both species collaborated. It could be discussed that this project is another example of humans using birds for their own benefit, and the willingness of pigeons to participate could be questioned. However, the interesting part is that it showed that when the aim is collaboration, we can design for nonhumans. The box was designed specifically for pigeons and considered their well-being, and thanks to a button, the birds could communicate with their human colleagues and inform them when a raft was spotted at sea (U.S. Coast Guard, n. d.).

PigeonBlog

PigeonBlog was an art and environmental project led by artist Beatriz da Costa in 2006, that equipped homing pigeons with tiny electronic sensor packs to collect real-time air pollution data as they flew over Los Angeles, as represented in Fig. 38. The data was published on a public website, creating a community-driven, alternative environmental monitoring network. The project highlighted issues of

environmental justice, citizen science, and the democratization of data (Haraway, 2016, p. 20).

The reason PigeonBlog is an interesting project for this thesis is that it is an example of *making-with*, of a collaborative practice that includes other species than humans. At first, it can seem to be a way for humans to exploit pigeons for a result that is about humans only. However, after further reading about it, the attentive and caring nature of the collaboration became more obvious. The air pollution in Los Angeles is an issue for birds as much as it is for humans, and the pigeons participating in the project were cared for by people competing in the sport of pigeon racing with them, which means that they have had the time to build real connections with each other. Pigeons contributed to the project with skills that humans do not have, and humans designed tiny backpacks to assist them, forming a multispecies collaboration.

Conclusion

The different collaborations we have had with pigeons through history have not always been mutualistic, and it can be criticized and discussed that we were often exploiting pigeons for our own benefit. However, it is worth observing that during those collaborative projects, we seemed to be more aware of pigeons' intelligence and abilities, as well as more caring towards them. P. Dobraszczyk (2023) writes "These attempts to harness pigeon perception for human benefit might seem to provide yet more evidence of our intractable conception of animals as only of worth if they can be made useful to us; yet they also open up cities to more-than-human perceptions that mitigate against the pervasive indifference, even hostility, felt towards pigeons as one of our urban co-habitants." (p.78). When we considered pigeons to be useful to us, we cared for them, we had more respect and consideration for them. We designed objects and structures thinking about their perspective and their needs. Even if this kind of argument is problematic - can't we care about species that we don't consciously benefit from? - it is interesting to notice that it is a situation that incites practices of care and more-than-human design. This can be compared to the elements that are today designed for (against) pigeons, like bird spikes (Fig. 40) that are common in urban spaces. When we do not care about pigeons, when we have lost our empathy for them, we seem to design repellent objects, ignoring the fact that they could hurt our past companions.

Take-aways

Collaboration incites care
Empathy leads to multispecies design



Fig. 37. Pigeon towers, Siwa, Egypt. (Unger, 2011). CC BY-SA 3.0

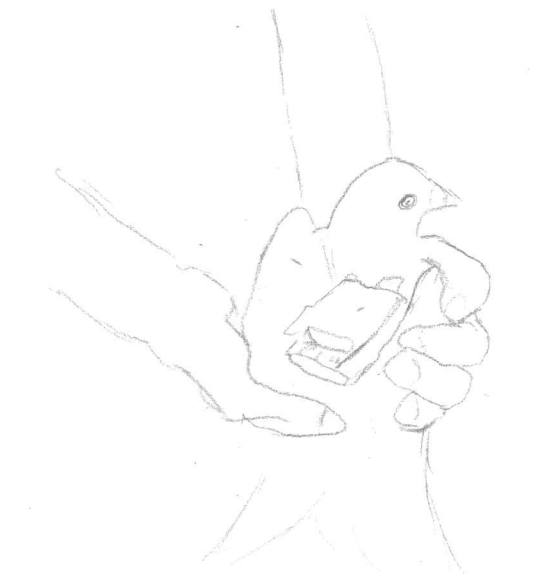


Fig. 38. Pigeon equipped with backpack for the PigeonBlog project. (author's own drawing).

U.S. Patent Apr. 14, 1981 Sheet 1 of 5 4,261,284

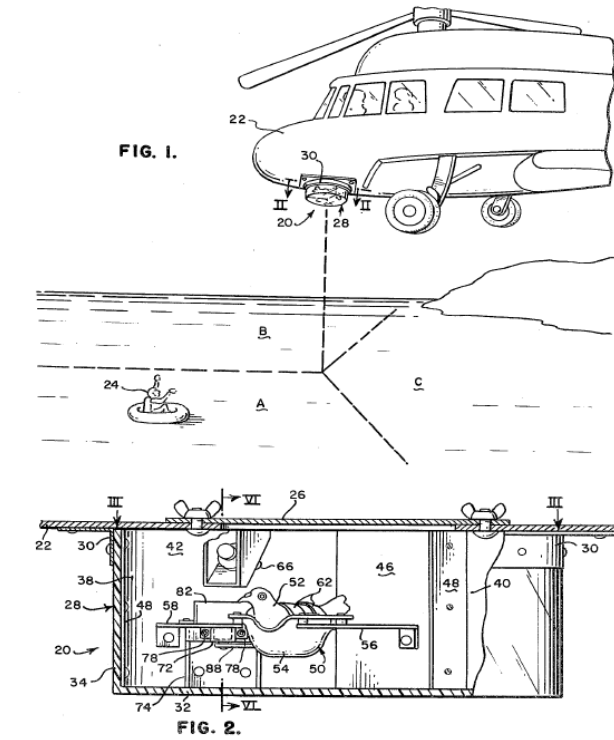


Fig. 39. Sea hunt system. (Simmons, Jr., 1981). Public Domain

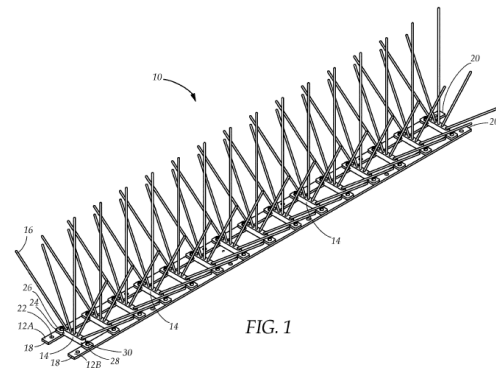


Fig. 40. Bird deterrent and repellent device. (Kaps & Rosario, 2021). Public Domain

From welcoming dovecotes to deterrent bird spikes

Mediating architecture

Several contemporary multispecies projects were studied to identify what strategies were used to mediate between species. The aspects that were in focus were the kind of activity that is done at the intervention, the type of interaction and the spatial design elements enabling the relation.

Dolphin Embassy - Doug Michels & Alexandra Morphett

This project is about interaction, with the aim to facilitate a form of communication with dolphins instead of just observing and studying them. An important aspect of the proposal is the idea that the interaction should happen at equal terms. The dolphins have control over the gates, which gives them the ability to choose if they want to meet the humans or not, grounding the encounter in the principle of voluntary participation (Doucet, 2022). The project is a way of showing how concepts and ideas coming from the humanities can be given shape through architecture. An interesting aspect, mentioned by I. Doucet (2022) is that in addition to design, other tools were used as mediators, such as the chosen vocabulary used in the project and all communications, a documentary film, and the cameras used to film underwater. The film's purpose was to finance the Dolphin Embassy expedition, but also to raise awareness around interspecies communication. This shows that imagining other ways to interact with nonhumans requires a holistic perspective, collaboration and storytelling.

For the Birds - Natalie Jeremijenko & Phil Taylor

Natalie Jeremijenko's project *Ooz* (zoo spelled backwards) consists of several structures that allow interaction between humans and nonhumans (MASS MoCA, 2006). The bird perches outside of the MoCA museum allow people and pigeons to communicate, based on their respective abilities and needs. The reciprocity in her projects is inspiring, as well as the creativity necessary to imagine different ways to enable interspecies interaction.

Multispecies lounge - Double Happiness (Joyce Hwang and Nerea Feliz)

Multispecies Lounge is a public furniture installation placed in front of the Bentway studio in Toronto, Canada, in 2023. Each element in the structure is designed to attract a specific species that lives around the site, and UV reflective graphics remind of some of the insect species' vision (Feliz, 2023). The structure also includes QR-codes that lead to a series of first-person stories about the different species and their life in the city, meant to raise awareness. Through creating a space where species can hang out together in a public space, the project highlights the multispecies character of cities and contributes to normalizing more-than-human thinking in the field of architecture. Here, mediating is not done through direct interaction, but through the combination of different elements - each adapted to a certain species - in the same structure, and the concept of sharing spaces with our nonhuman co-habitants. It also encourages the species to learn to know each other.

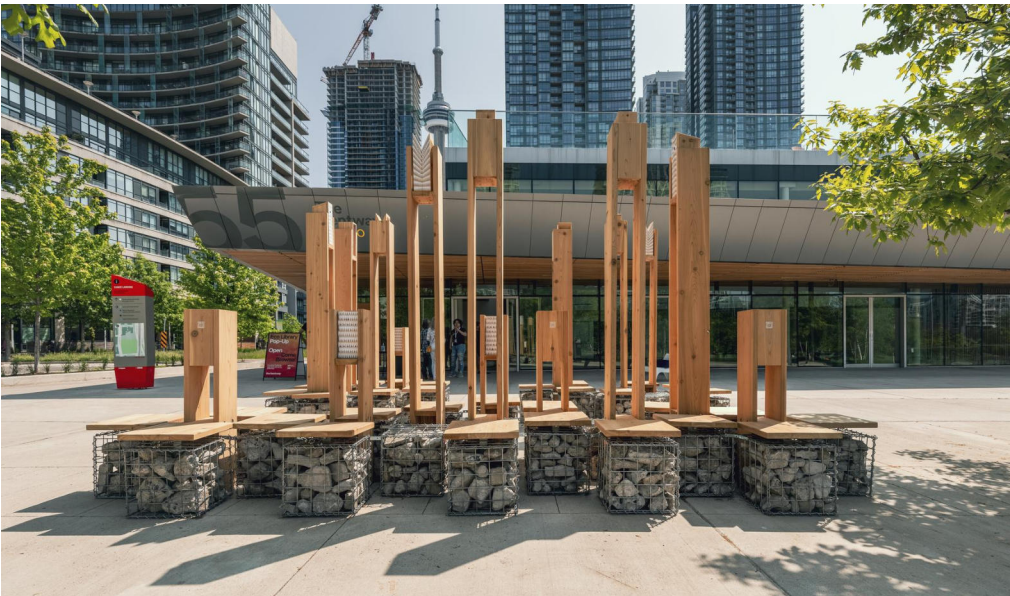


Fig. 41. Multispecies Lounge (2023). Photo by Jack Landau, courtesy of The Bentway.

Ornithon - Studio Ossidiana

This project is inspired by bird watching and the idea that they would enjoy observing us as much as we enjoy observing them (Studio Ossidiana, 2025). There is no direct interaction between humans and birds, the concept being to share a space and structure with nonhumans. The design incorporates elements that are typical for birds as perches, in addition to food being provided to attract them. The project also works with defining a space, as the activities happen within the circle only, and the shape and colour of the design spark interest and curiosity. Ornithon is about being a part of the other species' rituals and switching the roles. Rather than a negative use of anthropomorphism, the storytelling around the concept has a strong impact in provoking empathy and sparking interest in the project. When presenting this reference project throughout the process of writing this thesis, I witnessed the whole room light up and smile on several occasions. The storytelling that emanates from the drawings and the text describing the project on the studio's webpage shows the power of narratives in introducing more-than-human projects.

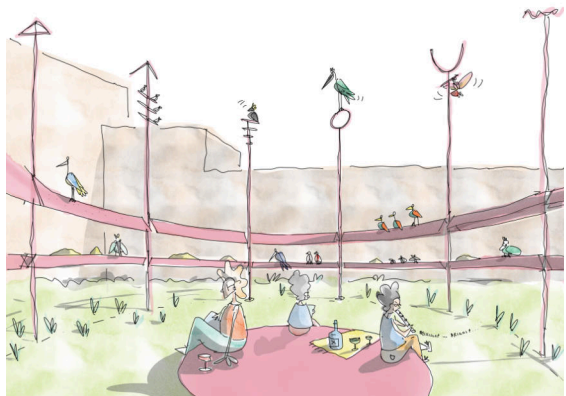
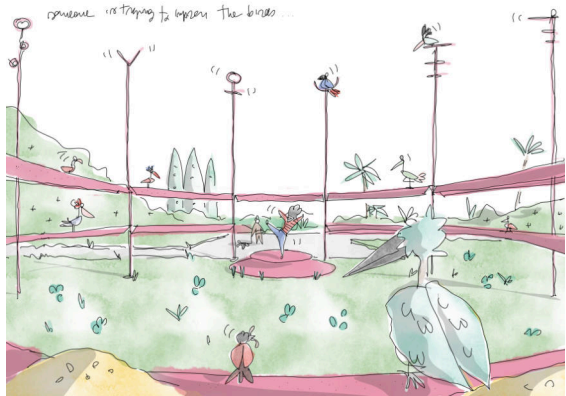


Fig. 42. Ornithon, Installation for Centro Cultural de Belém (2025). Sketches by Giovanni Bellotti, courtesy of Studio Ossidiana.



Fig. 43. Ornithon, Installation for Centro Cultural de Belém (2025). Photo by Riccardo De Vecchi, courtesy of Studio Ossidiana.

Conclusion

A common thing in Ornithon and Multispecies Lounge is that architecture becomes a mediator through creating a space where the different species can rest or spend time together. Maybe mediating does not need to be about interacting but about sharing spaces with each other. In the case where encounters are used as a way to learn to know each other, it is important that it happens voluntarily so that none of the species is forced to participate, as shown in Dolphin Embassy, and that the interaction is reciprocal, like in Natalie Jeremijenko's project. The projects also highlight the importance of storytelling and the narratives used to present the project, whether it is in the form of a complementary film or in the story told by the drawings and project description.

Take-aways

A space for [...]
The power of storytelling

Making kin tenets

After studying reference projects and identifying the strategies used to turn architecture into an interspecies mediator, the take-aways were combined with literature study about *Making kin*, more-than-human design and mutualism and resulted in a manifesto. The *Making kin* tenets are ground principles that are considered essential to interspecies kinship and mediation.

The manifesto is presented in Fig. 44 and further explanation and sources to the different tenets are stated below.

LEARN TO KNOW EACH OTHER; BE CURIOUS AND ATTENTIVE
Learning to know each other is essential in the building of real connections, and was highlighted in the reference project Multispecies Lounge, as well as in the PigeonBlog project. In the first, humans were given the opportunity to learn about the nonhuman species that they share a city with, and in the second, both humans and pigeons had to learn how to collaborate. Curiosity and attentiveness emanate from Anna Tsing's concept called the *arts of noticing*, which suggests paying attention to the nonhuman world (McGuirk, 2024b). It emphasizes the importance of looking carefully at what is there, and what could need a response.

TAKE PART IN EACH OTHERS' ACTIVITIES AND DO THINGS TOGETHER
The importance of taking part in each other's activities was discovered while studying the reference projects Ornithon and Multispecies lounge. Showing an interest in the other species' activities and rituals and doing things together is a way to build interspecies connections. This also relates to the notion of 'a space for [...]', as while doing things together, we create a space dedicated to this activity, a space that is defined and defines the activity.

REAL CONNECTIONS ARE BUILT ON EMPATHY, RECIPROCITY AND SELFLESS ACTS OF CARE
Empathy, reciprocity and care are based on Haraway's (2016) concept of response-ability as well as what she describes as *Making kin*. These principles are also mentioned in the master's thesis *Rat-ical Justice*, which puts care as the most central condition for multispecies coexistence (Davis & Säfdal, 2024). Additionally, reciprocity resonates with mutualism as described on page 12, and so does the concept of selfless acts of care. Finally, empathy has been shown to facilitate more-than-human design throughout our history of companionship with pigeons and could strengthen humans' interest in being part of multispecies cities.

STORYTELLING IS YOUR BEST TOOL
The power of storytelling was highlighted in reference projects like Ornithon and the Dolphin Embassy. Narratives and creative practices can serve as tools to explore more-than-human approaches and to normalize multispecies encounters in cities. Storytelling is thus a

great means to reimagine relationships between humans and nonhumans.

FIND WAYS TO COMMUNICATE, LANGUAGE ISN'T ALL THERE IS
Find ways to communicate is inspired by the Dolphin Embassy project, and the speculative idea that humans and dolphins could "communicate through their thoughts and minds" (Doucet, 2022, p.9). Furthermore, the Sea Hunt project and the way pigeons could notify humans when they spotted a raft, with the help of a button, also contributed to the definition of this principle. Both projects are based on finding ways to communicate that are adapted to the abilities of both species. In the case of Sea Hunt, pigeons and humans had to learn how to communicate with each other, and to understand what the other was expecting (Haraway, 2016).

COLLABORATION SHOULD BE BASED ON VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
The importance of collaboration was identified while looking at the history of our relationship with pigeons and how collaborative projects have encouraged practices of care. Voluntary participation comes from the Dolphin Embassy project, as well as Natalie Jeremijenko's bird perches.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAST DAMAGES, BUT DESIGN FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE
This principle is inspired by the writings of Donna Haraway (2016) and the concept of recuperation. Presented as an alternative to reconciliation, described as too forgiving, and restoration, idealizing a perfect past state that could be recovered, recuperation is about acknowledging the past and the harm that has been done, while trying to build a future together in a damaged world.

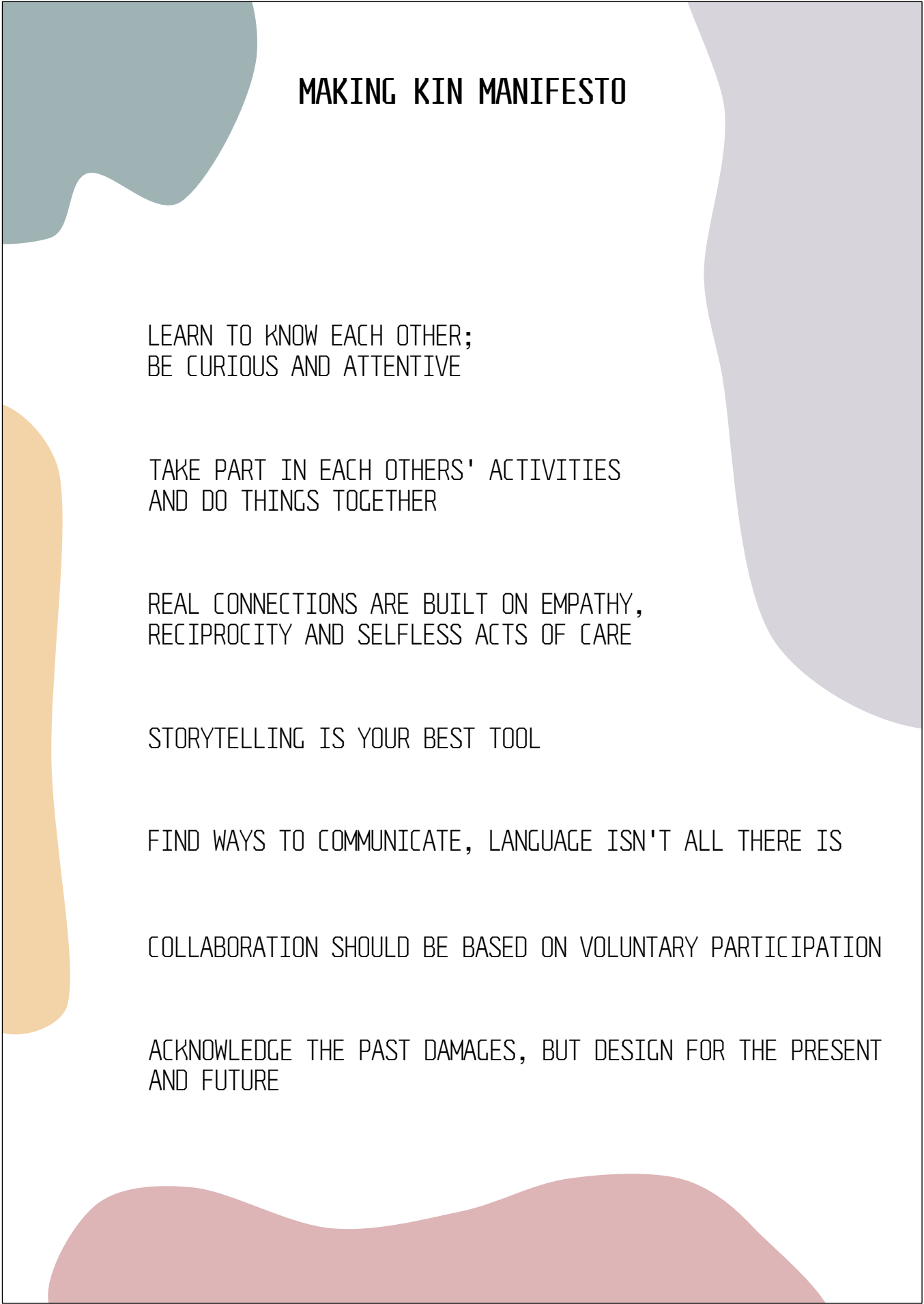


Fig. 44. Makin kin manifesto.

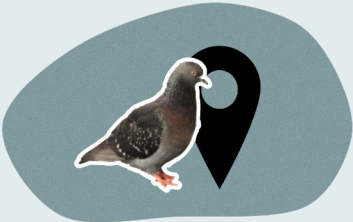
Design principles

The *Making kin* tenets were translated into design principles, that are presented below. The design principles are overarching and serve as guidelines for the author throughout the creation of design interventions that have a potential to transform Brunnsparken into a multispecies park and reorient pigeon-human relations toward

mutualism. They are further developed into design strategies in the upcoming design section. Note that some of the principles are directed at the potential created space, while others are about the interventions more specifically, or the proposal as a whole.

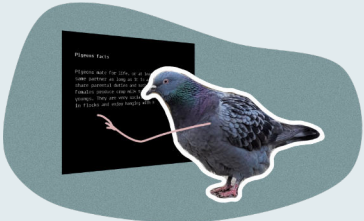
- Making kin tenets

- ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAST DAMAGES, BUT DESIGN FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE



Context-specificity - the proposal is adapted to the chosen site and context

- ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAST DAMAGES, BUT DESIGN FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE
- LEARN TO KNOW EACH OTHER; BE CURIOUS AND ATTENTIVE



Education - the interventions provide opportunities for interspecies learning



Attentiveness - the interventions direct the users' focus to facilitate mutual attentiveness

● REAL CONNECTIONS ARE BUILT ON EMPATHY, RECIPROCITY AND SELFLESS ACTS OF CARE

● FIND WAYS TO COMMUNICATE, LANGUAGE ISN'T ALL THERE IS

● TAKE PART IN EACH OTHERS' ACTIVITIES AND DO THINGS TOGETHER

● COLLABORATION SHOULD BE BASED ON VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

● STORYTELLING IS YOUR BEST TOOL

Care - the interventions facilitate practices of care and incite empathy

Reciprocity - the interventions benefit both species and contribute to a mutualistic environment

Communication - the interventions enable interspecies communication

Collectivity - the space is shaped around shared experiences

Accessibility - The space is open and free to use, without physical constraints

Storytelling - the proposal is introduced with more-than-human narratives

44

45

Multispecies placemaking

In this section, the design process is presented. First, the design strategies are introduced, followed by the design proposal and the four interventions that it consists of. Finally, the educational aspect of the proposal is illustrated.

Design strategies

The design principles established in the previous step were combined with the intervention points identified throughout the context analysis phase to develop site specific design strategies.

The design principle *Context-specificity - the proposal is adapted to the chosen site and context* motivated the decision to combine the design principles with intervention points, to assure that the design interventions are grounded in the context of Brunnsparcken.

Design principles

- Intervention points

Design strategies



Context-specificity

- High maintenance

The different interventions are based on observations and findings related to the chosen site and context.

Terrazzo was chosen as the main material, as it is easy to clean.

The placement of the table interventions, over flower beds, allow pigeon droppings to fall into soil.



Education

- Lack of knowledge
- Influence of negative discourse

Include information panels and manuals in the design proposal to incite people to learn about pigeons.



Attentiveness

- Lack of knowledge
- Influence of negative discourse

Design and place walls with holes at different heights at strategic spots in the park, to direct pigeons' and humans' focus toward each other.

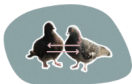
The design strategies aim to enhance the positive aspects of the current human-pigeon relationship and the potential of Brunnsparcken to become a multispecies park.



Care

- Practices of care

Design benches with an armrest where pigeons can sit when they need help with stringfoot, and that allow humans to reach the pigeon's foot.



Reciprocity

- Shift perspective

Pigeon droppings that fall in the soil of the flower beds fertilize it.



Communication

Designing an armrest where pigeons can lay down to indicate to humans that they need help with stringfoot.



Collectivity

- Positive relation in stillness
- Rest, socialize, eat and drink
- Conflicts around food
- Sanitary conflict

The interventions are interacted with while standing or sitting, not in movement.

Activities like drinking and eating are done together



Accessibility

The interventions are open and free to use or not use at all time by both species



Storytelling

- Reason for humans to visit the park
- Shift perspective
- Influence of negative discourse

The interventions are introduced with information panels and a narrative that makes it more understandable and attractive to the visitors.

Design proposal



Fig. 45. Axonometry of Brunnsparken with the design interventions.

The design proposal consists of four spatial interventions that are placed in Brunnsparken: multispecies fika tables, bathing fountains, stringfoot assistance benches and observatory walls. The choice to work on several interventions highlights the entanglement of things and how networks are important. The strategically located interventions form a network changing the dynamic of the park and creating a space for sustaining interspecies connections.

The visual identity of the interventions is meant to highlight the fact that they belong to the same project. The choice of terrazzo as a material is motivated by its tolerance to being washed with water, as it is commonly used in bathrooms and kitchens.

The interventions are presented in more detail in the following pages.



Multispecies fika tables



Bathing fountains



Stringfoot assistance benches



Observatory walls

Design interventions

Multispecies fika tables

Having a fika with pigeons? The thought could seem uncomfortable at first, and maybe it is the point. As Joyce Hwang (2013) writes, I am "interested in how architecture can provoke our own discomforts and conflicted attitudes toward the unpredictability of 'nature.'" (p.347). Through sharing a table, pigeons and humans are given the possibility of observing each other. The concept of a table is also a reference to practices like the *Council of all beings*, where more-than-human perspectives are adopted. Pigeons and humans can start a symbolic dialogue, the table becoming an interspecies mediator.

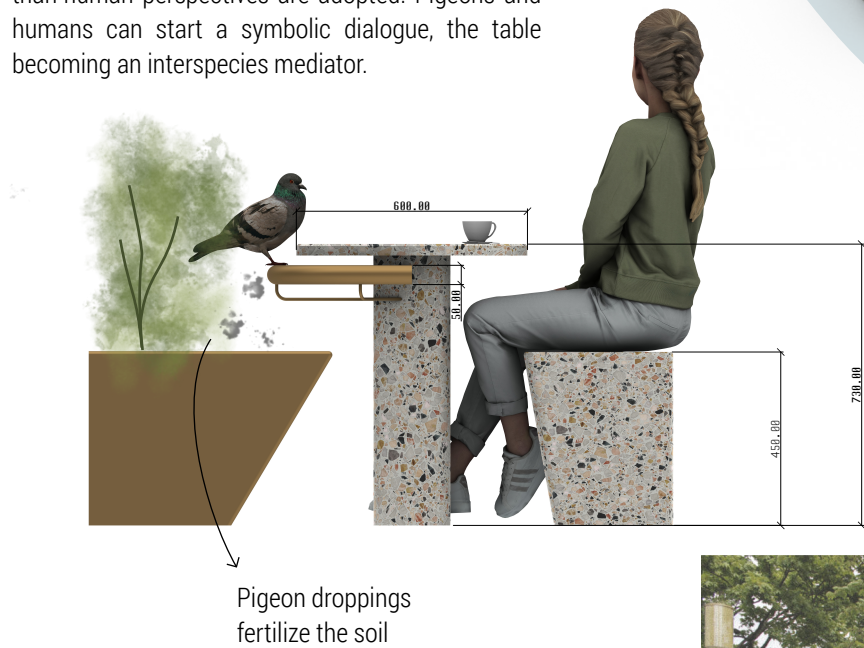


Fig. 47. Illustration showing that pigeons sit over a flower bed.

The half of the table that is dedicated to pigeons is placed over flower beds. The idea behind this decision is that the pigeon droppings would fall into the soil and act as a fertilizer. In this way, pigeons contribute to the green environment of the park as co-gardeners, and the maintenance load decreases for the city of Gothenburg, as less pigeon droppings end up on the ground.



Fig. 46. 3D model of the multispecies fika tables.

What about...

...Having a fika together?



Fig. 48. Collage of the multispecies fika tables on site.

Bathing fountains

This intervention is a water fountain providing clean drinking water. The design includes a tap where humans can, for instance, fill their water bottles, and a bath retaining some water where pigeons can drink and bathe. The water is not running constantly, it activates through a motion sensor at the tap level, or a button at the bath level, that pigeons would (most certainly) learn to use.

There could be something unsettling for some humans in the idea of sharing a clean water source with pigeons. This intervention challenges the discourse and the misconceptions about pigeons being dirty and potentially transmitting diseases to humans. As stated in this report (page 28) this risk is extremely low, and thus this water fountain is considered safe to use. However, the negative discourse increases the need of educational elements to encourage people to revise their prejudices and dare to use the fountain. Another idea behind the concept is that, through seeing pigeons bathing, humans would eventually start considering them as cleaner birds than they initially believed. Additionally, humans would get the opportunity to witness pigeons' intelligence by seeing them pressing the buttons activating the fountain.

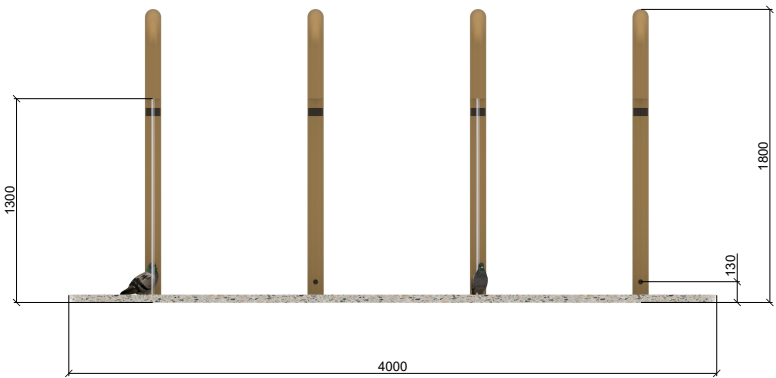


Fig. 49. Dimensions of the bathing fountains.

...Sharing a water fountain?



Fig. 50. Pigeon perspective at the bathing fountains.



Fig. 51. Collage of the bathing fountains in the context of Brunnsparken.

Stringfoot assistance benches

The concept of this intervention is to provide an object that makes it easier for humans to help pigeons with stringfoot and remove the threads from their feet. This is done through the design of a bench with special armrests, and relates to the benches that already play an important role in our relation with pigeons. The shape of the bench reminds of the angled flower beds found in Brunnsparken. The armrest is shaped to allow a pigeon to sit on and let a leg hanging on one side, making it easy to reach for a human hand. The human helper can then cut the threads and hair loose from the pigeon's toes. A common tool to use for this procedure is a seam ripper.

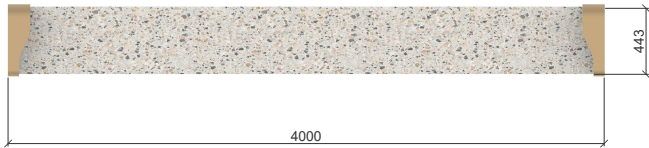


Fig. 53. Dimensions of a stringfoot assistance bench.

Keep calm and get untangled

This intervention is based on care and challenges the discourse by implying that pigeons are worth taking care of. It also highlights the fact that threads and hair are commonly what causes pigeons to lose part of their feet, and not diseases. The idea is that, with time, pigeons would learn the purpose of the armrests, allowing them to seek help from humans voluntarily when needed. Humans would be provided with instructions on how to assist pigeons with stringfoot next to the benches, as well as tools like seam rippers.



Fig. 54. Collage of a stringfoot assistance bench in use.

Observatory walls

The observatory walls are placed strategically in the park, directing humans' and pigeons' attention toward each other. The three walls have holes of different sizes placed in different ways, to focus on specific sceneries. For instance, one of the walls frames pigeons sitting in their favourite tree, as illustrated below. The walls' purpose is to encourage humans to notice and practice

attentiveness. They remind of the observatory walls that can be found in bird watching towers, emphasizing on the fact that pigeons are also worthy of bird enthusiasts' attention. The frames around the holes are here to symbolically reframe pigeons as a species worth observing, taking pictures of, and worthy of our empathy.



Fig. 55. Observatory wall on site.



New hobby: pigeon watching.

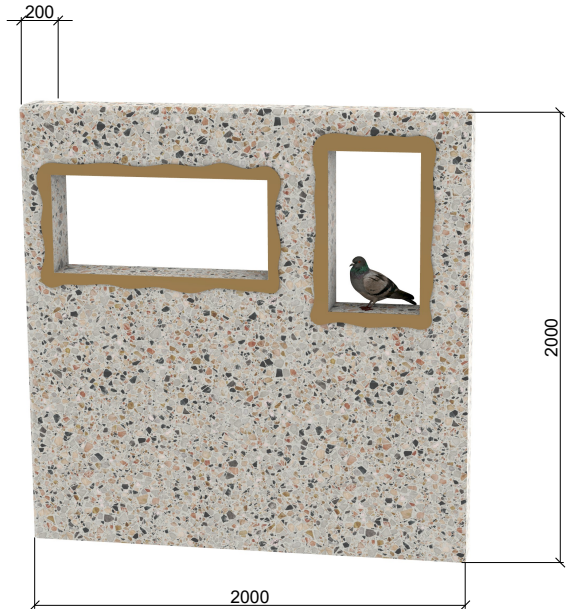


Fig. 56. Dimensions of an observatory wall.

Education and storytelling

The educational part of the proposal is crucial to making it work as a whole. As mentioned earlier in this report, Ulrika Jansson insists on the fact that we have to *want to* share spaces with nonhumans in cities, as opposed to feeling that we must (Personal communication, February 26, 2026). It has also been shown that knowledge can be a step towards building more empathy for the natural world, and that humans seem to care more about pigeons when learning facts about them. Hence, the design proposal incorporates educational panels containing information about the different interventions, and descriptions of pigeons' abilities and past collaborations with humans. Another educational feature is that Viktors Kaffe would start serving beverages in mugs displaying facts about pigeons that challenge the negative stereotypes that shape the current local discourse. Humorous signs placed over each intervention would also tickle the curiosity of the visitors of the park, like the "keep calm and get untangled" slogan connected to the stringfoot assistance bench. The bench would also be completed with an untangler-manual, explaining step by step how to help pigeons with stringfoot in a safe way.

In order for humans to engage with the design proposal and be willing to start rebuilding connections with pigeons, the local discourse has to change. This could be done through changes in the regulations, such as ending the feeding ban and instead establishing a ban on throwing hair and threads on the ground, as the new edited sign in Fig. 63 illustrates.

To increase the visibility of the interventions, a way finding, in the form of pigeon footprints, would lead park users from the information panels to the closest interventions.

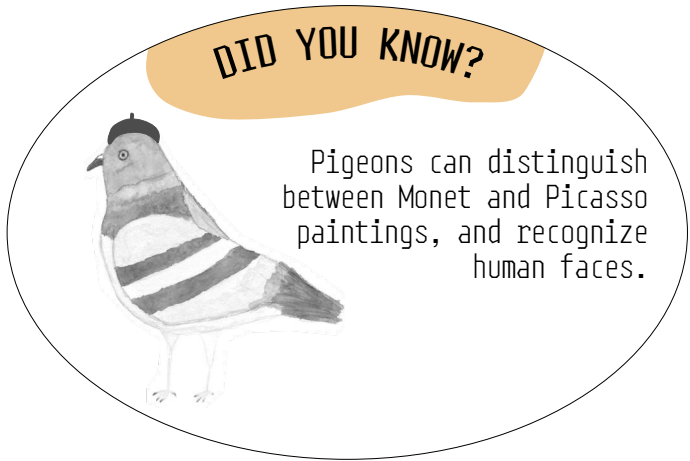


Fig. 57. Sticker for coffee mug, example 1.

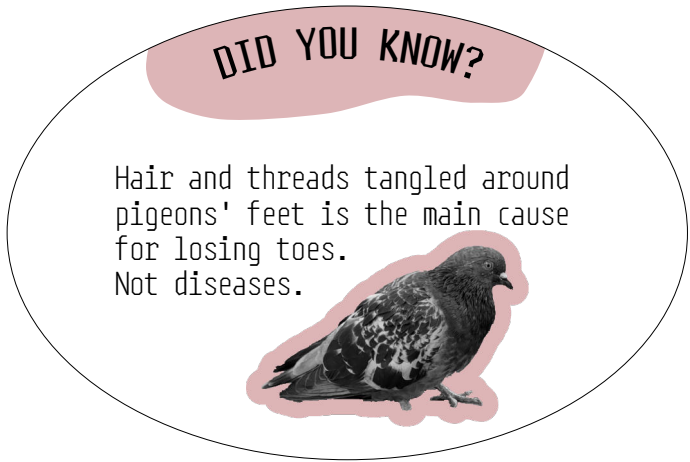


Fig. 58. Sticker for coffee mug, example 2.



Fig. 59. Pigeon footprints.

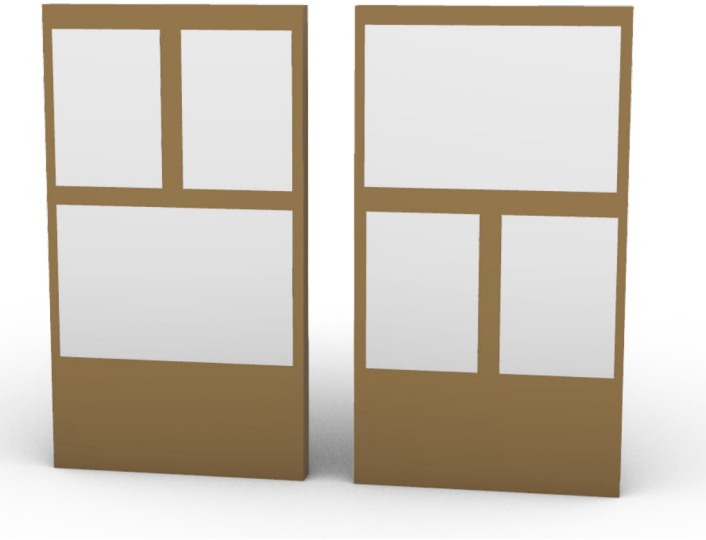


Fig. 60. Information panels.



Fig. 61. Example of content of an information panel.



Fig. 62. Feeding ban sign photographed in Brunnsparken.



Fig. 63. More-than-human sign, edited photograph of the original sign.

Transforming Brunnsparken

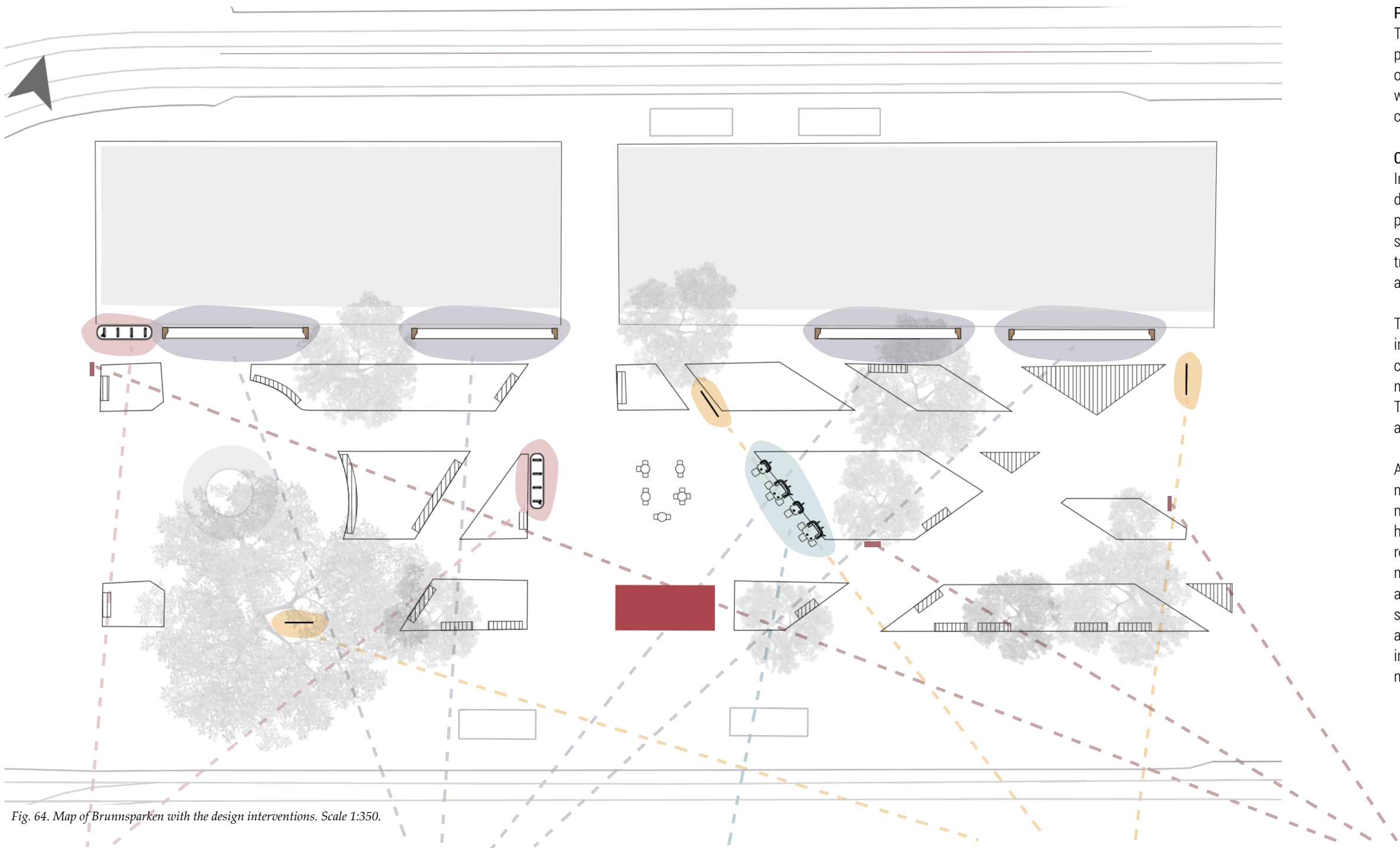


Fig. 64. Map of Brunnsparken with the design interventions. Scale 1:350.

Bathing fountains.

Placed close to the axis of movement to be noticed. The one closest to the water replaces the existing drinking fountain, and the other one is next to the outdoor serving area of the café.

Stringfoot assistance benches.

Placed where the current benches are placed.

Multispecies fika tables.

Placed close to the café, and hanging over a flower bed where the pigeon droppings can fall.

Observatory walls.

Placed facing axis with a lot of human movement for higher visibility. The one in the middle frames a tree where a lot of pigeons usually sit. The one by the triangular bench allows the observation of the pigeons and human interactions that commonly happen on this bench.

Information panels.

Placed to welcome park users from three different entrances of the park.

Placement of the interventions

The placement of the interventions gives the café a central role and position. The idea is that they would still have an important influence on the site, however, this time advocating for respectful relationships with pigeons. There are good views on all the interventions from the café, but also from the main axis of human movement.

Conclusion

In the design proposal, architecture becomes a mediator through the design of urban furniture that allow for interspecies connections, and practices of care and attentiveness, and that together redefine the space. This results in a park which identity and spatial planning is transformed into a space where multispecies design is prominent, and mutualistic relationships can be built and sustained.

The mutualistic aspect of the design may not be obvious in each intervention separately, but lies in the proposal as a whole. Pigeons can get assistance with stringfoot from humans, humans get to learn more about pigeons, pigeons contribute to the greenery of the park... The relationships that are encouraged and facilitated by the design are based on care and would benefit both species.

Architecture alone may not be able to change the discourse, but a municipality choosing to design urban furniture considering pigeons' needs, and transforming a park in a multispecies environment where human and nonhuman interests are put on an equal level could help redefining interspecies relationships. Paired with information panels meant to introduce the project and increase people's knowledge about pigeons, the design proposal could potentially contribute to a shift in the discourse. Imagine a news article, that instead of being about the café's fight against pigeons, would be titled "a new project in Brunnsparken brings people and pigeons together in a new multispecies harmony"...

Discussion

This section presents discussions and reflections about the process, the design, the theories, the methods and the outcomes of this thesis.

Discussion

Architecture as an interspecies mediator

Architecture can bridge the knowledge and communication gap that exists between human and nonhuman species. It can act as a mediator, where sharing space brings individuals together, and architectural principles, like directing the users' focus towards the chosen details, can be used to foster interspecies care and empathy. The built environment then works as an interface between nonhuman and human species and enables a dialogue between the two. Through creating a dedicated space where interspecies interactions are encouraged, architecture sets the conditions for mutualistic relations to be built and fostered.

However, the negative discourse around pigeons in the local context of the project was shown to have an important influence on human behaviors at the site. Thus, a shift in the discourse would be necessary for the relationship between humans and pigeons to change, and the local human actors would have to be part of redefining the approach to nonhumans at Brunnsparken.

The more-than-human approach was shown to be essential in this thesis. Thinking and designing beyond anthropocentrism requires being able to imagine nonhumans' perspective and consider their needs and interests. More-than-human thinking and the theoretical background it provides are valuable guides in the pursuit of multispecies urban spaces, as well as storytelling tools necessary to introduce the project in an effective way to human users. Although still emerging in the architectural practice, more-than-human design shows great potential to challenge the current human centred way of planning and designing, and consider nonhuman needs and interests.

Mutualism

Mutualism could feel like an unreachable goal when it comes to more-than-human relations, as the idea that both species benefit from every interaction could seem utopian. However, it is important to remember that mutualism can exist and be defined at several levels. For instance, it could seem like humans do not benefit from the stringfoot assistance bench, while it is indeed essential for them to be aware of where the threads around the pigeons' feet come from, and to learn to care for other species. Selfless acts of care could also be part of mutualistic relations. The overall relation between humans and pigeons, and their relation to the park could be mutualistic even if in some situations, one species does not seem to get anything from an interaction. I think a conclusion from this thesis could be that one of pigeons' latent needs is to be considered in the design. Hence, even if some of the interventions seem to be mainly directed at human users, pigeons still indirectly benefit from the way they change humans' opinions about them. Pigeons benefit from being

treated as co-users of Brunnsparken that are worth learning to know instead of pests that have to be deterred from the park.

Maintenance and durability

The interventions are designed to be durable and easily washed. However, encouraging pigeons to use urban furniture could lead to more important amounts of pigeon droppings that would require more maintenance. Some solutions were adopted, like placing the fika tables over flower beds so pigeon droppings would fall directly into the soil and fertilize it, but this might not be enough. A more-than-human perspective on this question would be to accept that pigeons produce a lot of droppings, and that it is evident that the necessary measures should be taken to keep the space clean, as it is currently the case with the littering caused by human park users.

More-than-human approach

One of the limits of a more-than-human approach is that it requires a holistic perspective and overall change. In order for Brunnsparken to become a space for interspecies mutualistic relationships, all the local actors would have to challenge their own human-centred perspective of the park's organisation, regulations, maintenance routines and planning. The municipality would have to change regulations to be in accordance with more-than-human thinking, treating pigeons as co-users of Brunnsparken instead of a nuisance that has to be kept from visiting the park and its built environment.

Future development for Brunnsparken

Brunnsparken shows promising qualities that gives it the potential to become a space for multispecies relationships. The park's identity is already defined by the presence of pigeons, and birds in general are a recurring topic in the discourse. Humans in Brunnsparken practice acts of care like bird feeding, although it is prohibited, and many of them seem to enjoy watching pigeons.

Maybe one day, Brunnsparken will become known for being a space where interspecies connections are built, like the park in Juan-les-Pins.

The discussion continues on the next page...

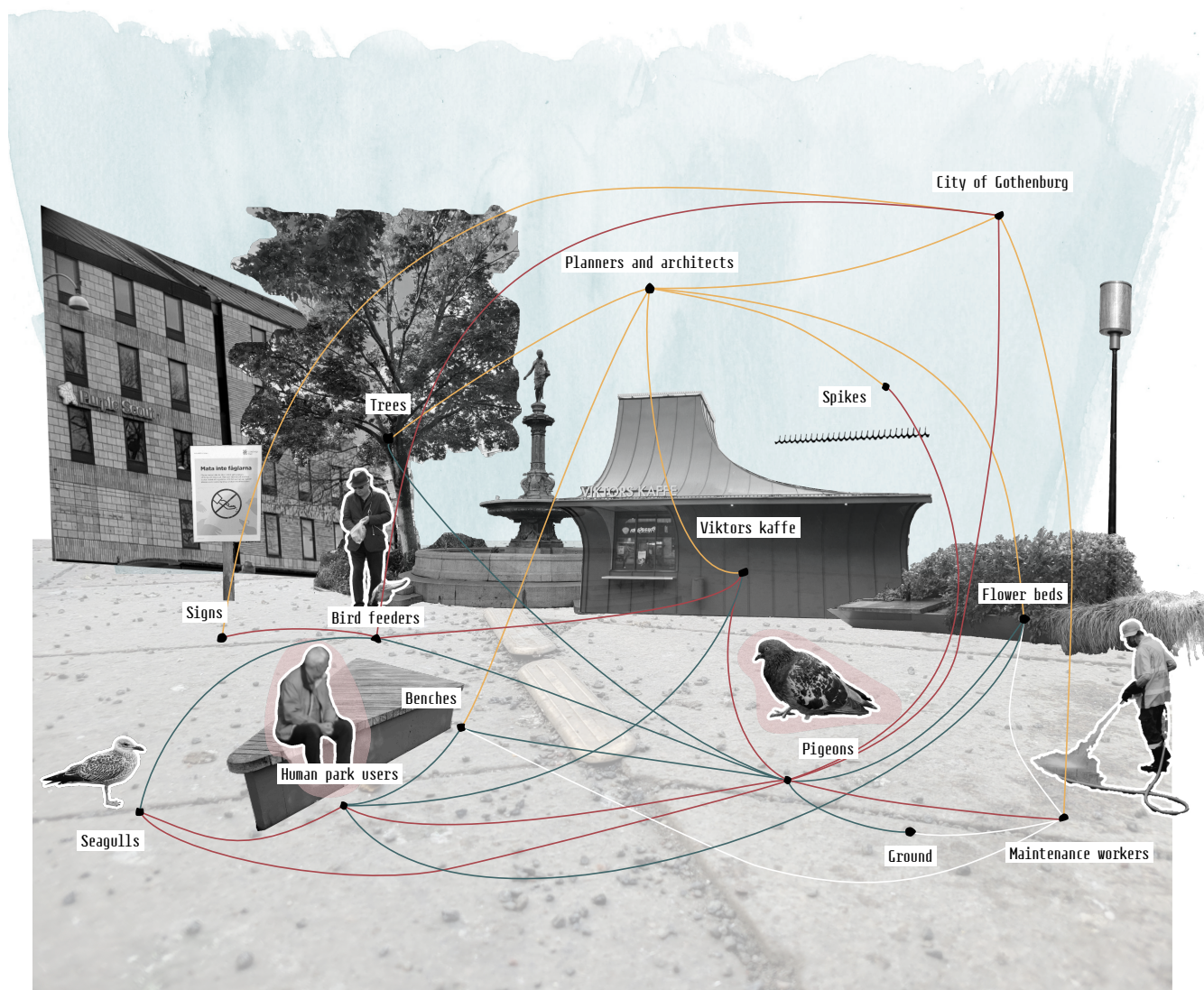


Fig.65. Relationscape for Brunnsparken.

Desicional power

Conflictual relations

Maintenance relations

Beneficial relations

Transformative potential

The design proposal is meant to improve some of the conflictual relations identified in the relationscape. Having tables where pigeons and humans can eat together may be a way to create new connections between the human park users and pigeons. Although new conflicts might occur, the idea is that the concept of sharing a table, and the fact that this would be an opportunity offered by the municipality, would help reorient the human-pigeon relationship in a positive way. As mentioned in this report, our attitude towards nonhumans is influenced by the discourse, which in its turn is reflected in the built environment. A conclusion could be that through changing the built environment, the discourse could be influenced and with it, the attitude.

The decisional relations identified in the relationscape would use their power to introduce more-than-human thinking in the park through planning, routines and regulations. The design interventions would influence the conflictual relations and facilitate their redefinition towards more mutualistic relations.

Several smaller interventions could have as much impact as a single bigger one, as they act like a network and influence onsite relations at various levels. To acknowledge the entanglement of things can also mean using it to spread an idea or concept and believing that small changes here and there could influence the bigger network as a whole.

The goal is not that it works - it is the concept

I cannot possibly know if pigeons would like to participate in the activities or interact with people. I can only assume, based on everything I have read, observed, and my inherent belief that nonhuman species are more aware of the entanglement of things. That their instinct tells them how essential it is for us all to make kin with each other in order to move on in our damaged world. That they also have an interest and enjoy building connections with us. I cannot know either if humans would want to share a fika table with pigeons, or fill their water bottles at the same fountain where pigeons bathe. I can only assume that the information panels would be enough of a motivation, and that with time, the park would be known for these interventions and people would visit it for this specific reason.

Interactions between humans and nonhumans in urban spaces are not commonplace in contemporary Western cities, and if we want to move on together in our damaged world, we have to start somewhere. The goal is not that everything works perfectly, without conflicts, and without occasional failures. Moreover, conflicts are part of relationships, and mitigating them was never the aim of this thesis. The goal is to provoke a shift in the discourse through spatial interventions that could build alternative narratives and progressively (re)build the relation that we as a species have with pigeons. As mentioned in this thesis, *Making kin* is an ongoing process, not defined in time, and it can be imperfect, because so is the world, and striving for perfection is thus not realistic.

Perhaps, the most important is to start somewhere.
Perhaps, the most important thing is to try.

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Unless specified otherwise in the figure text and reference list, all the illustrations and pictures in this thesis are produced by the author.

Timeline (page 14-15)

Fig. 7.
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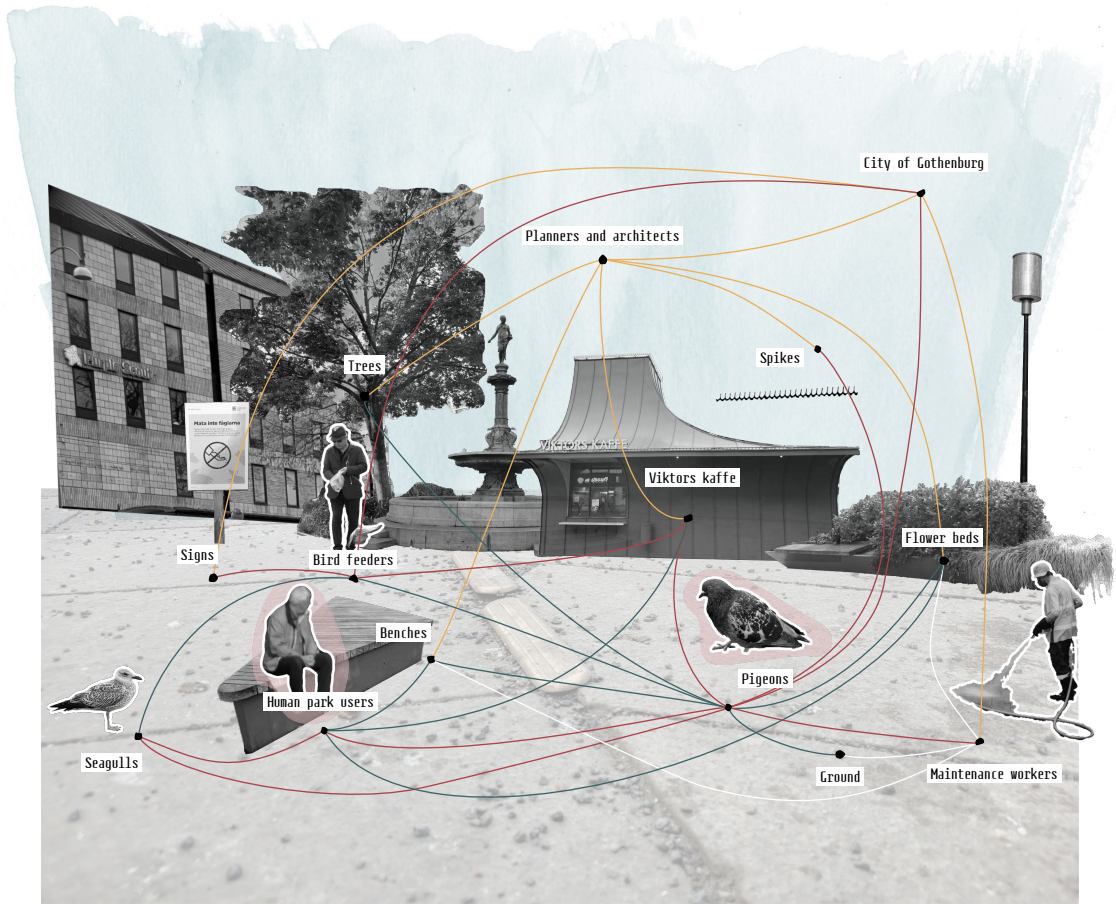


Fig. 36. Relationscape for Brunnsparken

Picture representing bird feeders:
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Picture representing maintenance workers:
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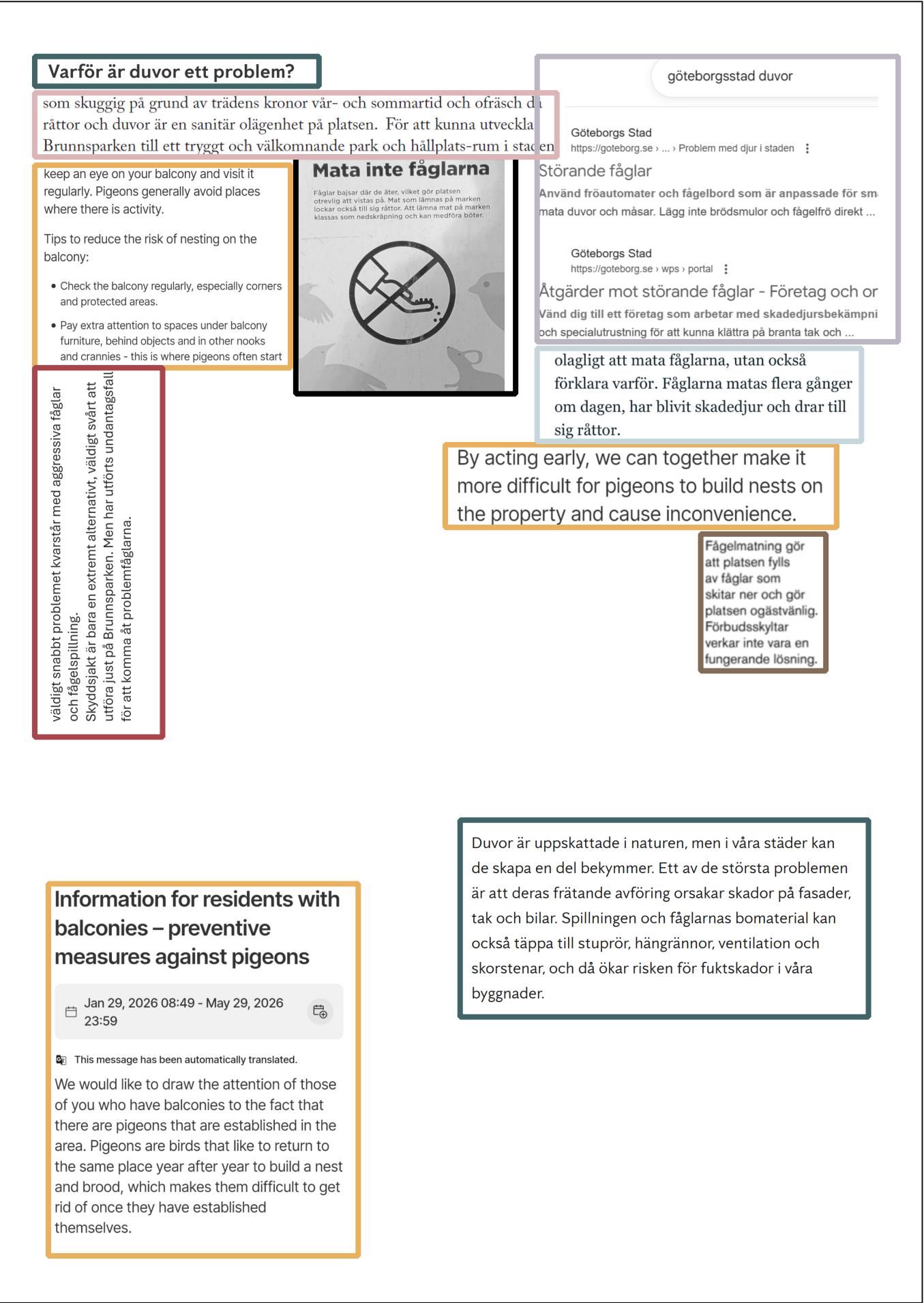


Fig. 33. Discourse analysis

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Author's own picture of a sign at Brunnsparken, Gothenburg.

Fonts

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