



welcoming wilderness

RECREATIONAL USE OF DERELICT URBAN LANDSCAPES

How can the use of small scale design interventions, and respect to the existing nature, turn the wildly growing derelict, and often post-industrial land, into valuable recreational landscapes?

background

In the latest decades sustainable planning has been on the agenda and increasingly integrated in urban planning and landscape architecture. Along with this comes a higher focus on for example re-use, multifunctionality and ecologically informed solutions. But how can the derelict landscapes play an important role in this?

In our cities, the land-use and spatial organization is constantly transforming due to many different factors, such as for example economic growth or decline, densification, and relocation of industries due to globalization. This transformation sometimes result in leaving derelict landscapes behind, which if left alone, with time gets colonized by different vegetation in the remnants of the former use.

These emerging landscapes are scientifically proven to be of importance for the conservation of urban biodiversity, but due to their random nature, fencing, and their often typical function as trash dumps, they might add to the decadent feeling of a neighborhood, which in the end might rush redevelopment and wipe out the valuable nature these landscapes often hold. These landscapes contain both remnants connected to the history and development of a place, as well as the spontaneous vegetation's interpretation of it, resulting in random and often richly structured nature with atmospheres not often seen in other green areas. At the same time, it is proven that the use of wild nature push peoples view and acceptance of it, which can have positive effects for nature conservation inside as well as beyond urban borders. An increased awareness of the potential of these derelict landscapes, and how they can be used for recreational purpose, is seen in examples in other parts of the world, but yet has not been seen a lot in Denmark.

With this thesis my intention is to investigate how the use of small scale design interventions can be used as a tool to invite people into the nature of the urban derelict landscapes, and transform them from being neglected back-sides, into valued green areas.

The main findings of the thesis are, that the spontaneous vegetation of the derelict land has many imbedded qualities, both of ecological, cultural, and economical character. Activating these areas for recreation can play an important role in sustainable transformation of our cities. For a successful use of the derelict land and the random nature, a middle course between human recreation and nature conservation is vital. Exactly how to find this middle course is much dependent on site specific factors, like cultural context, size, biological values and expected use. To help people interpret the area; both its history, spatial qualities and natural processes, is of utmost importance. This could be obtained by the use of robust designed structures, emphasizing interesting vegetation, orientating elements and sightlines.

With above mentioned findings in mind, I have given my proposal to the post-industrial landscape of former Amagerbanen in Copenhagen, which I believe could become an identity forming green area of its neighborhood, and stand as an inspiring example of how to approach other derelict green areas in urban contexts, and thereby push the development both in favor of a more diverse range of green experiences for the urban dweller, as well as of nature conservation.



Naturpark Südgelände, Berlin. A place similar to Amagerbanen, where a minimal intervention approach has been used.

tools

Layer Of Intervention	Tool	Abbr.	
Social/Cultural	Social Area Social centers, often with high cultural imprint, e.g. places for activities, and generally higher maintenance of vegetation.	[SA]	
	Visual connection Strengthening views and sightlines to awaken curiosity, help people interpret, orientate or see certain details.	[V]	
	Pathsystems Using pathsystems for orientation and interpretation, and to direct movement.	[P]	
	Art The use of art and/or sculptures for contrasting, robust, colorful or characteristic structures, for orientation and emphasizing existing qualities.	[A]	
	Enhancement of historical layer Re-use and reinterpreting historical structures, or communicating the history through other structures.	[H]	
	Landmarks Using landmarks for orientation and drawing attention to the area.	[L]	
	Information Supplying information to the public, on e.g. flora and fauna or history.	[I]	
	Smaller Stops Stops helping people to interpret a certain area, for example a bench, a watchtower or other activities.	[S]	
	Vegetative Management	Nature Conservation with biodiversity in focus The landscape is maintained with a focus on keeping a rich flora.	[NCb]
		Nature Conservation with recreation in focus The landscape is maintained with a focus on highlighting aesthetically pleasing vegetation or rooms.	[NCr]
Nature Conservation with free succession/process in focus The landscape is left to grow freely and only maintained for accessibility and safety. Process of succession is in focus.		[NCs]	
Creative Conservation Seed mixes dispersed in empty, "dead" areas. Meant to help the succession and biodiversity on its way, and bring life and quick aesthetic value to an otherwise dull environment.		[CC]	
Designed and/or Formal Plantings Planned plantings, often around social centers. More formal or monumental, and used to frame and enhance certain parts or areas.		[DP]	

The thesis have the objective to investigate and get an understanding of the different views on, and values regarding the derelict land and spontaneous vegetation in urban areas, and to investigate how design has been worked with in such areas before, and the knowledge is then brought into the design phase.

Literature of both philosophical- and designed oriented character has been studied to get an

understanding of the topic:

- Views on and valuation of spontaneous vegetation and urban derelict landscapes, historical and present
- Urban biodiversity and the biological values of spontaneous vegetation
- Transforming cities and planning methods and tendencies (e.g. Landscape Urbanism, Urban acupuncture)
- Ecological design, re-use and sustainability (e.g. Ecological, Planting design, "Concept of Stops")
- Environmental psychology

The literature study was followed by analyses of five different existing projects on former derelict land, where the spontaneous vegetation has been in focus, and where minimal design interventions has turned this places to valuable green areas.

The knowledge was finally systematized as tools and summarized in the table above. This table shall be used to read the situation plan, where the different abbreviations are used.

amagerbanen

The project area is 2km long, and contain the last remnants of the former railway Amagerbanen plus two derelict plots in direct vicinity. The last part of the railway ran up to 1997, and has since then been more or less derelict, and colonized by a wide range of vegetation.

The railway as well as the surrounding industry and Klevermarken has a rich history, closely connected to the development and population growth of Amager. There is an ongoing transformation in the neighborhood, with a mix of new housing, office buildings, industries, heavy traffic and green areas.

The project area is 2km long, and contain the last remnants of the former railway Amagerbanen plus two derelict plots in direct vicinity. The last part of the railway ran up to 1997, and has since then been more or less derelict, and colonized by a wide range of vegetation. The railway as well as the surrounding industry and Klevermarken has a rich history, closely connected to the development and explosive population growth in Amager during the 20th century. Today

there is an ongoing transformation in the neighborhood, with a mix of new housing, office buildings, industries, heavy traffic and green areas, where the old railway connects many of these different patches.

The project area constitutes a main green element in the otherwise rather grey environment, and consists of a minimum of 120 (registered) plant species in varying assemblages, of which many grow in places in ways that would never be seen in a more traditional park. The spatial and vegetative characteristics likewise vary a lot from light open and low with a rich flora, to narrow, deep, lush and forest-like, where you almost get the feeling of being alone.

Problematic sides with the area are typical for its kind, with heavy trash dumping in dead ends, fencing (sometimes very poor), which together with dense vegetation at times, give you the experience of being trapped or not getting an overview or find your way.

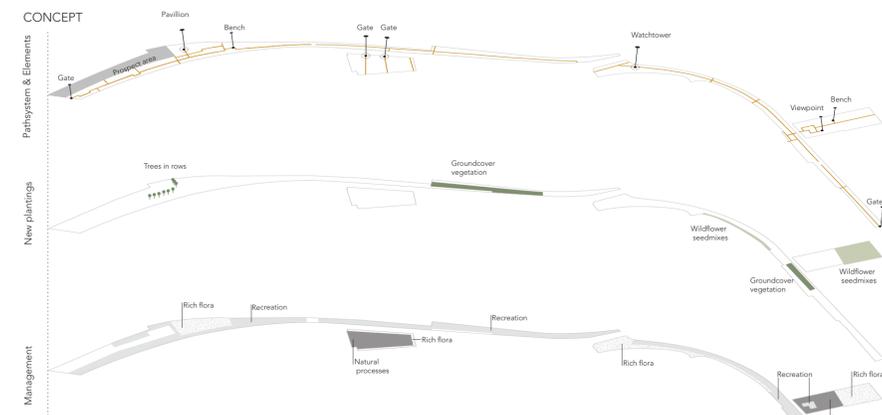


design proposal

To turn Amagerbanen into the characteristic, identity shaping area it has the possibility to become, and to bring people closer to the qualities of its nature, knowledge of, and accessibility into the area is vital, as well as acceptance of its wilderness. It has to signal that someone cares about it, and that it is okay, safe, and interesting to enter. With its shape and location it has an excellent potential to become an alternative, green transportation route through the developing area, and at the same time be an important green corridor in favor of the local wildlife.

The proposal is made with a focus on making a coherent route along the railway area, and with a more individual approach to the adjacent plots. The area of the old railway is designed as a coherent path with opportunities for smaller stops on the way, where it is possible to learn more about the history and nature of the place. The plots offers fascinating nature in different successional states and species assemblages and the idea is that in the first round make people more aware of this nature by using them as green passages. Depending on the development of the surrounding areas, it is then possible to make space for stay of more social character, if it is estimated as relevant. The part which today hold housing and a car rental is treated as a prospect area, where suggestions for a future social area is discussed. The project should though work without including this part.

The interventions will be of different character and can be divided into the two categories **Social/Cultural** and **Vegetative**, similar to the tools in the table above to the right.



SOCIAL/CULTURAL

Pathsystem
The area will be provided with a coherent path system, mainly following the old rails to emphasize the historical layer. In areas earlier used for dumping trash, new movements and stops can change the view and use of it. A new connection is suggested from Strandlodsvej 11B, across the old railway, in level with the Jungle and a continued path in direction to the sea. It is free accessibility in the whole area but "directed" by dense vegetation in some parts. There are no real restrictions.

Elements
Along the path there are some bigger and smaller elements of different character, to make the area visible from the outside, and to highlight different qualities inside the area. The elements consist of for example: a pavilion; a watchtower; concrete gates; benches and information on flora, fauna or history.

VEGETATIVE

New plantings
There will be planted some new vegetation to accentuate existing qualities, or make problematic areas more aesthetically pleasing. There will be planted trees, groundcover vegetation and used wildflower seed mixes in the today bare areas, to bring in life and color.

Management
It is suggested to manage the vegetation in the area with different aspects in focus: A rich flora, recreation and aesthetical landscape, or the natural processes and free growth, depending on problems and potentials of the different parts.

