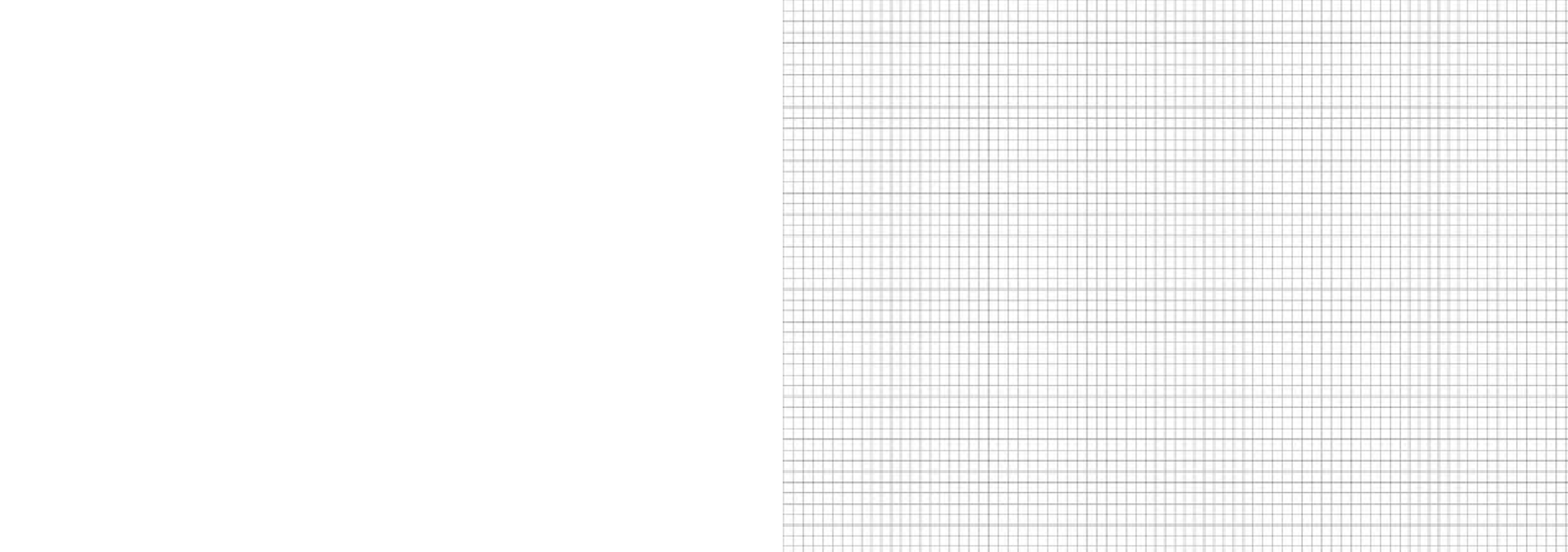


A YEAR IN THE FIELD

Field-Work PAD 1





A Year in the Field

In 2007 a number of artists were selected to be part of Fingal County Council's Public Art Panel. Funding for the individual projects was allocated from the Department of Heritage and Local Government's Per Cent for Art Scheme. We invited artists to respond to an open brief and to consider Fingal's geographical and historical context. In their attempts to locate and capture its place these selected artists responded with work reflecting expanses of landscape, while others looked at social and historical narratives, which drew on local knowledge and character - communicated through performance, film, sculpture and sound.

Much like the landscape painters of the 18th century concerned with philosophical principles of the beautiful and the sublime, Christine has considered the indeterminate power of the landscape in her choice to spend a year dissecting the intricacies of the ecosystem of a small field situated just off a busy Donabate road in Fingal. A Year in the Field draws on Christine's current art practice, whereby the field in this instance is used as a catalyst for the generation of different kinds of enquiry into place and that by revisiting and revising at this location she is able to account for

microscopic patterns, which begin to reveal hidden histories leading to a more expansive engagement with the site.

A Year in the Field *Field-Work* PAD 11. was developed with the help of a number of people including the children of St. Patrick's Boy's National School. This field is located across from the school and so the children were able to visit with Christine, ecologists, bird and botanical experts to explore their knowledge of the natural world. Emmanuel Kant, a key figure in philosophy surrounding the beautiful and the sublime advocated that all our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds to understanding and ends with reason. The children of St. Patrick's Boy's National School in Donabate had first hand sensory experiences in the field and from this were able to take with them information, which can be applied to their gardens, play areas and the greater natural world, re-affirming that the small really can be beautiful.

Caroline Cowley
Public Art Co-ordinator



Back-drop

'A Year in the Field' devised as a set of two publications and a website, was developed in response to fieldwork carried out on a wet-land site at St. Ita's in Donabate, Co. Dublin.

Field-work PAD 1. collates my responses based on a series of activities - walking, collecting, digging, diagramming, recording, and talking of this space. In order to carry out this work, I adopted a notion of the 'field' as being a parameter as opposed to a perimeter that defines and/or encloses a space.

Field-work PAD 1. served as the prototype, from which an outline of *Field-work* PAD 11. emerged. PAD 11. functions as a playful nature study-guide, premised on a series of twelve activities designed to prompt creative exploration of any 'field' system, by any person.

Activities are listed from 1 to 12, but they can be done in any order. Just open the PAD and begin wherever you wish. Each activity has a title that suggests what the content is - but it's only that: a suggestion. Within each activity, specific words that may be challenging are high-lighted in bold.

A glossary explaining the words is provided. But the main requirement is simply to take this PAD out on a walk, with a pencil in hand, and explore your own environment - the things there that capture your attention as they evolve with you over time and in their - and your - place.

'Field' means any kind of site, such as brownfield sites, wastelands (in cities, towns or villages), roadside verges, pathways, forests, playgrounds, etc. Wherever 'things' are found growing.

In this respect a 'field' is in constant flux and is agitated by my presence and interaction with the 'other'. Whether turning the page of a book, bending close to the ground searching for microscopic patterns or socially engaged with people mediated through conversation.

This approach allows me to consider all 'fields' as systemic patterns of a landscape and follows an old tradition called 'stooper labor'. An activity that brings one out to work in a 'field', using methods that are transferable and expandable including observational processes recombined with other mobile and contextual mediums.

Throughout this process, I engaged with a range of people and community groups from the area and further afield. Botanist Chloe Galley drew attention to the unique flora of sedges, rushes and grasses, which appear at first all of the same kind. Over time a complex habitat revealed it-self to us.

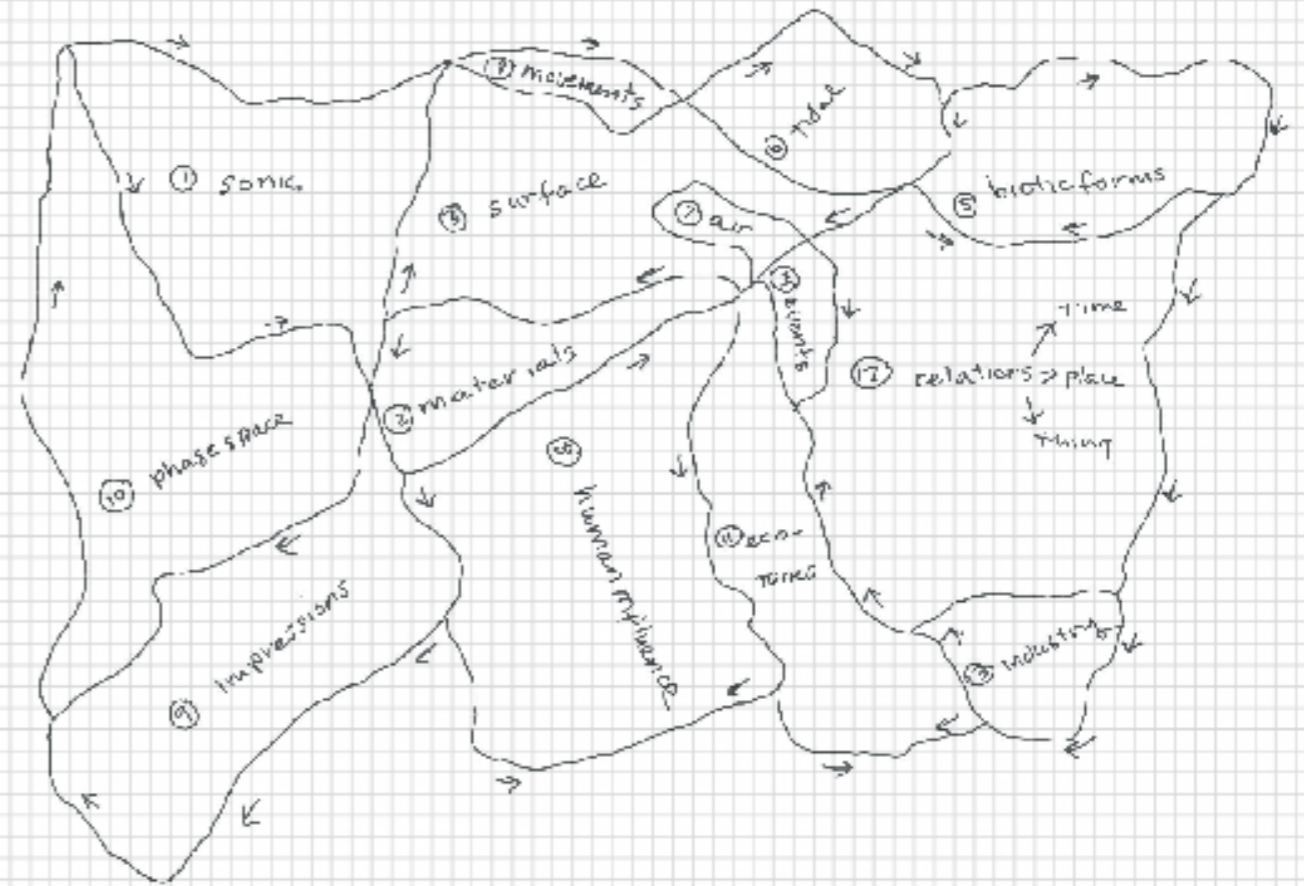
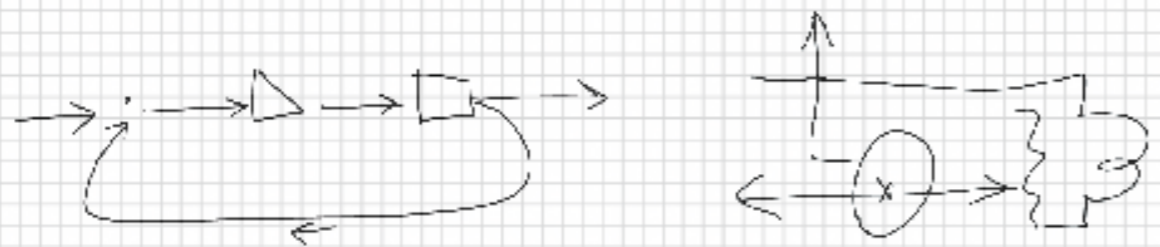
Botanist Declan Doogue discussed the inhabitants of the deep-water drains and the transitional aspects (riparian zones) between seawater and land. Bird watcher - John Lovatt shared valuable data on the range of birds and butterflies, variable frequenters of this site. Hans Visser, biodiversity officer, Fingal County Council, provided background information and organized a field expedition with children from St. Patrick's Boy's National School concluding with a tree-walking event with folklorist Niall McCoitir.

A series of workshops were held with children from St. Patrick's Boy's National School, testing out ideas and generating feedback from the boys on the activities that were at development stage.

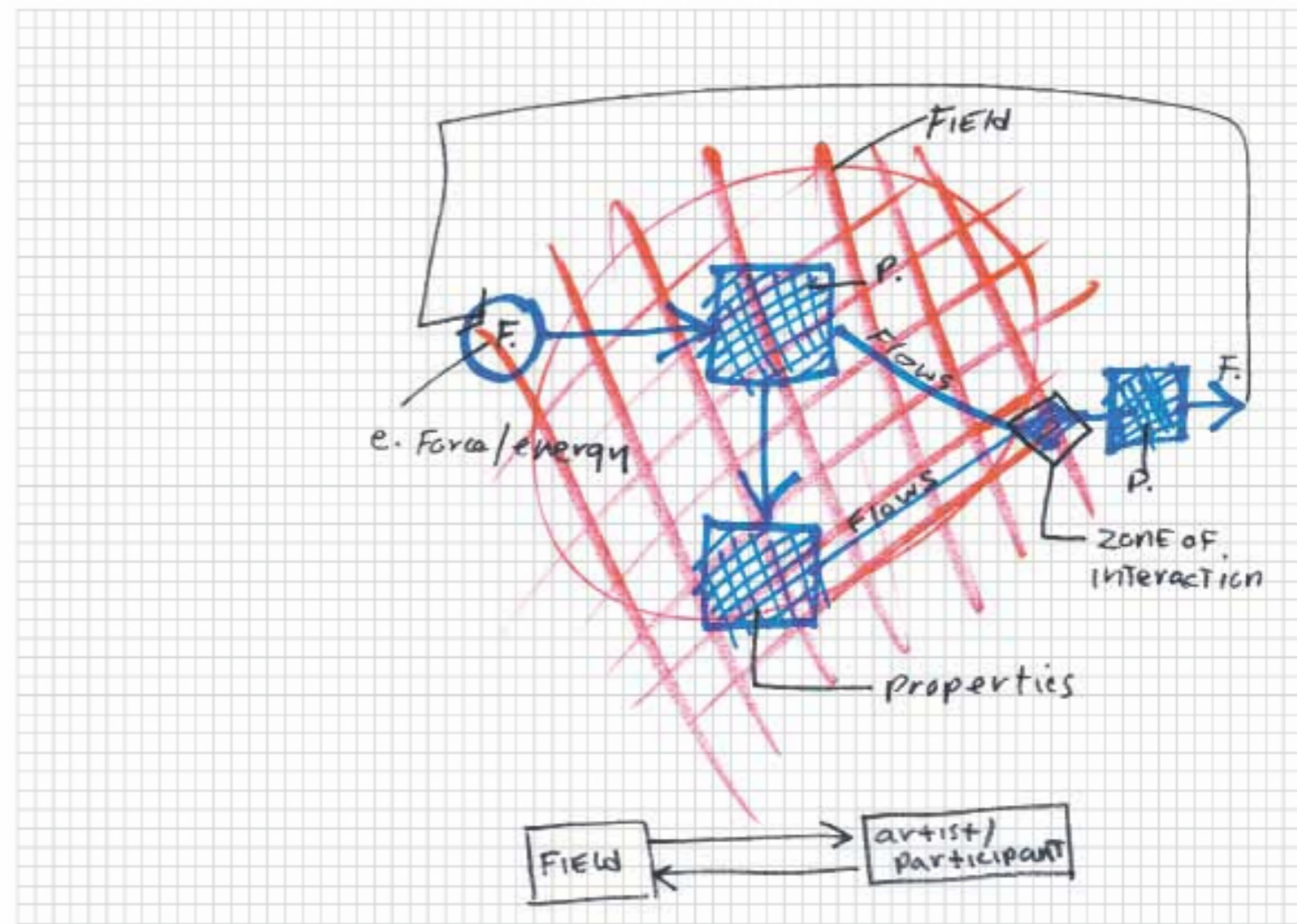
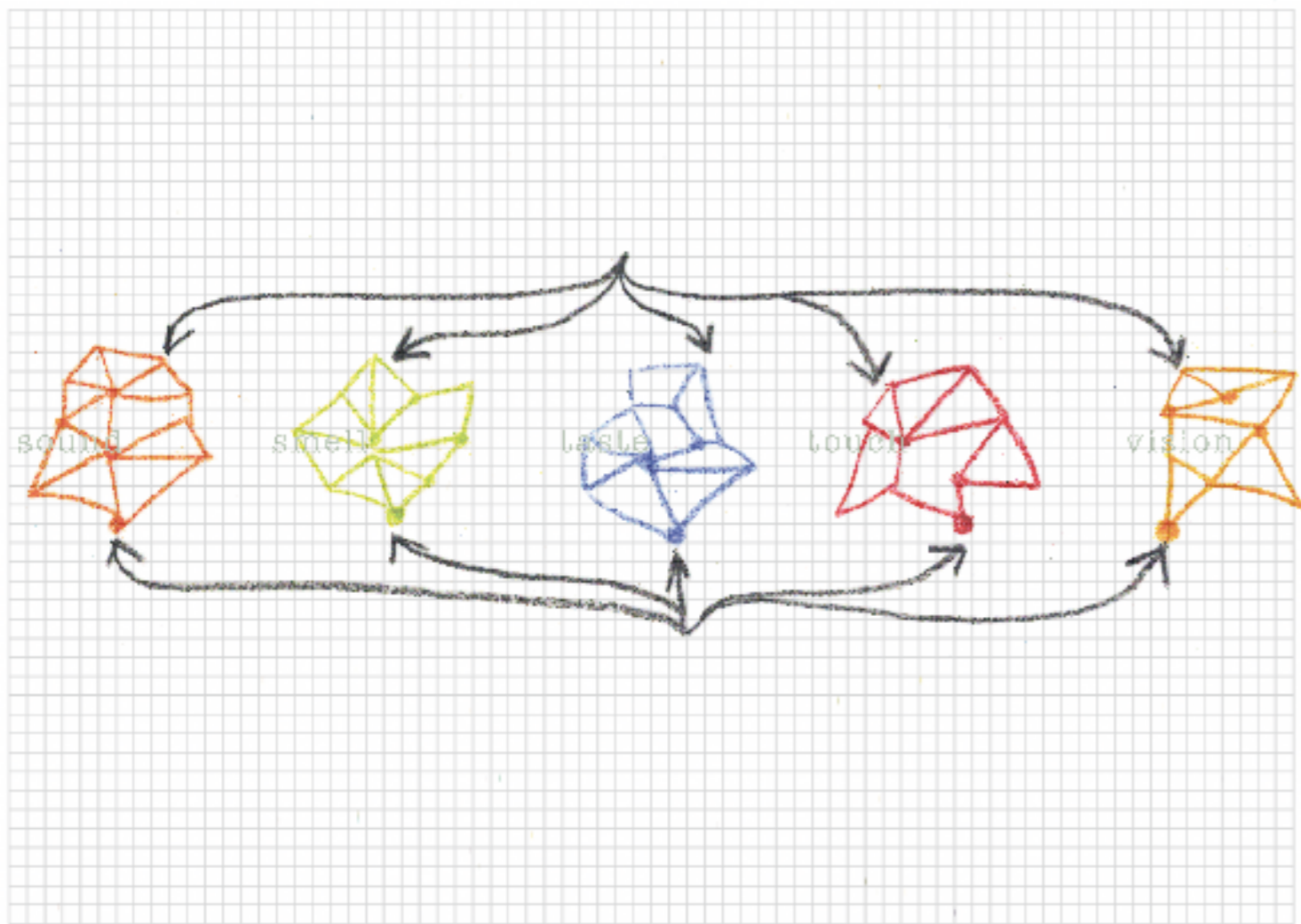
In addition, local resident Trish Carey drew attention to the orchard on the grounds of St. Ita's hospital, which expanded the grounds of the original site that I had worked in.

A dedicated website: www.ayearinthefield.com invites the public to upload and share personal investigations of their fieldwork, extending the creative and social possibilities beyond the original framework conceived for this project.

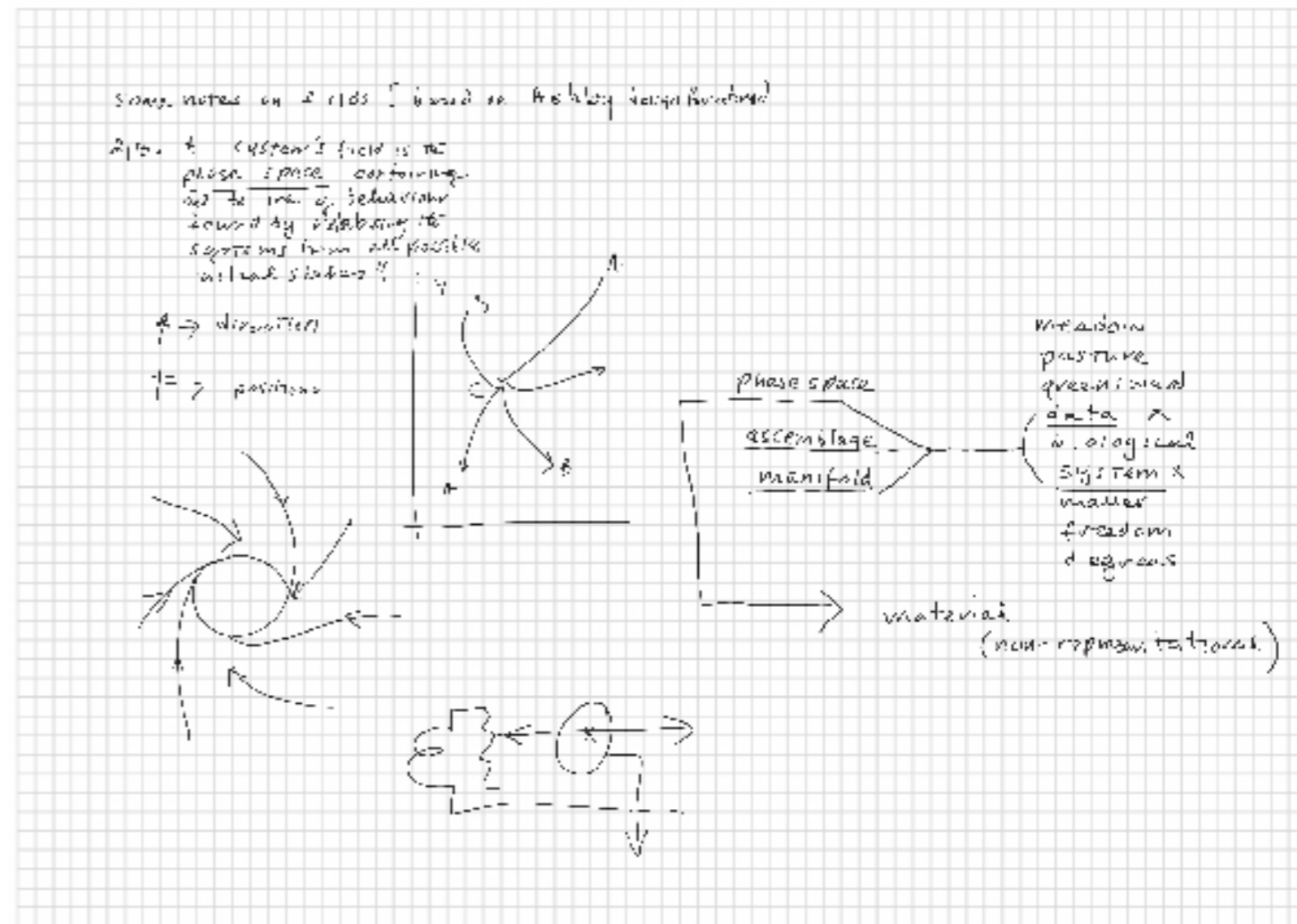
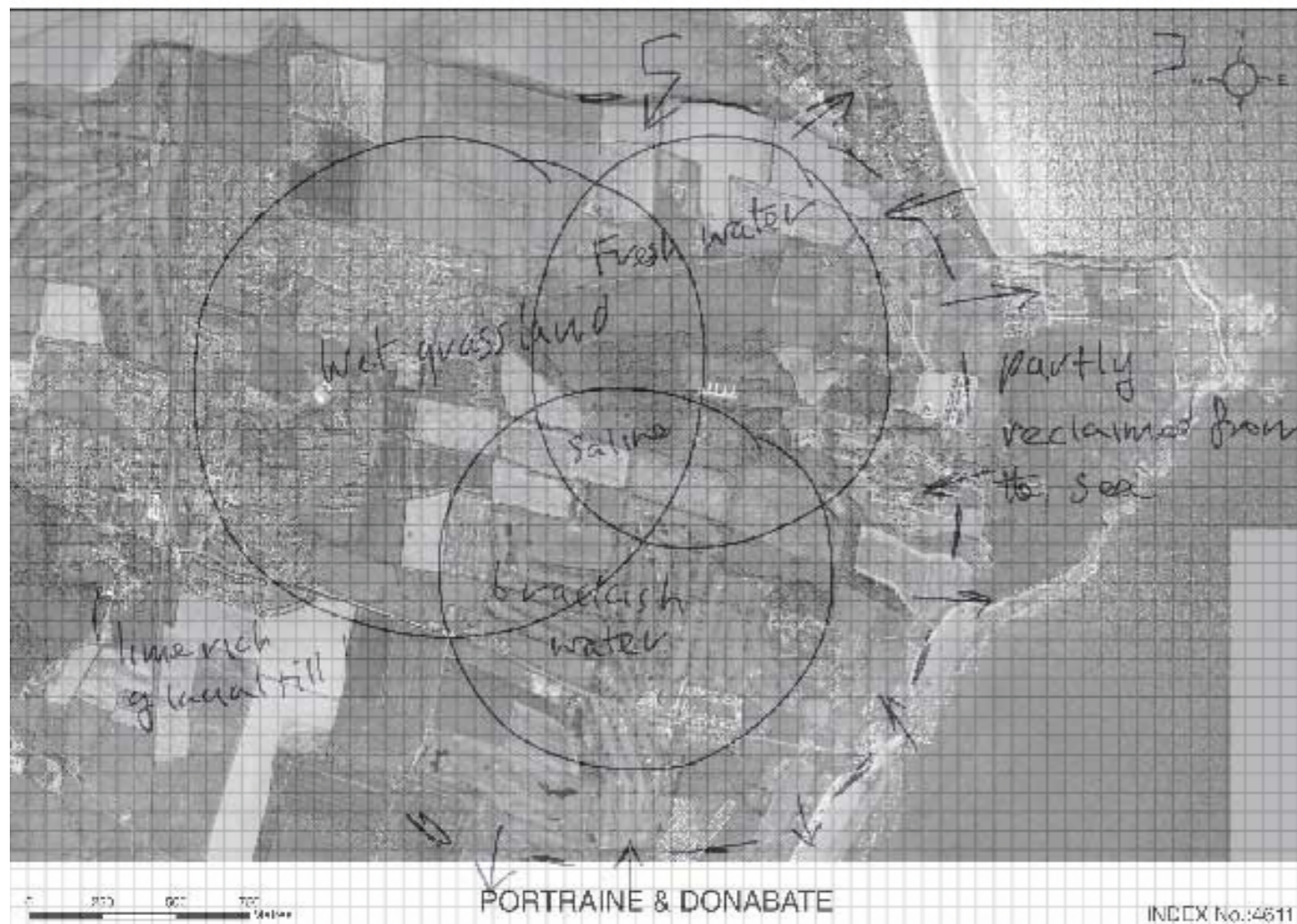
Christine Mackey, 2012
www.ayearinthefield.com

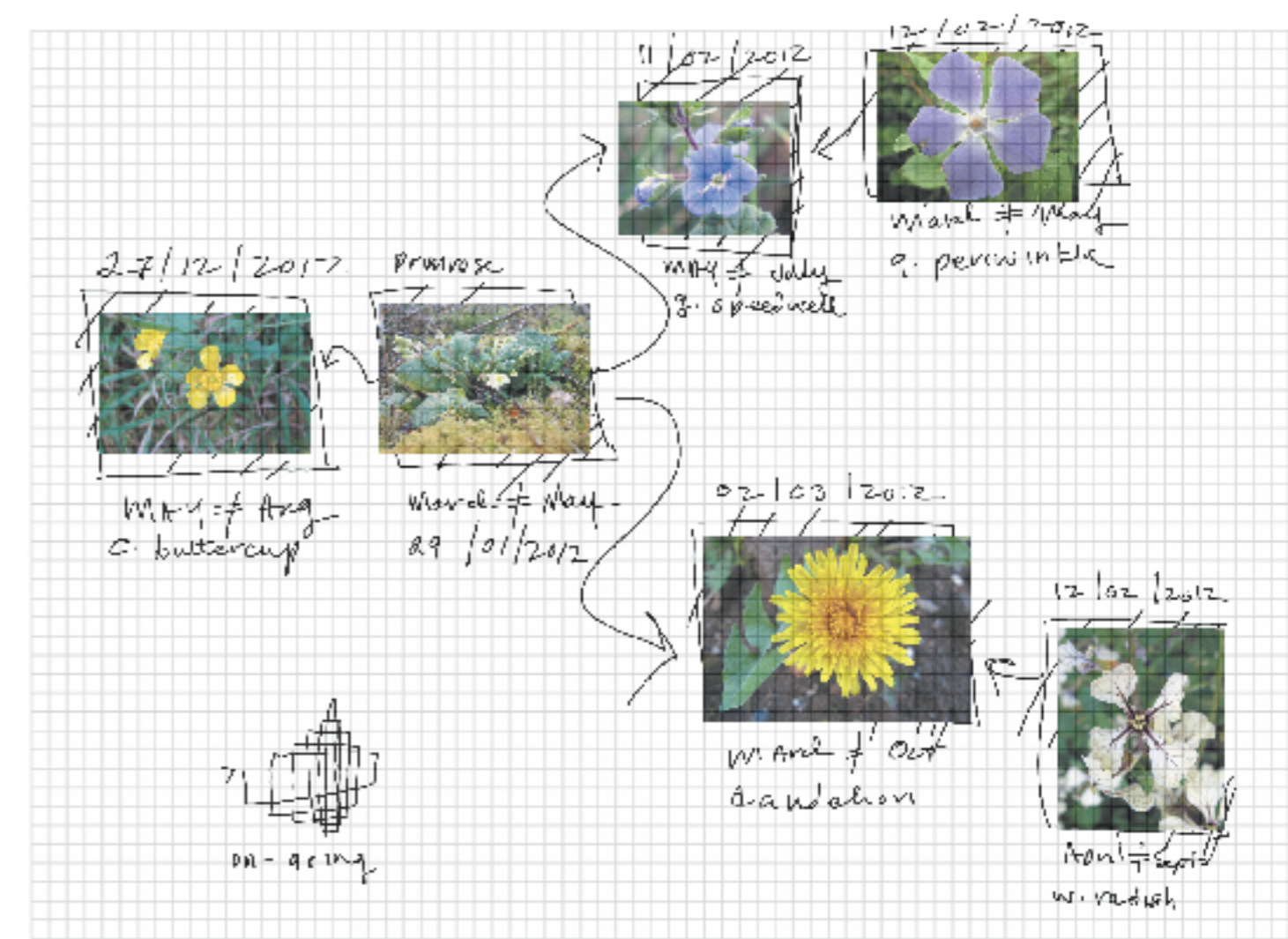
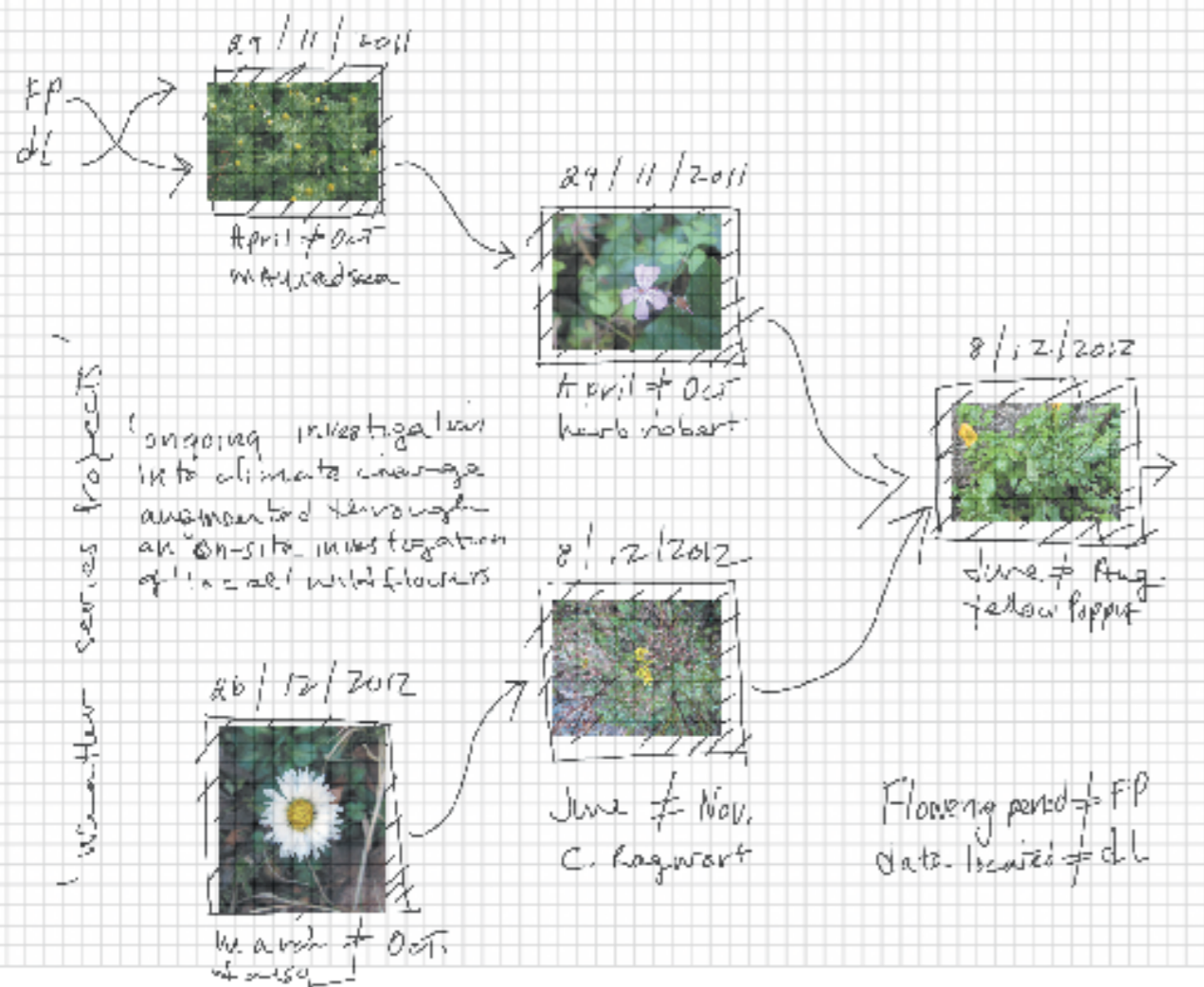


system
 "Field" outwards + tracks









start:

leaf blades: fruste-like

fin:

ligule: a fringe of hairs
membranous

youngest
leaf blade: folded in shoot

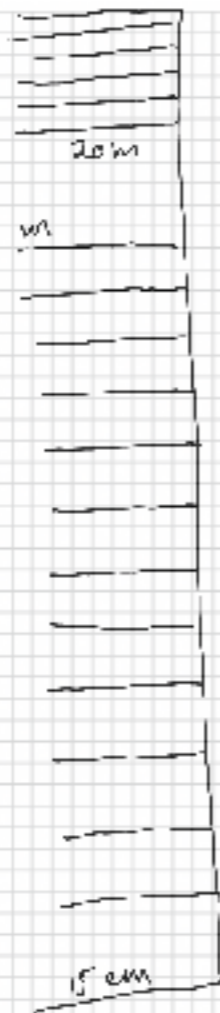
rolled in shoot

auricles: present/
absent

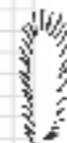
sheaths

(closed) + tubular

wrapped open



MEMBRANOUS



grasses

- scratch (C. mon. in)
 - creeping shoot
 - abundant field of sterile
 - narrow flowering fusion
 - streaked ash
 - snow arrow
 - marsh as/ox
 - creeping soft
 - common chick weed
 - mouse ear
 - field corn
 - tall + wide
 - meadow fescue
 - sharp fescue
 - head of creeping fescue
 - poor annual meadow
 - smooth meadow
 - rough meadow
 - common cat grass
 - sawing meadow
 - + into 2/3
 - violet grass
 - velvet grass
 - common bent
 - white bent
 - Yorkshire fog
- a few plants

grasses

- hard rack
- cat's paw
- soft rack
- ribbed rack
- hull rack

edges

- water pond sedge
- hairy sedge
- fine sedge
- spiked sedge
- tufted sedge
- common sedge
- old sedge
- remote sedge

(M. + U.)

- water
- water
- water
- water

grasses
sedges
rushes → herbs
high structural value
extensively cultivated
in presence of man
seeds highly nutritious
(barley, rice, wheat, oats)

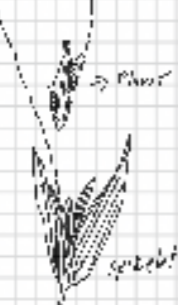


flower head - ear
↓
pawls

spikelets

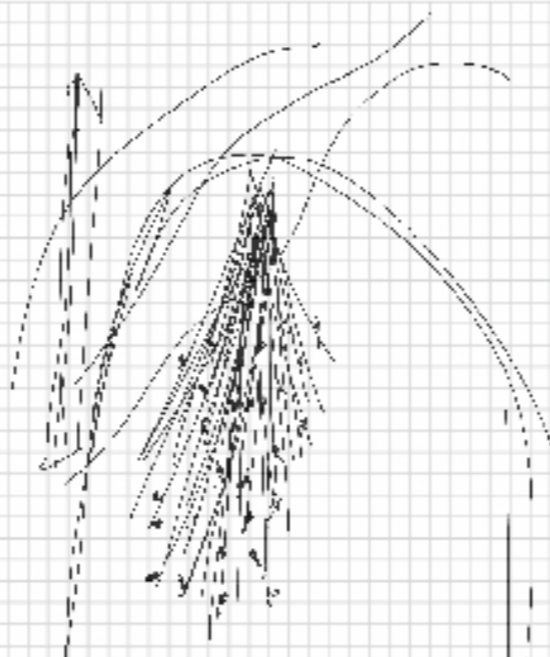
→ complex structure

→ arrangement & content and distribution



→ flower

→ lower part



grasses
sedges
rushes →

herbs
high structural value
extensively cultivated
in presence of man
seeds highly nutritious
(barley, rice, wheat, oats)





Key: 1 - 12 = Jan - Dec ; visibility
 O = nesting period
 — = months when songs can be heard
 (only certain families of birds have songs which can be recognized as such)

• = absent
 (1) = occasionally seen in Jan. for example
 C = common
 L = localized
 V = present all year
 U = uncommon
 S = winter
 V = vagrant
 P = passage migrant
 W = winter
 Y = Y.A.V.E

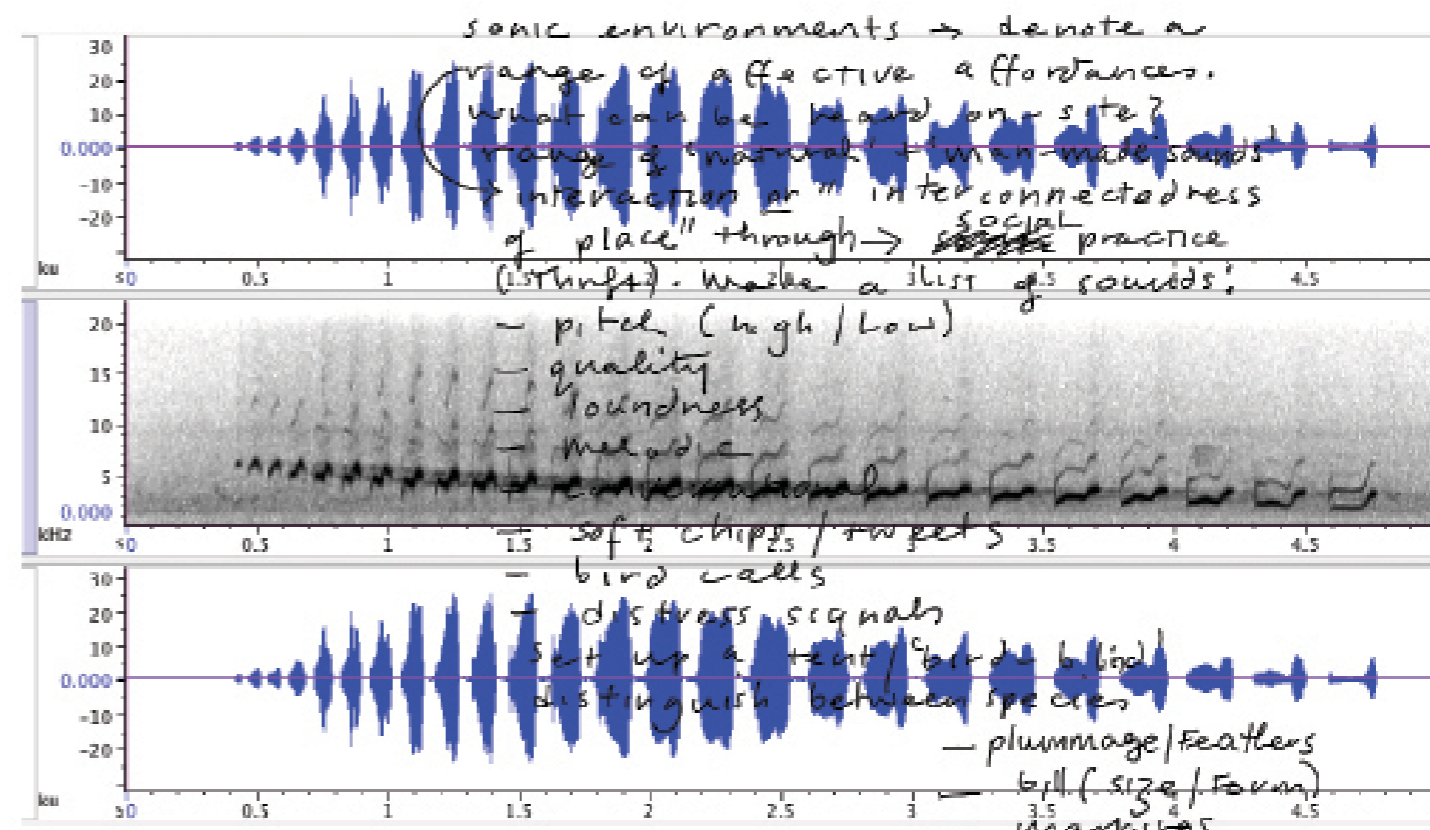
little egret	--	Y + V _U	(freeing since 1907)
grey heron	--	Y	(green circuit)
Mallard	--	Y + W	(resident) winter migrant
Buzzard	--	Y + C	from Ireland
pheasant	--	Y + C	Fennoscandia
Song thrush	--	Y + C	Russia
moorhen	--	Y + C	Polish
Mist Lark	--	Y	detached
wood pigeon	--	Y + C	Germany
blackbird	--	Y + C	Netherlands
wren	--	Y + C	Belgium
robin	--	Y + C	France

sedge warbler	- S
goldcrest	- Y + C
magpie	- Y
reed bunting	- Y + C
blackcap	- Y + S
green creeper	- Y + C
chaffinch	- Y + C
goldfinch	- Y + C

[Red Kites = absent but ve introduced ZOI]



'sound ecologies'



tools: sound recorder / camera / binoculars.

little egret	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
heron	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
marsh wren	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
blue zard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
pheasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
song thrush	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
moorhen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
mistle thrush	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
wood pigeon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
blackbird	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
wren	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
robin	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
longtailed tit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
coal tit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
blue tit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
great tit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
red kite	1	absent - ve-int reduced [2011]											
swage warbler	1	• (3) 4 5 6 7 8 9 10											
goldcrest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
magpie	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
reed bunting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
blackcap	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
tree creeper	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
chaffinch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
goldfinch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	









spider like



tick like



scorpion + tick like



diving beetle + water bug



hopper like insect



plant bugs



grass hoppers



walking sticks



ants + termites



large winged + other long winged insects



dragon flies



flies



bees, wasps + bees

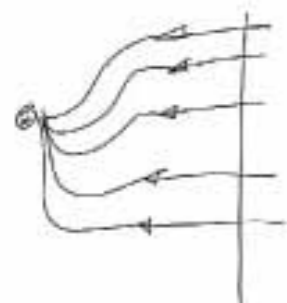


travis. water - 1 comp. ms - (cluster)



spiders + harvestmen





After Alky
Environment
+
the 'field'

Tadpoles
(biology) → eating machines
→ no limbs (can swim)
→ no wall (can hear)
↓
sense movement

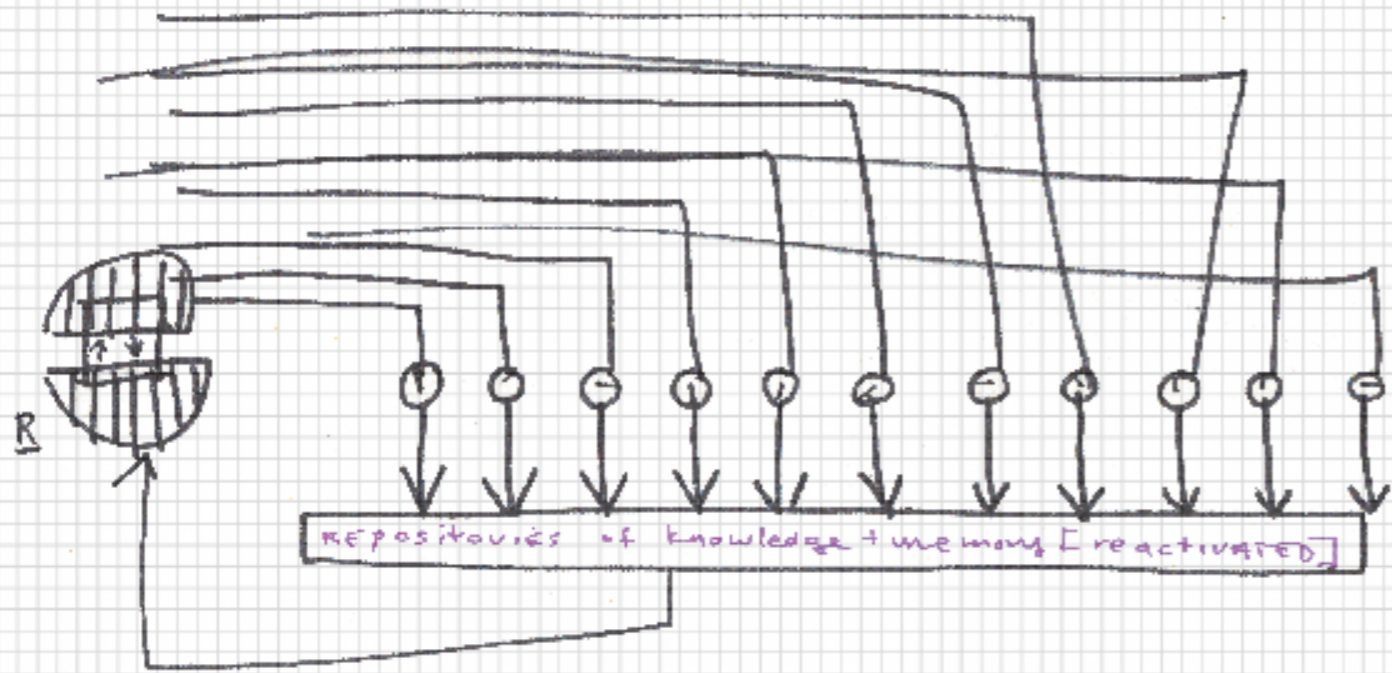


organic bodies forming the ooze of the bed
of the Atlantic at great depths.

Fig. 1 *Globigera bulbosa* Fig. 5. Spongia of sponge
Fig. 2 *Asplenocylus*
Fig. 3 *Praxibria* } siliceous diatomacea
Fig. 4 *Eosia bides*







! conversation tactics!
 (walk) make contact with
 specialist - in what some
 individuals - a circle (records)
 conversations / take notes on
 any thing that catches
 your attention / it's about
 the different plants / insects
 if possible - collect! make
 a notebook at a later date.

field
 ecotones - biotic community
 water channels / pools
 site adjacent to a small body
 of water
 patch of local habitat
 (soil water) -
 +
 fresh water
 -> MOTICITY -
 WATER UPTAKE
 -> dig - clear at first glance
 NOT so interesting!



Christine: I thought Chloe, we could begin this process by sending you a series of images taken in the field (between the months March - August 2011) as a way of re-visiting the site, which may act as a series of visual prompts as previously suggested by you. What struck me most with regard to this 'field' was that it gave me an appreciation of time that is experienced seasonally - from bare winter where plants remain hidden or close-cut to the ground, one forgets that underneath is a complex living system of biological flows waiting to upturn the ground. One could easily be pardoned to think that there was 'no-thing' of interest here. This in turn required a series of visits over the course of the year, pleasantly surprised with how new patterns of growth takes root and how the colours and the transitional crossings between land and water become more prominent from the various plant species that begin to take hold of the site.

Chloe, what was your first impression of the site and did you imagine that this 'field' had so many diverse eco-zones determined by various biotic communities living above and below ground, which indicated a close connection to the various water channels and pools made visible during the winter months?

social enaction: conversing the 'field' after the 'event'

Chloe: I think that the wetland site at Donabate is special for several reasons. The first of these is its location - the site is adjacent to a small, yet busy road, as well as (sometimes very) fast cars. There are often trucks trundling past, although when you step into the wet-land site you leave much of this behind. Its proximity to the road also reminds me that we are often (physically) very close to such beautiful areas in our daily lives. Some people travel very far to see wildlife or to spend time in semi-natural areas, yet these areas are sometimes just on our doorstep and we just have to explore a little bit beyond the path that we would normally tread, to find them.



Christine: How varied (if at all) are the species growing on this site and were you surprised by what you found?

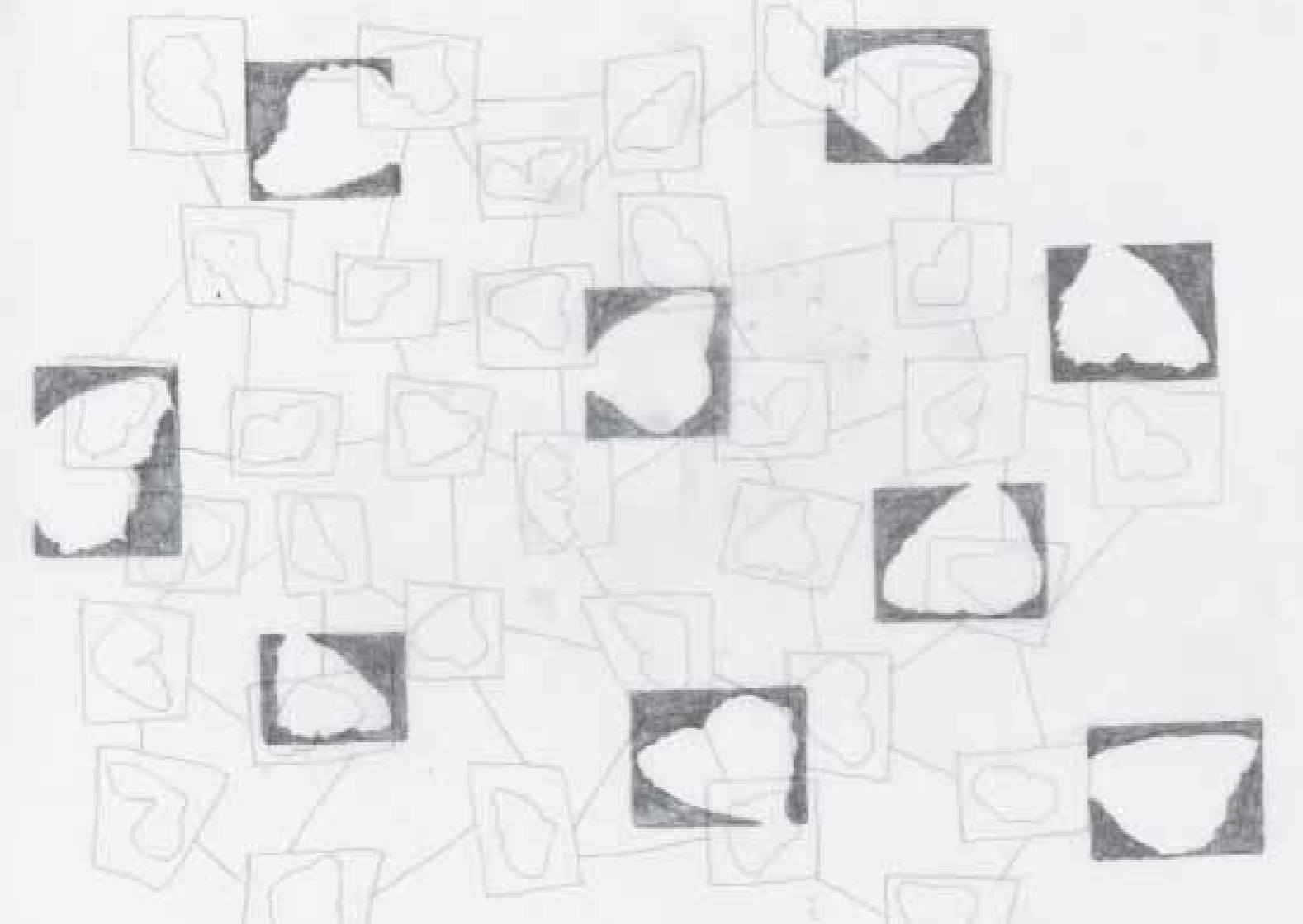
Chloe: This site has a complex system of micro-, or local habitats. This caused me some confusion at first, as I encountered plants that typically grow in freshwater habitats, very close to plants that grow in saltwater habitats. My confusion abated when you confirmed that there is a mosaic of water-types flowing through the site. Similarly, there are local gradients of drier to wetter areas criss-crossing the site. This habitat complexity as well as the resulting range of plants (and probably animals) found at the site contributes to the site's interesting qualities. When you see the wetland site from the road, it does not appear to be very exciting or contain many different plants or animals. It could be over-looked by people very easily. However these plants and animals are there; one has to look around, look closely at the tussocks of grass, look around the water's edge. I think that people, who visit this site with this attitude or knowledge, will be inspired to investigate other wildlife areas more closely. They will turn over leaves, have a closer look at the bark of an old tree, look under some leaf litter, have a look around the edge of a drain or a stream - not being too destructive of course and they will see a lot more.

I also hope that the site encourages people to see other such areas in a different light and to appreciate that just because an area doesn't look too inspiring at the first glance, this does not mean that it isn't interesting or important.

Christine: I guess this is tied up with the idea that the 'somewhere' else is always better than somewhere 'here'. Whereas in reality, albeit we all hold different views of reality that are unique to each one of us in determining when to stop, why and where to look. How do you think we can challenge this generalized view of the somewhere else and start to look closer to what's around us in terms of looking at the 'natural' world as been part of our everyday experience of landscape?

Chloe: One has to look and listen carefully to discover what a site contains. Doing the work with you Christine especially, reminded me that one needs to look up and around as well as down at the plants, and stand silently for a few minutes to hear the noises that the site creates.

Christine: This idea of listening is interesting because it embodies all of the senses. In order to listen one has to rest, in order to rest one has to be still.



holly blue
 orange tip
 green veined white
 large white
 speckled wood
 small tortoise
 peacock
 meadow brown
 ringlet



"micro habitats + moving records"
 noticed a lot of small creatures
 falling onto my skeletal boot -
 different colours, sizes + shapes
 I stratified flat out onto the
 ground in an effort to trap
 and record their movements in
 detail - "butterflies under threat"







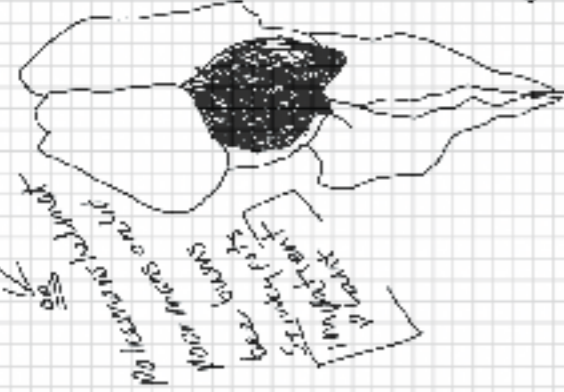


'migratory species'
 on a separate walk with
 Dauran, ~~where~~ where he pointed
 out a range of plants that
 were native + non native;
 consider: what is a weed?
 — source Robert Lloyd Sargent,
 book 'Weeds: simple lessons
 for children (1913) → not so
 simple!
 characteristics of weeds:
 thrive in the company of humans
 flourish with movement + the
 various activities we do
 they arrive using our transport
 system — plane / boat / train / car / foot
 — birds / [apparently bird
 seeds contain a host of all
 possible kinds of plants + weeds.
 Himalayan knotweed, ragwort,
 golden rod, evening primrose,
 hogweed, willow herb, Indian
 balm, Spanish bluebell
 ← Invasive
 species → shows of trade / the historic
 garden! plant hunters

ecological dispersals

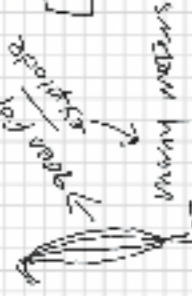


Indian balsam!



→ native to western Himalayas
 introd. Kew Gardens - 1800s
 invasive
 aggressive in its growth patterns

polyploid plant
 lanceolate leaves
 [vic. Tamaragut]



games: 'seed pot olympics'
 project the seeds
 record 12 mts.

process: an expression of elegance in
 the business of living + ageing! Kuskin

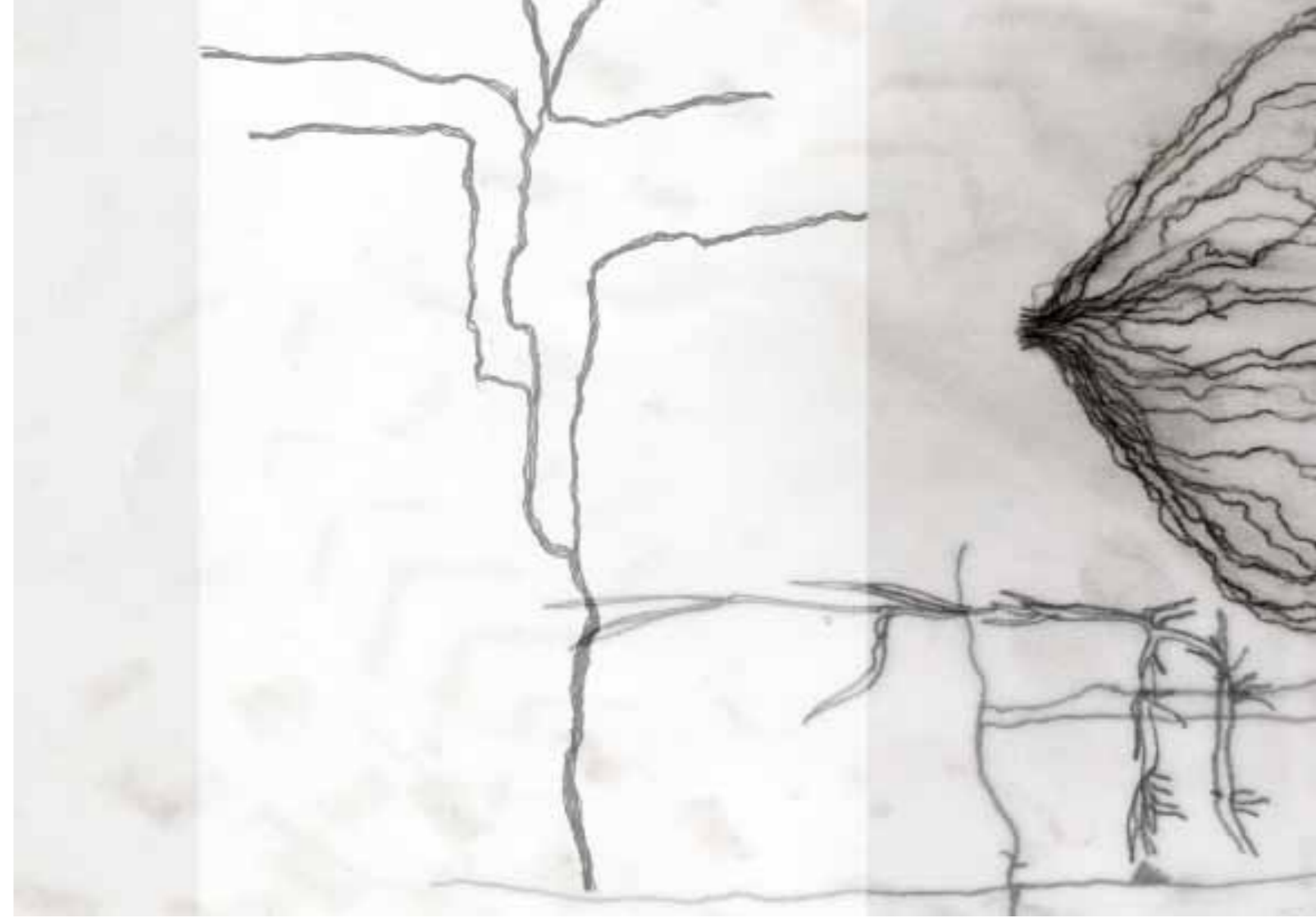
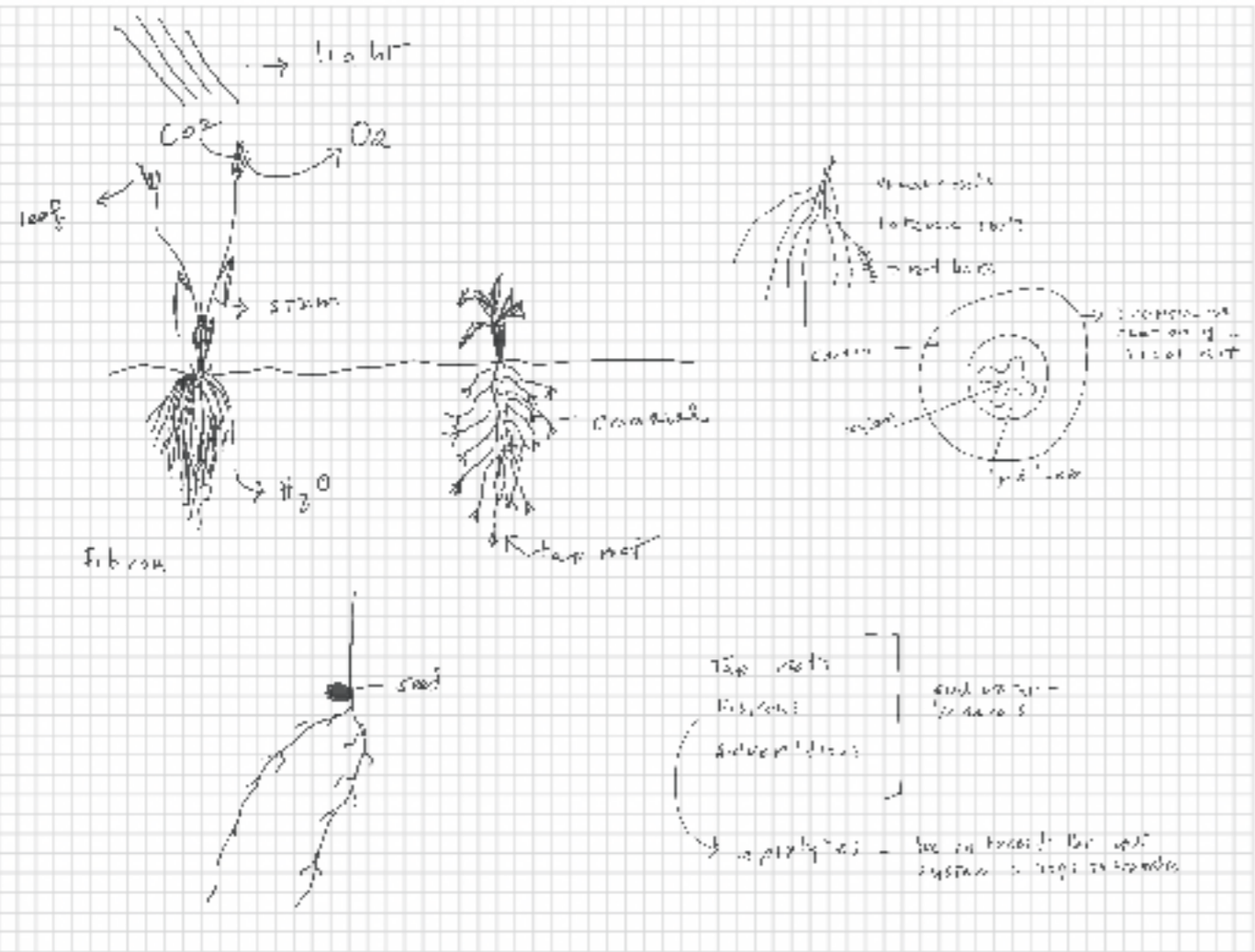
history of plant collecting/hunting
 1730 - 1780

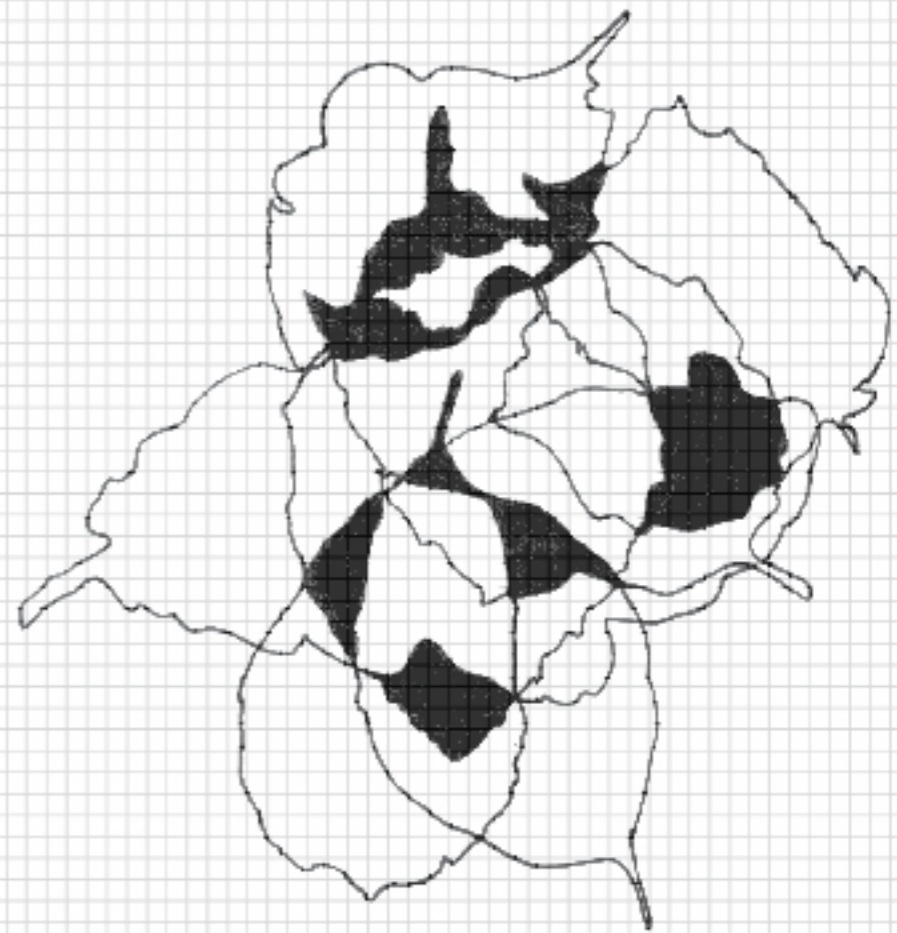
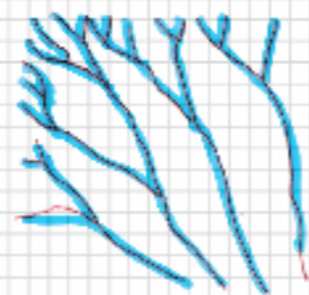
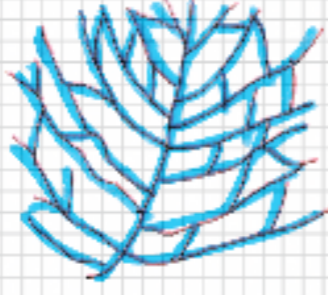
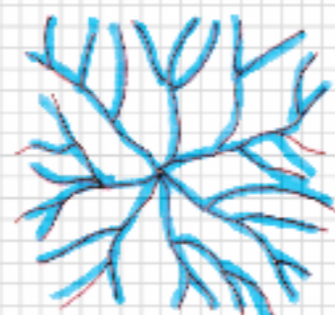
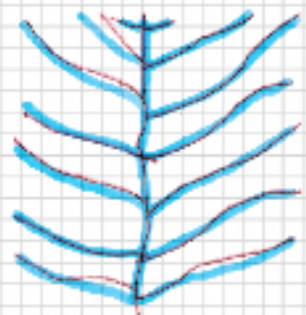
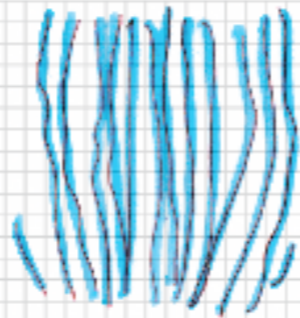
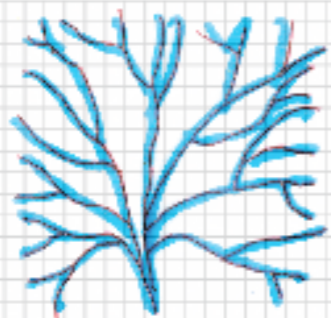
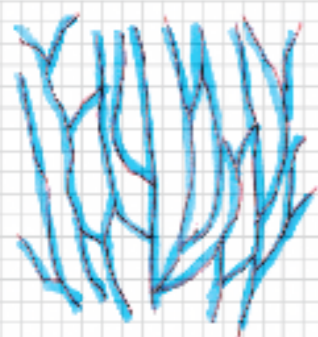
- 1) John Bartram - N. America
- 2) Philibert de Commaison - Madagascar
- 3) Jean Baret - 'Mydriagen hortensis'
- 4) William Bampier
- 5) David Douglas - Scot
- 6) Benedict Roezl - 'orchids'
- 7) George Forrest - Yunnan Province
- 8) Ernest Wilson - China

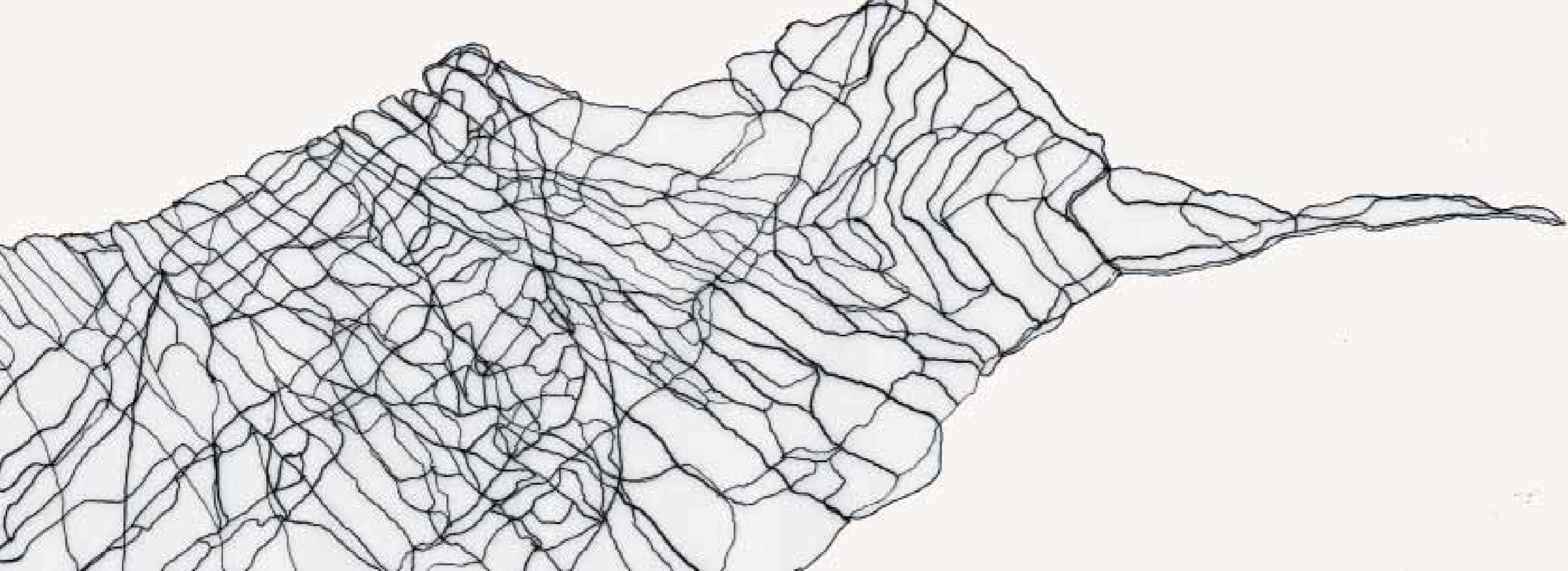




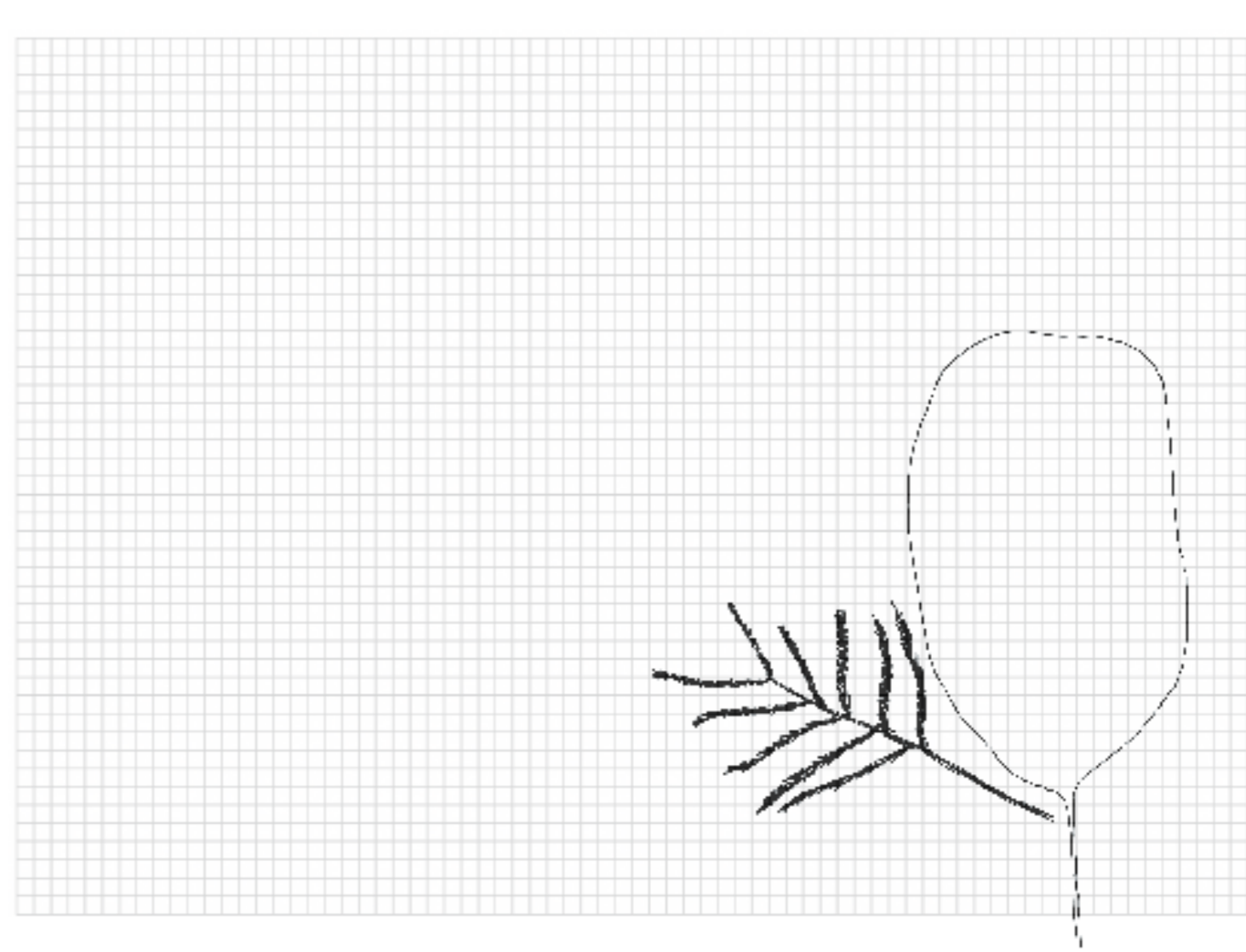
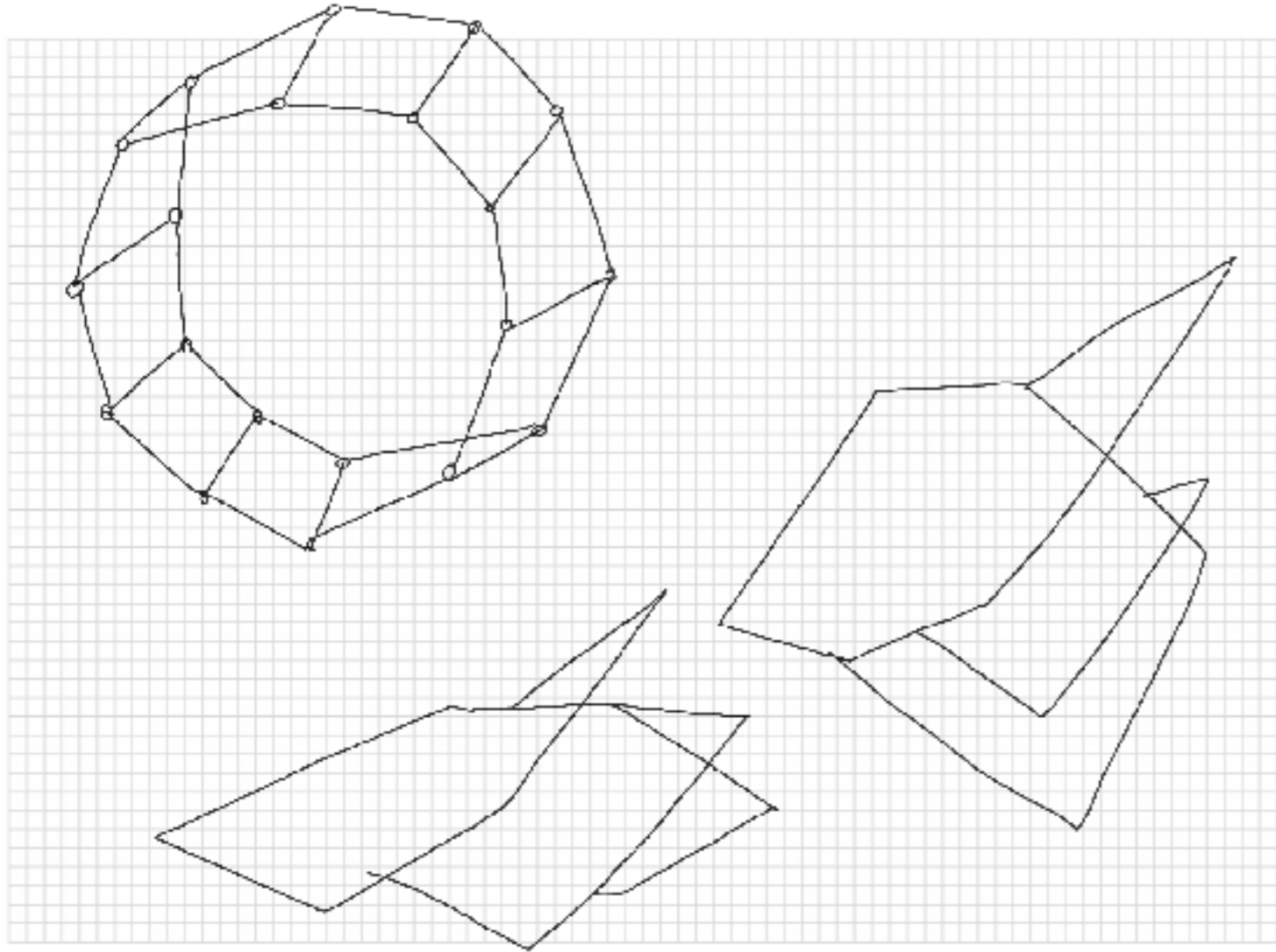


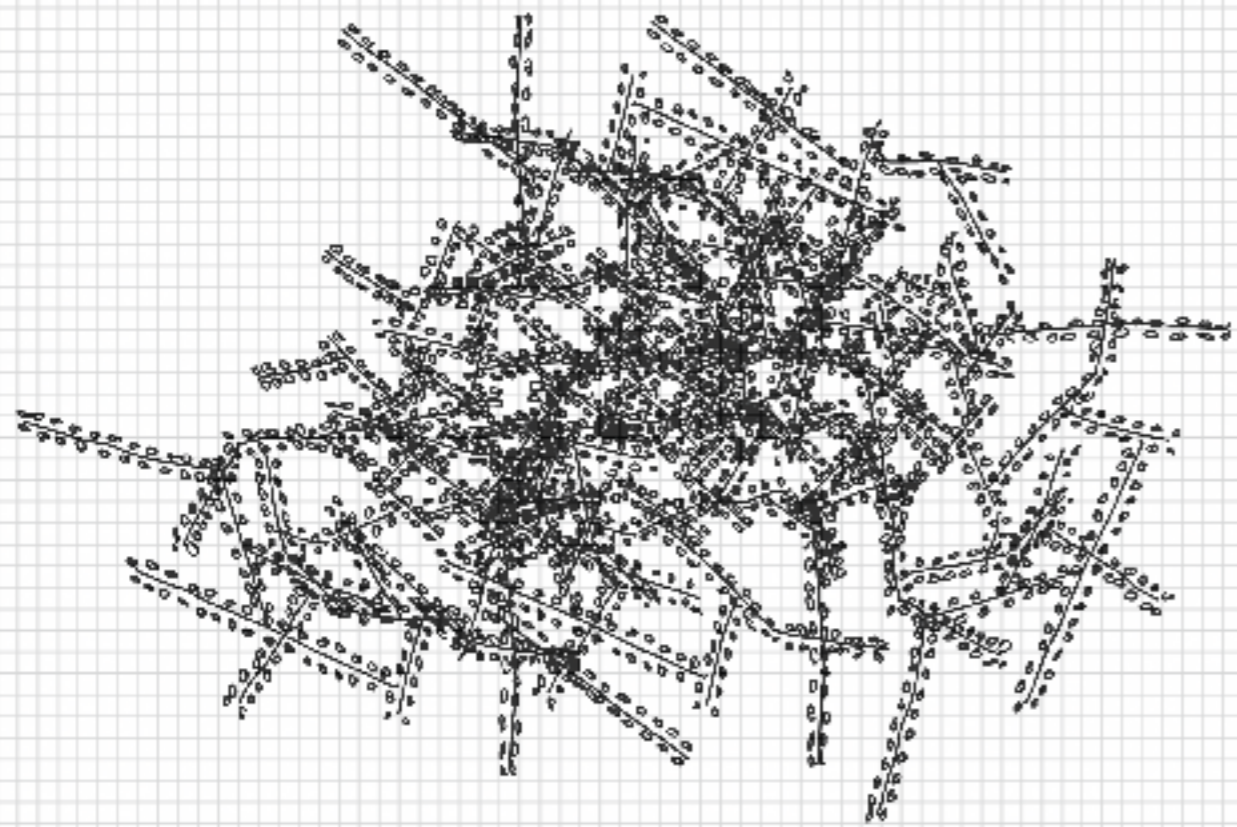














Colophon

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Artist

Christine Mackey

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Christine Mackey

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Christine Mackey with Trish Carey [Sandbox]

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Biographical note

Christine Mackey is an artist and independent researcher who employs diverse disciplines, subject matter and tactics in devising works that can generate different kinds of knowledge of place, their hidden histories and ecological formations. Using diverse graphic sources and quasi-scientific methods, her work explores the interactive potential of art as a research tool and its capacity for social and environmental change.

<http://christinemackey.com>

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Fingal Arts



