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SKY AS GROUND: REFRAMING ECOLOGIES AT ZURICH AIRPORT PARK

Posted on October 14, 2025 by Dima Fadel



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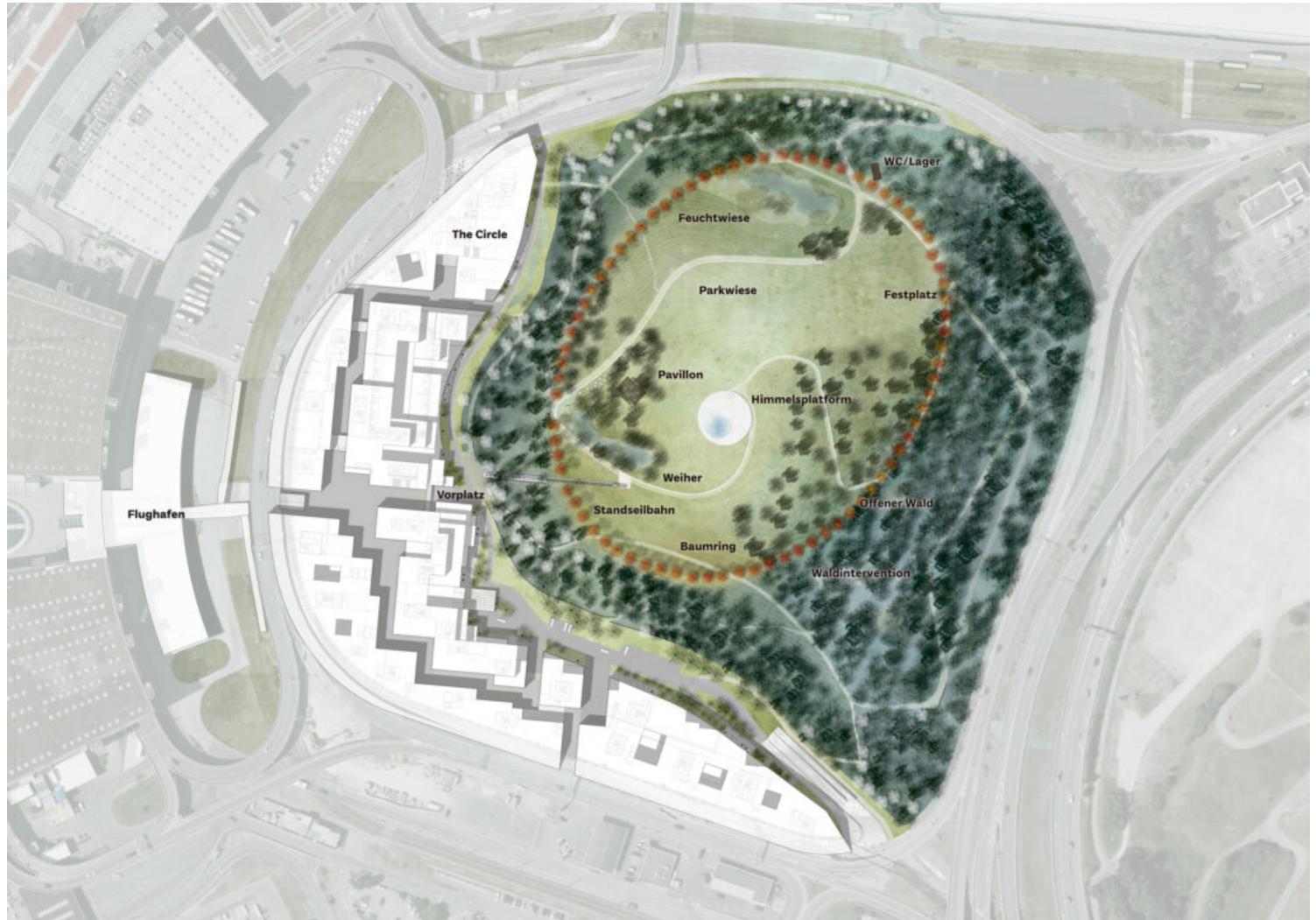
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Zurich Airport Park reimagines an infrastructural edge as a high-intensity public landscape that also strengthens ecological systems. The commission called for a park capable of absorbing thousands of daily users without compromising protected habitats or forestry regulations. The design positions the periphery as a new kind of urban nature—simultaneously global in outlook and local in structure—by converting apparent conflicts among conservation, recreation, and timber management into complementary objectives. Across scales, the project amplifies a latent poetics in an otherwise routine suburban setting, drawing on atmosphere, phenomenology, environmental psychology, and social activation.

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Set on a glacier-moraine hill beside the airport, the park opened in 2020 and is encircled by Riken Yamamoto's megastructure, The Circle. Here, tranquility persists within a ring of movement. Over time, distinct layers accumulated: primordial moraine gravel; 1960s highway spoil heaped into abstract forms; and compensatory plantings—forests, meadows, wetlands—subsequently protected. The plan uses existing ecological mapping as a framework.

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The Sky: above the earth

ephemeral time and weather
abstract
universal
connects all citizens of earth



Topography: the surface earth

abstract expression of landforms
sculptural
the world under our feet
the world we move over



Forest: on the earth

constructed image
universally evocative
shifting seasons
image of Swiss Forestry maintenance



Glacier Moraine: below the earth

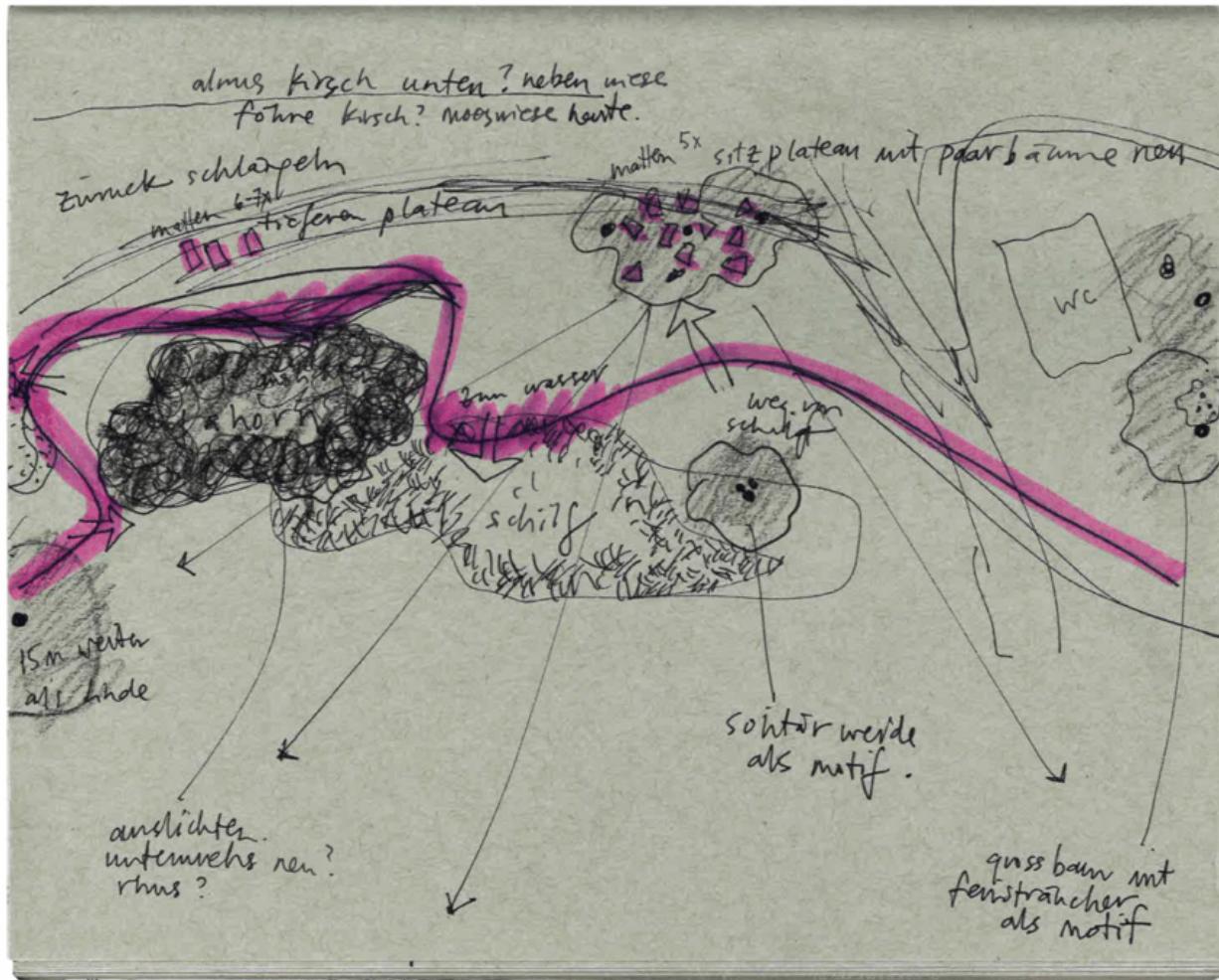
archaic
ancient
Swiss geological history



Two statements anchor the concept by Robin Winogrond. First, the site's vertical stratigraphy is turned into a spatial sequence perceived along the slope, from moraine to forest to wetland to surreal topography, ending at a 30-meter Sky Platform where water cycles between mirror and fog, rendering the sky as walkable, inhabitable weather. Second, a 200-meter tree ring crowns the hill, lending the landform a clear figure legible at the territorial scale, including from the air.

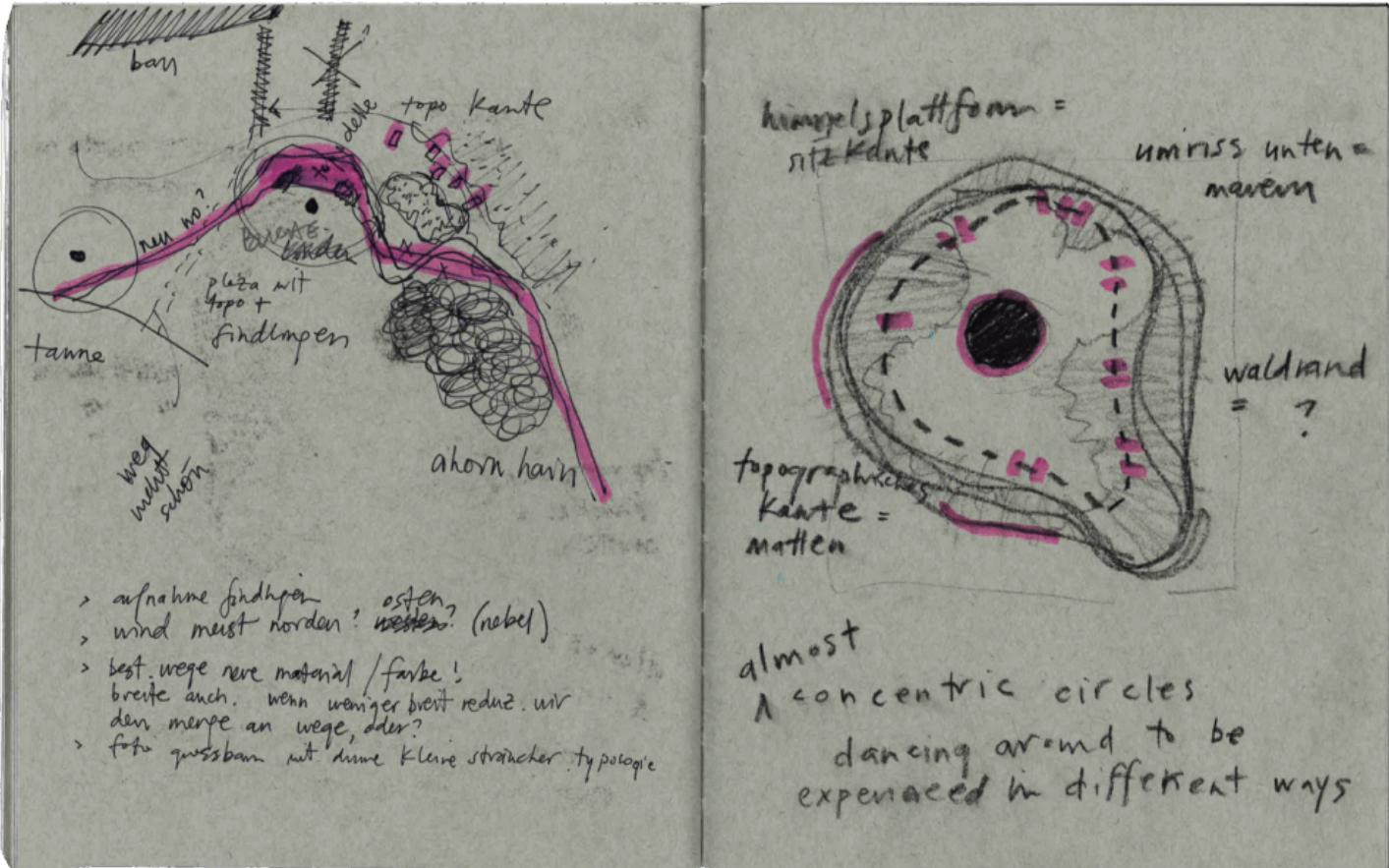
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Circulation is clarified by the Woodland Loop and Sky Loop, while planting strategies key to the site's erratic soils, alternating between poorly draining clays, fast-draining gravels, and uneven organics, compose distinct atmospheres every hundred meters. Programmed "micro-rooms" offer brief yet immersive pauses: Woodland Pavilion, Fire Ring, Yoga Mats, Wildwood Plaza, and a Sky-Gazing Chair: a contemporary aluminum take on the 1903 Adirondack. Biodiversity targets were developed with ecological and forestry specialists, prompting a broader shift in management values from commodity production toward multi-benefit forests that balance habitat and leisure.

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