

# Coexistence when beavers repeatedly evade attempts of control

## Beavers and Food Forest Ketelbroek

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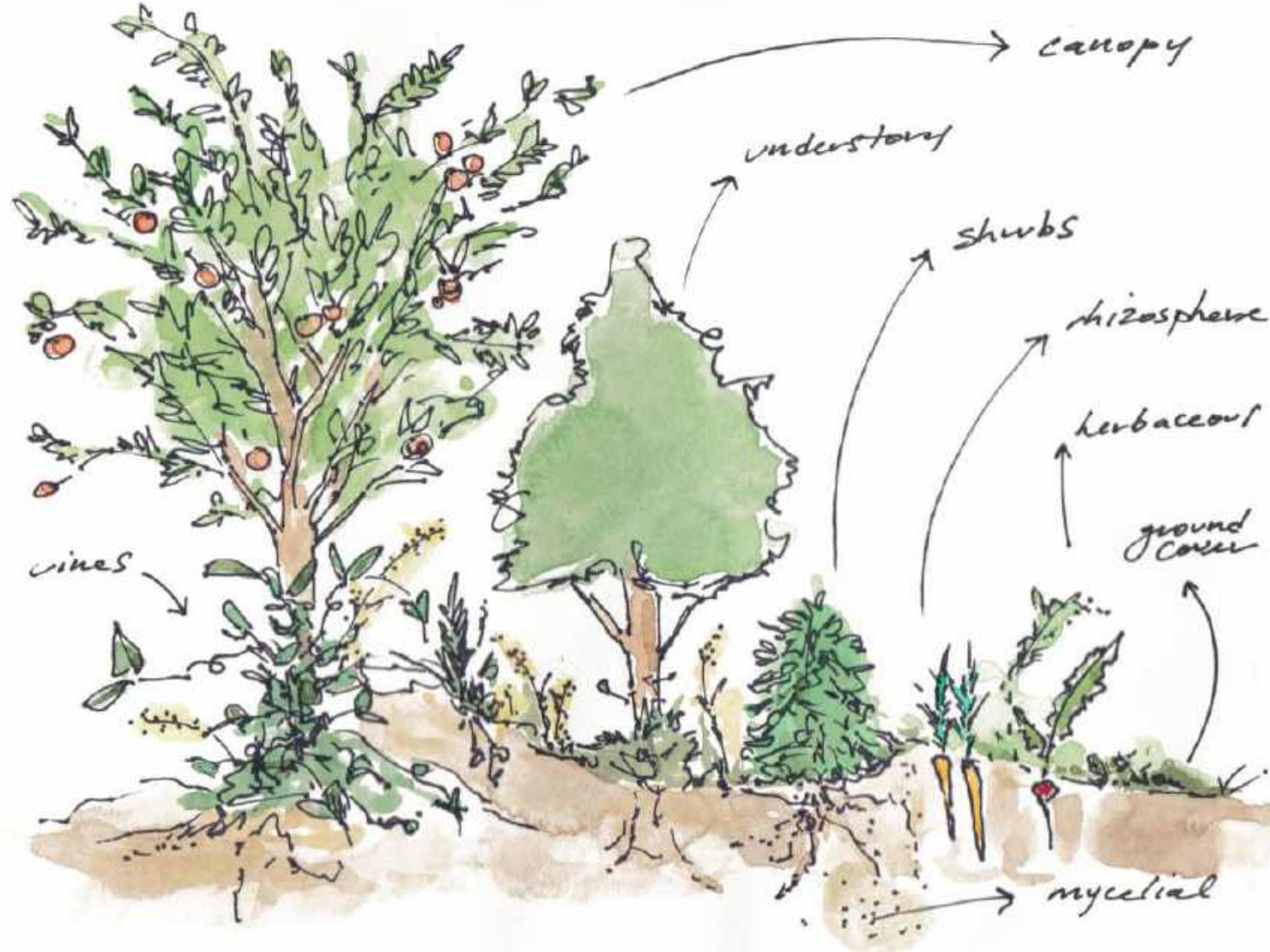
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# THE FOOD FOREST





A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a person wearing a dark jacket and shorts is bent over, working in a field of low-lying green plants. The field is divided into sections of different vegetation, including some taller, yellowish-brown grasses. In the background, a line of trees stretches across the horizon under a pale, overcast sky. The overall scene suggests a rural or agricultural setting.

# Food forest Ketelbroek

How it began back in 2009





# Food forest Ketelbroek

How it's going 2025

# Food forest Ketelbroek & research project

Methods: field visits, interviews, news items and policy documents



## Actants

- Beaver dams and lodges
- Food forest farmers and Food producing trees
- Neighbor
- 2 Rivers (1 under Water authorities)
- Road
- Municipality
- Province



# Categories and Ambiguity



Zaltbommel April 2023

Ambiguous events

Coping strategies

Powerful allyship

# River x housing x infrastructure

Ambiguous event: beaver dam

Experienced threat: road and house foundations

Kind: external pressure

Responses: water authorities place beaver deceiver -> assimilation

Ambiguity returns

- > beavers block the inlet of the deceiver
- > weekly clearing by water authorities
- > co-adaptation



Picture credits: Dekker May 2022



# Food Production x Ecological Processes

Ambiguous event: Beavers feeding

Experienced threat: food production

Kind: internal contradiction

Responses: wire mesh around trees and buffer zone

-> embracing / co-adaptation





# River x housing x infrastructure x food production

Ambiguous event: beaver dam 2

-> ambiguity returns again

Experienced threat: **road** and **house foundations** *and* **food production**

Responses: food forest farmer removes 3dm when water levels are high

-> co-adaptation in legal margins



## De bever als bondgenoot: een plan voor boeren, burgers en bever-buddy's

Geschreven door Rivierenland - 22 februari 2023

De bever is terug! Na in de 19de eeuw uitgeroeid te zijn heeft een succesvolle herintroductie plaatsgevonden. Deze grote knaagdieren verrijken natuur en landschap. Maar soms lijkt het alsof het succes te groot wordt... op steeds meer plekken worden bomen doorgeknaagd en ontstaan dammen en/of holen. Her en der wordt al opgetreden tegen overlast van 'probleembevers'. Een excursie naar het voedselbos Ketelbroek geeft inzicht in ervaringen uit de praktijk om bevers een optimale plek in het landschap te bieden. Wouter van Eck (eigenaar voedselbos) en Patricia de Cocq (lijstrekker water Natuurlijk Rivierenland) geven een toelichting.

# River x housing x infrastructure

But then; extremely high-water levels and accidental damaging

Responses: extermination of dams



Picture credits: Dekker February 2024



# River x food production

Ambiguous event: Beaver dam 3 elaborated

Responses: food forest farmer removes 5dm when water levels are high

-> co-adaptation in legal margins



Picture credits: Britt van Zelst February 2024





# What can ambiguity teach us?

Ambiguity constantly returns;  
Uncertainty, surprise, frustration,  
fascination, anger, awe...

Becoming aware of beaver presences

Reflections on categories

- What part of the category is threatened?
- What is the boundary of the category?





# Practical tools

Cultural category adaptation

Buffer zone

Linear -> dynamic

- Complex puzzle
- Creativity is activated

Interspecies interaction:

- More conscious relationality
- Learning about beavers
- Mutual benefits

But what about responsibilities towards other humans?



# Thank you for your attention



Picture credits: Wouter van Eck winter 2025

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