

BOOKLET 01
FIELDWORK NOTES

LOCATION:

K a n n e - M a a s t r i c h t
- E b e n - E m a e l

DATE:

2 6 - 2 7 / 0 3 / 2 0 2 2

DISTANCE:

3 5 , 9 k m

SPENT THE NIGHT AT:

K a n n e

WEATHER:

S u n n y

From our starting point in Kanne we head north to explore the area between Maastricht and the Albert Canal that connects Liège with Antwerp. In order to bypass Maastricht, the canal intersects the 'Plateau van Caestert', an impressive cut dividing the Sint-Pietersberg into two parts. We follow a self-mapped route which is quite long but only takes part of all possible paths. The area may not be large and certainly not large-scale (rather picturesque), but the possibilities for recreation in this area seem endless.

Time and again, we come across houses, small and bigger castles made of limestone, built against a massive but internally hollowed-out limestone wall or even carved into this wall. Limestone is omnipresent, but its extraction seems to be a labour of the past. On the Cannerberg, we find gigantic pipes that are presumably ventilation channels. In hindsight, this was a good prelude to the ENCI

quarry, a former mining- and cement production location. We drink coffee and eat a waffle at the edge of the silent factory, overlooking what is both an industrial landscape and the Oehoe Valley, an idyllic sight and the habitat of one of the largest owl species in the world.

As in Hambach, there's a slag heap (the Observant) next to the quarry, but on a completely different scale: the heap, 171m above sea level, is less noticeable, integrated in and on the St. Pietersberg. The quarry itself, with its deepest point 5m above sea level, is a lot smaller than its German counterpart. Noticable is that the Maas river, just a stone's throw away, flows 40 meters higher, 45m above sea level. The ENCI-quarry also shows itself as an industrial artifact but already with a peek into the future, where nature value and recreational use seem to predominate.

The next morning, the area to be explored lies south of the Albert Canal. Where the Meuse carved out a valley, men dug the canal, two large and countless small quarries and raised a slag heap. All these elements together make it difficult to understand the morphology of this area but also to orient ourselves. There's more that makes this area complex to grasp: it consists of three regions, two countries and two languages, the borders of which also cut straight through the area, not always following morphologic or geologic elements. You will understand: often we don't know in which region or country we are when wandering through this relatively small area.

Near Eben-Emael, we come across a third quarry, which can be seen on aerial photos but which, in reality, you only see until you pass really close to it. This one, fenced off, seems to be still in use, although there's no activity

now. Maybe because it's Sunday, we wonder. In Hambach and Inden, this question would not be difficult to answer: there's a constant noise of humming machines in the background and the huge dinosaur-like machines are moving constantly.

We pass by Fort Eben-Emael. A huge infrastructural complex of 17 bunkers dug out of the marl of the St. Pietersberg and with its tunnels and cannons reaching kilometers further. Next to the various war stories about and around the Sint-Pietersberg (in which a bunker was built at the beginning of World War II and set up to secure the Netherlands' most important art treasures from air raids) and the Jezuïetenberg/Cannerberg (containing a communications center and headquarters of NATO during the Cold War), this fort adds another layer to the experience of this area that seems to be more tangible here than anywhere else: wartime memory.

Everything in this area seems to be a carrier of meaning or a consequence of complex, layered historical events. There's no shaft, no quarry and no path that hasn't been created, turned upside down and that hasn't witnessed bright and dark moments. Understanding everything or being able to read this each layer of this landscape seems an impossible task. But, we ask ourselves, is this necessary to fully experience the exceptional richness of the interwoven nature, culture and industrial developments within the Three Countries Park?

