

The Rock Garden

creating a field course on campus

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The Rock Garden is a field skills training course on Campus Sterre, Ghent University

- The geology of the Rock Garden is entirely invented.
- We designed a plausible geological structure with outcrops arranged across the available space on Campus Sterre.
- We dug local Belgian stone, carefully orientated, into the ground at 10 sites across campus to make realistic outcrops.
- We now use the Rock Garden for teaching geological mapping and structural geology.



Landscaping the Rock Garden: a team effort to carefully position the blocks.



Students taking strike and dip measurements from the (very) recently emplaced rocks.

Field skills training

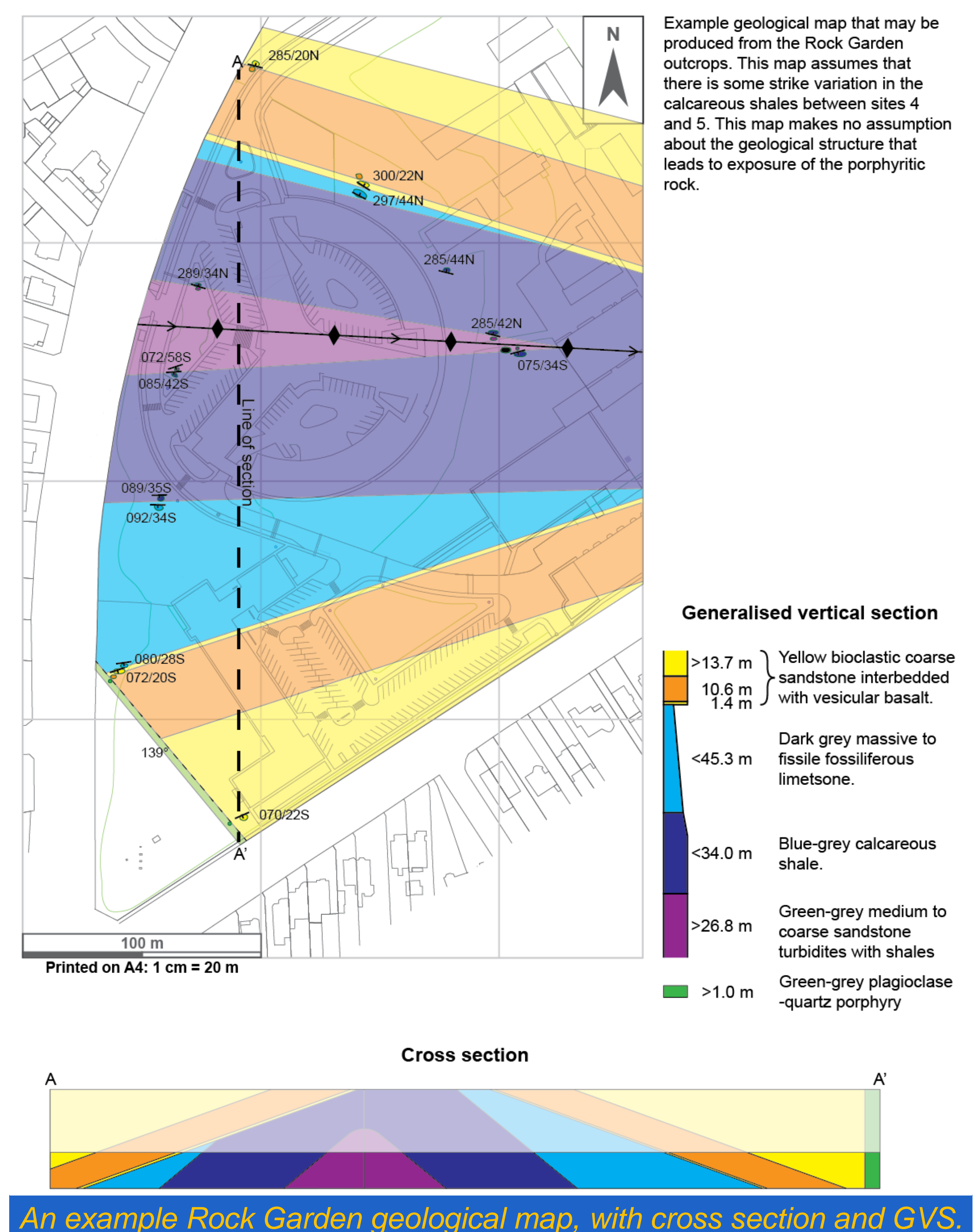
- Each site can be used to teach specific field skills (e.g. strike and dip measurement).
- We designed the Rock Garden as a mapping training exercise: it can be treated as a 'real-world' geological mapping area.
- There is no unique solution to the Rock Garden outcrops: we encourage students to explore possible hypotheses.

Creating additional resources

- We have made a field guide for the Rock Garden, as if for a 'real world' course.
- We are building a Rock Garden website (scan the QR code or visit <https://rockgarden.ugent.be>) to support teaching and facilitate public outreach activities.
- We will develop the Rock Garden to support more outreach activity.

Increasing the accessibility of geoscience field training

- Learning how to collect field data is an important part of geoscience education^{1,2}.
- Student confidence in their skills comes from regular practice, but field skills are taught on infrequent intensive field courses.
- Long (residential) field courses can create physical, financial, racial, and cultural barriers³⁻⁵ that stop prospective students pursuing a geoscience education.
- Locally available field training mitigates some of these barriers and increases opportunities for students to practice their field skills.



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References and further reading. ¹Butler (2008), *Higher Education Academy*; ²Whitmeyer et al. (2009), *Field Geology Education*; ³Stokes et al. (2019), *Geosphere*; ⁴Giles et al. (2020), *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*; ⁵Abeyta et al. (2021), *EarthArXiv 2091*.