For most of human evolution the vast volume of cultural and environmental insight needed to thrive and survive was passed on orally. Knowledge-keeping narratives were of critical importance. Once universal practices have been so thoroughly forgotten in our cultural context that there is no name for them in our language.

MONSTERCODE
THE POWER OF HUMAN IMAGINATION / CODING INFORMATION INTO THE ENVIRONMENT

TAPPING INTO TWO POWERFUL FORMS OF HUMAN MEMORY

1: Our memory for geography

We may not be great at remembering lists, but we are amazing at remembering places. Imagine your house. Hardly anyone struggles to remember where the living room, bedroom, kitchen, toilet are, or even the furniture in those rooms. Modern memory champions still use this technique for remembering, known as a memory-palace. Our ancestors did not live in palaces, but their landscapes could serve just as well as their mental theatres. The settings of forests, swamps, a strange rock, a particular bend in a river, all could function as places to encode knowledge.

Building worlds into the world

MonsterCode is an experiment in combining these two forms of memory to encode knowledge in our own environment, using the existing world around us as a memory palace. Timelines are a good place to start. You might want to memorise inventions, famous female pirates, or geological ages, it doesn't really matter. A mental landscape for storing the information can be set up anywhere—it can be your walk to the local supermarket—but it is important to think about how you construct it.

You will need to determine the start and end in physical space, and there need to be enough objects in the environment for you to map your data points onto. Once you have determined the physical space, you can begin to map the objects you want to memorise onto it, associating them with short stories or visual cues to help trigger the memories. Over time a particular tree may remind you of a famous president, a restaurant may remind you of a prehistoric elephant species, or the cheese section in the supermarket might represent Viking history.

2: our memory of character

You may forget someone's name, but you never struggle to remember their personality. Animism gives character to our environment: stones, rivers, houses, masks, fire, musical instruments. When our knowledge is carried by characters in our environment that knowledge is much easier to share. One example that survives even in Europe are the zodiac signs. Without those signs the sky is just an abstract mass of stars, making it very hard to point one particular star out to a friend, but with the zodiac signs, you can point out the star that makes up the shoulder of the bear easily.

Creating such a mental landscape overlaid on physical space allows you to store all kinds of data, and you can just walk through it. You recall information by seeing it in your imagination when you walk along your timeline. As you populate your landscape with more types of information you may even start to see patterns forming, overlapping events and facts influencing each other. As you do more research and add more information these patterns trigger further curiosity, and as you expand your timeline the world around you grows, becoming increasingly enriched by the information layer you have created for it in your imagination.

Try it in your local environment and see what monsters might emerge! The more fun it is, the better it works.

Take for example a list of inventions, and place them in correct order, associating each object or event with features of the local landscape. A tractor might remind you of a steam-engine, or the chimney of a factory might resemble a space rocket. Once you have set up your timeline you can add other sets too!
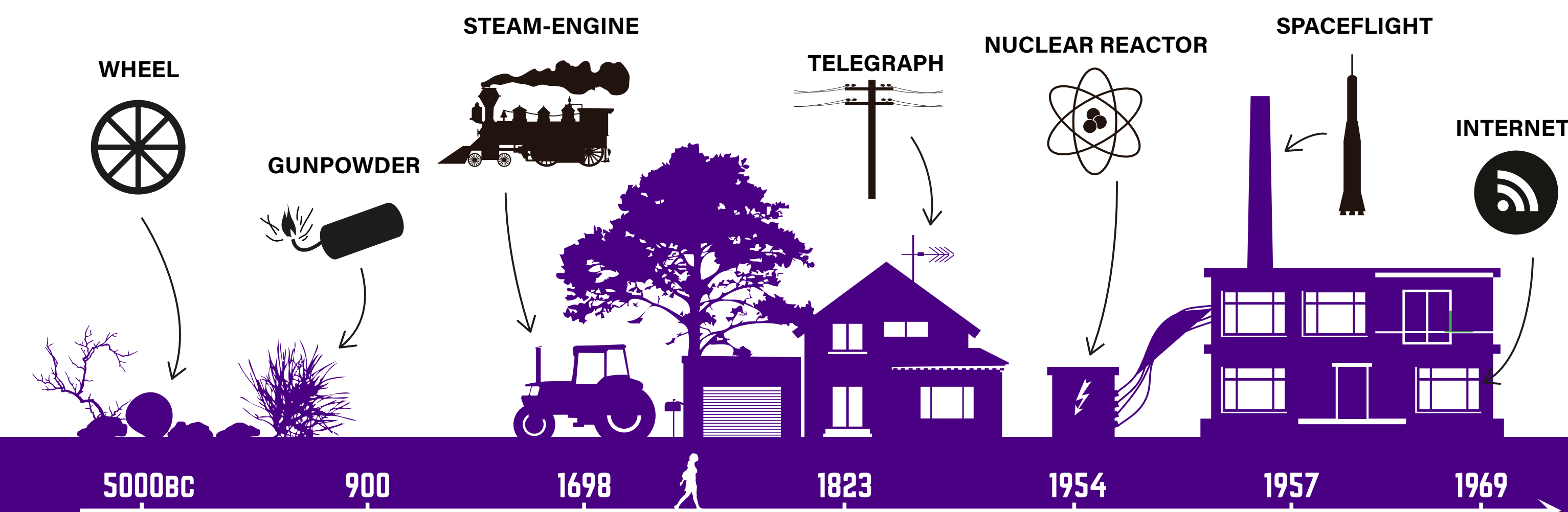
THE FORCES SHAPING AMELISWEERD AS EPIC CREATURES

In many cultures throughout time, monsters have served to warn and protect, influencing our behaviour and carrying moral force. Perhaps our distant ancestors believed not so much in the monster itself, but more in the wisdom it embodied, the monster as signal or insight. Monsters as guides in an uncertain and changing world.

Even now in Iceland, ancient mythological creatures have their place in the landscape and are taken into account when infrastructure is built. In Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 2008 the construction of a state highway was adjusted so as not to disturb a Taniwha (a water monster, often a warning against danger or protector of an important local resource) living in an ecologically important swamp near a bend in a river.

We often dismiss our ancestors' use of animism as primitive superstition, instead of seeing it as a vital means of consolidating crucial cultural knowledge and indeed wisdom. In our experimentation with encoding knowledge into the landscape we found the practice to extend beyond just memory, reorganising mental frameworks with such power that you wonder why we ever stopped doing this; living in mentally enriched landscapes, encoded with knowledge.

The next step in our ongoing MonsterCode research is where you now find yourself. Encoding knowledge in the landscape is one thing, but it can be a highly personal process. What narrative strategies can we apply to transfer that knowledge in a way that can warn against the consequences of disturbing, and protecting that environment?

Amelisweerd has been and is shaped by many forces, in recent years the construction and expansion of the A27 motorway has been a threat to the local ecology. The forces at play are described in policy documents, standards and zoning plans. They can be invisible to us , or opaque. What happens when these forces are translated into monsters?

Can we look to the future in new or different ways through considering the actions of the monsters we have created?
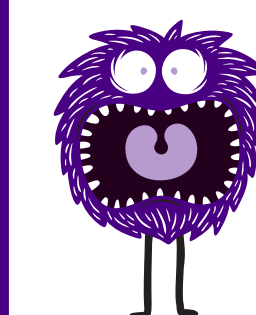
The origin of the word Monster is found in Latin: *monstrare* which means to point out, to show, but also *monere*; to remind, to advise and of course *monstrum*; portent, omen, sign.
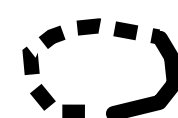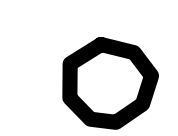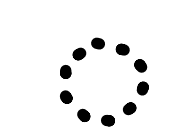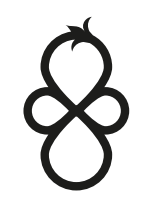

WHEEL

GUNPOWDER

STEAM-ENGINE

TELEGRAPH

NUCLEAR REACTOR

SPACEFLIGHT

INTERNET

| 5000BC | 900 | 1698 | 1823 | 1954 | 1957 | 1969 |

GARDENINGS WITH MONSTERS

Did you find a new monster?

There are still many undiscovered monsters in the Amelisweerd area! If you believe you have encountered a new monster please describe it here so we can add it to the bestiary!

MATERIALS *What is the Monster made of?*

....
....
....

ORIGIN *Why does the Monster exist?*

....
....
....

MOTIVATION *What does the Monster want?*

....
....

Sketch your monster, you can share it on instagram with the hashtags **#monstercode** and **#gardeningAmelisweerd**
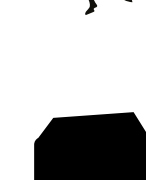
Do the MonsterWalk

Can you find the signs of our monsters? You can mark the locations where you have encountered monsters on the map. We are certain there are also many new monsters waiting to be discovered, maybe you will find some of your own...

Track Guide:

- ⬡ (dashed) Full loop: ±45 minutes
- ⬡ Short loop: ±25 minutes
- ⭘ (dotted) Explore off track at your own risk!

Monster Legend & checklist:

Á or Zoabouros ☐
The eternal sigh of Zoabouros Á can be heard throughout Amelisweerd.

The Narcito ☐
Have you spotted anything yellow? The Narcito may be hiding nearby.

Bloombat / Witherwing ☐
The signs of their existence are all around, but these creatures are extremely well camouflaged.

The Creamtoad ☐
Don't forget to look up! The Creamtoad hammocks are not always easy to spot.

The Ocunim ☐
Close your eyes in the forest. Are you feeling watched? Do you feel safe or might you be a threat to the forest?

Lumberbunkers ☐
Some prefer resting in open fields, while some would rather keep under the shade of the forest canopy.

The Wickander ☐
Twigs and leaves drifting in the water may be a sign of a growing Wickander moving beneath the surface.

2. Choosing your route

From the crossroads here you will be able to see Nieuw-Amelisweerd estate to the west. Head in this direction to complete the full monsterwalk, or turn south into the woods for the shorter loop.

1. Start here!

Cross the bridge opposite the Oud-Amelisweerd estate, and take the winding path heading into the forest in an western direction...

START

3. Take a break, what did you see?

You have almost reached the end of the walk! Take some time in the picnic area to check your list for signs of monsters you might have encountered.

Did you see anything else that people should be warned about? Or things that should be protected? What other invisible forces are at play, shaping the future of Amelisweerd? Maybe you can imagine a new monster that should be added to our collection, guiding people's actions in the area...

N W E S