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# CONTENTS

# SELECTING DESIGN SITES IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

## LEA HOLST LAURSEN AND DITTE BENDIX LANNG

## Abstract

This paper explores answers to the practical question of how to approach site selection in the urban landscape. Contemporary cities can be characterized by an increasingly diluted and blurred line between built-, open- and infra-structures, which creates a hybrid condition of urbanity and countryside. Working in and with this urban landscape, urban designers face many complex choices throughout the design process. One choice, related to the initial operations of creating a field from which further formative and creative design steps can be taken, is the selection of site. The paper outlines three operational approaches to this selection: sequential, outright random, and strategic. To illustrate the use of these approaches, a design study is included. This study ties in the selection of sites with the wider urban design process of capturing site conditions and discovering and developing their potential for future intervention.

## 1  Introduction

This paper explores design potential in the urban landscape. We use the term *urban landscape* to denote the present urban situation in which city and landscape mix without clear hierarchies and boundaries. The topic of the paper is tied to the larger methodological challenge of developing methods for urban designers to analyse and intervene in this complex and fluid urban landscape. Our intention is to tap into this challenge by outlining a hands-on perspective on how to find sites with design potential. We ask: how should the selection of sites be approached?

This question is relevant in urban design education: students need to be capable of exploring a large part of the urban landscape in order to discover where to enter it. It is also relevant to the kind of "research-by-design" practice that Raoul Bunschoten's studio performs, for example. This is a practice that explicitly aims at challenging and developing our conceptions about the urban condition. However, the relevance is not limited to these kinds of free selections of sites – it may also apply to the processes of large-scale strategic urban development projects. In such projects, it is important to find and assess sites for implementing a strategy and to critically consider the strategy in relation to the specific conditions and potentials of the possible sites.

We offer an outline of different selection approaches while maintaining a focus on the intricate processes of design with which site selection is interwoven. In the following section, we briefly describe the condition of the urban landscape and a relational understanding of site. This conception of the empirical field that we engage with as urban designers positions the paper's considerations of how to approach sites with design potential. The third section of the paper outlines a specific study of spatial conditions and design potentials on the edge of Denmark to illustrate a possible approach to site selection. The method of the study is constructed around a day-long journey along infrastructures from a mid-sized Danish city to the peripheral countryside of Denmark. This journey shapes a linear movement through an urban landscape of both concentration and de-concentration processes. Along this journey a series of "urban snapshots" of possible design sites opens the field for analysis and for discovery of design potential. In the fourth section, we tie this example in with three different selection criteria, which range from a sequential selection along a line over an erratic acupuncture-like approach to the strategic selection of special, or critical, points in the urban landscape. In the concluding section, we tie in the site selection approaches with the wider process of designing sites in the urban landscape.

Figure 1
A site in the urban landscape at the edge of Denmark

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## 2 Sites in the urban landscape

The contemporary urban landscape embraces a complex, fluid and diverse condition that can be difficult to grasp. It does not correspond with a concentric understanding of the urban, having a city centre with a surrounding periphery; instead the urban landscape can be conceived of as a poly-nuclear network structure of enclaves in different sizes and characters connected through networks (Nielsen, 2001; Flusty and Dear, 1999). As such the city is not to be understood as the opposite of the countryside; rather

> […] the traditional notion of the city as a historical and institutional core surrounded by postwar suburbs and the open countryside has been largely replaced by a more polycentric and web like sprawl: the regional metropolis (Wall, 1999, p.234).

By denoting the present urban situation an *urban landscape*, it is implied that the urban as well as the landscape is of equal importance and exists in different variations where either the urban or the landscape can be more present than the other (Koolhaas and Mau, 1995; Chung, et al., 2001). The urban landscape is an unbounded entity where the boundaries between urban and countryside increasingly blur or even disappear

(Clemmensen, 2011). Architectural scholar Hans Ovesen reasserts this point when characterizing the contemporary city:

*...by its regional extent, unboundedness and urban weaving of city and countryside, by its many local centres of varied size, by the absent of an overall hierarchy, as well as its infrastructural – and not spatial – coherence* (Ovesen, 2007, p.13, author's translation[1]).

This fluid urban condition indicates a relational understanding of the city and of site (Massey, 2005). Urban sites should be approached accordingly as relational entities, yet architectural scholars Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn state that in architectural and urban design practice, sites slated for design intervention are "often taken as a straightforward entity contained by boundaries that delimit it from the surroundings" (Burns and Kahn, 2005, p.x). Although such bounding of sites may primarily happen as an act of simplification to make them approachable as analytical objects in the design process, it is pertinent that we seek to find alternative site approaches. Sites are not simply to be approached as fixed geometrically defined parcels of land. They are not detached from their wider spatial and temporal relations. Burns and Kahn underline this point:

*No particular locale can be experienced in isolation. Embedded in comprehension of a contained parcel is contact with something tangibly much greater. The concept of site, then, simultaneously refers to seemingly opposite ideas: a physical specific place and a spatially and temporally expansive surround. Incorporated three distinct geographic areas, two divergent spatial ideas, and past, present, and future timeframes, sites are complex* (Burns and Kahn, 2005, p.xii).

Architect and scholar James Corner ties in this relational understanding of site with the term *milieu* (Corner, 1999b). Milieu is active, shifty and complex:

*Milieu is a French term that means 'surroundings', 'medium' and 'middle'. Milieu has neither beginning nor end, but is surrounded by other middles, in a field of connections, relationships, extensions, and potentials. In this sense, then, a grounded site, locally situated, invokes a host of 'other' places [...] 'Site' today is a multiplicitous and complex affair, comprising a potentially boundless field of phenomena, some palpable and some imaginary* (Corner, 1999b, p.225).

Implicit in this relational understanding of site is that we move away from a preoccupation with objects and forms and attend more to processes. Events are crucial. Sites are continuously remade and thus defined by both their spatial and their temporal relations. Architectural scholar Mari Hvattum frames this by stating that sites consist of a past, a present, and a future (Hvattum, 2010).

1  Translated from Danish: "ved dens regionale udstrækning, uafgrænsethed og urbane sammenvævning af by og land, ved dens mange lokale centerdannelser af forskellig størrelse, ved fraværet af et overordnet hieraki, samt ved dens infrastrukturelle – og ikke rumlige – sammenhænge" (Ovesen, 2007, p.13).

Also implicit in this attention to the temporal relations of sites, is our acknowledgement that a site is not only dynamic and changing, but also that its boundless phenomena appear and work differently in relation with different people at different times. The same site is multiple through time and space, and there are therefore multiple ways to understand it:

> The experience of space cannot be separated from the events that happen in it; space is situated, contingent and differentiated. It is remade continuously every time it is encountered by different people, every time it is represented through another medium, every time its surroundings change, every time new affiliations are forged (Corner, 1999a, p.227).

If, for a moment, we use the relational way of thinking when approaching sites in operational ways, an illustrative hands-on example could be sites where large-scale infrastructural systems spatially tie in with daily practices and lived experiences of the urban landscape. Such sites can be found everywhere: at a harbour café, in a traffic junction, or in a city centre parking house. These are all geographical, particular sites, but they are not stable and fixed. Rather they are embedded in the urban landscape. If we stop by a harbour café at a sunny afternoon where the ferry is soon departing, and its passengers and the people transporting goods are enjoying a coffee or a snack while awaiting the signal to embark, we might find a surprisingly busy meeting place. But if we come at night when the ferry is not in operation, the site will be empty of people and buzz. Thus, the harbour café is widely connected both temporally and spatially. The character of site, which we experience in an instant, is tied temporally to the ferry's timetable. It is also tied to multiple other processes: changing weather, rhythms of local life, slow geological fluctuations, technological networks, etc. A spatial snapshot of the site might capture the fact that it is both a tiny node in the regional infrastructural networks of ferry routes and roads as well as a local place for socialising and working.

These conceptions of the urban landscape and of relational sites articulate the empirical field in which we, as urban designers, intervene. It is on these grounds that we need to develop tools to select, analyse and design. To this end we provide an exploratory example of a hands-on approach to site selection in the urban landscape in the next section.

## 3  An illustrative design study: "urban snapshots" on the edge of Denmark

The harbour café in the example above was located at one of the sites that was encountered in a study for a Master Thesis project titled *På kant* ("On the edge") by Jens Rex Christensen and Ditte Bendix Lanng at

Aalborg University in 2008 (Rex Christensen and Lanng, 2008). The study illustrates one way we can select sites in the contemporary urban landscape and based on a Master Thesis project that dealt with landscape and development issues related to the declining outskirts of Denmark. The study worked along road infrastructure in the mixed urban landscape; it travelled from a city, where the urban is prominent, to the landscaped periphery. Along this journey it cut sections in the urban landscape in search of potential for design intervention and development. This chapter will discuss the methodological potential of the study and contextualize some of its key findings.

### 3.1 On the Edge: mapping borderlines

The study worked with a double reading of the notion *edge*. On one hand, the edge of Denmark is where growth and development are peripheral. It is the outskirts of the country – places that are no longer on the main agenda since the structural changes that have taken place in Denmark. On the other hand, the edge of Denmark is also where earth meets water – a special and varied urban landscape with specific cultural imprints that might hold the capacity to contribute as a resource in the development of new local agendas on the edge. The study thereby responded to a prevailing issue in Denmark: the polarised Danish geography where rural and remote areas, in particular along the western coastline, experience decline, while people and jobs move toward the urbanised areas in the east.

The study was conducted as a road trip by car. The original plan was to drive along the western edge of Denmark for half a day, stopping and drawing a section every 10 kilometre (see Figure 2). In actuality, the road trip turned into a 290 kilometre journey along roads on the edge of the Limfjord and turning south when encountering the North Sea. The 29 sections provide snapshots of the uses and spatial conditions of 29 sites on Denmark's western edge. After returning home, the snapshots, taking form as sections, became the focus for studies into historical societal changes and priorities that have contributed to the encountered situations. Through these 29 sections potentials were derived the uses of the edge show differing amounts and types of financial investment, both large and small, public as well as private. Maybe such investment, coupled with the natural values of the landscape, can be the outset for the modelling of new spaces on the edge, attractive to visitors and residents alike?
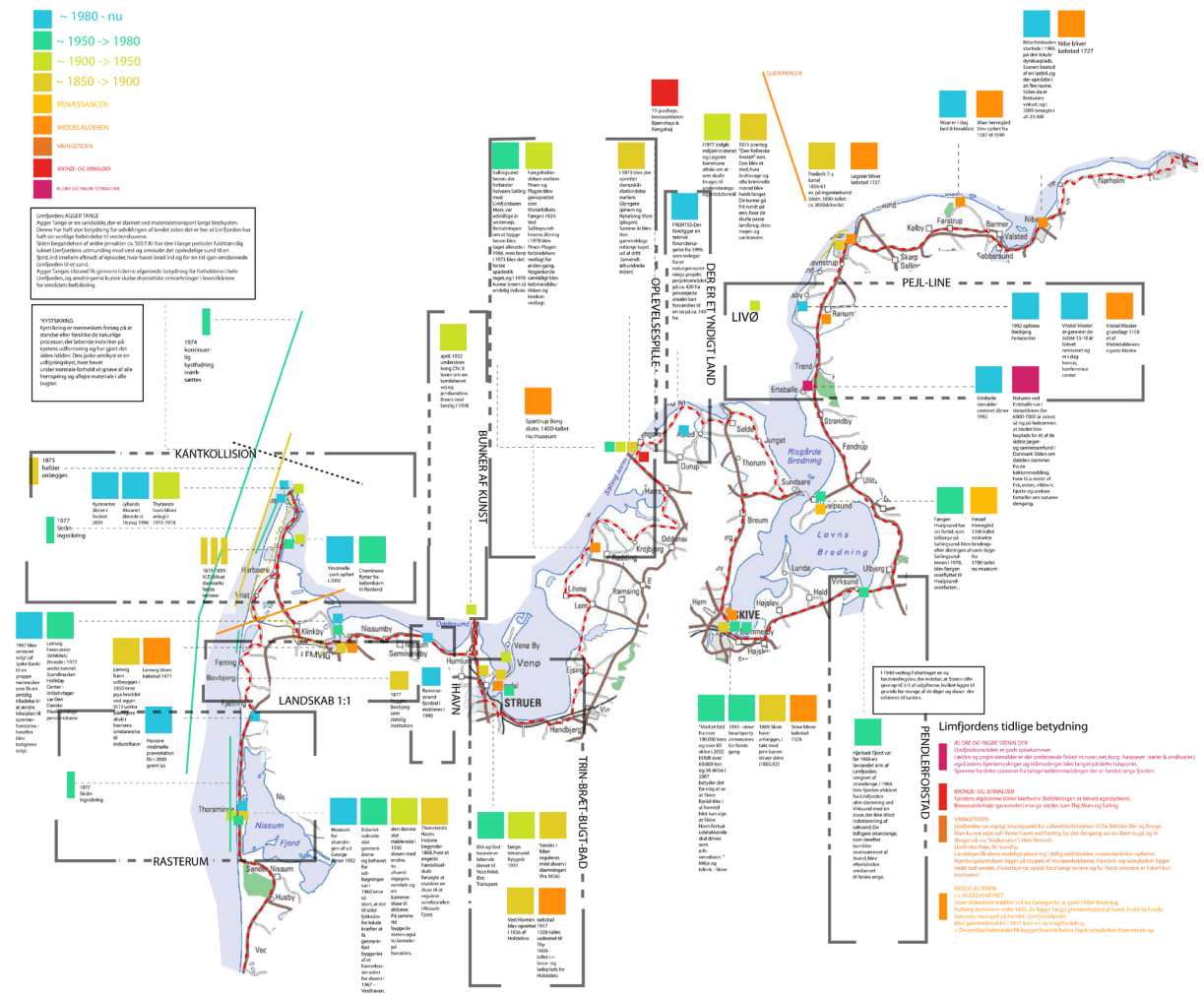
Figure 2
The 29 sectional snapshots cut to
capture the uses and spatial conditions
of 29 sites on the edge.

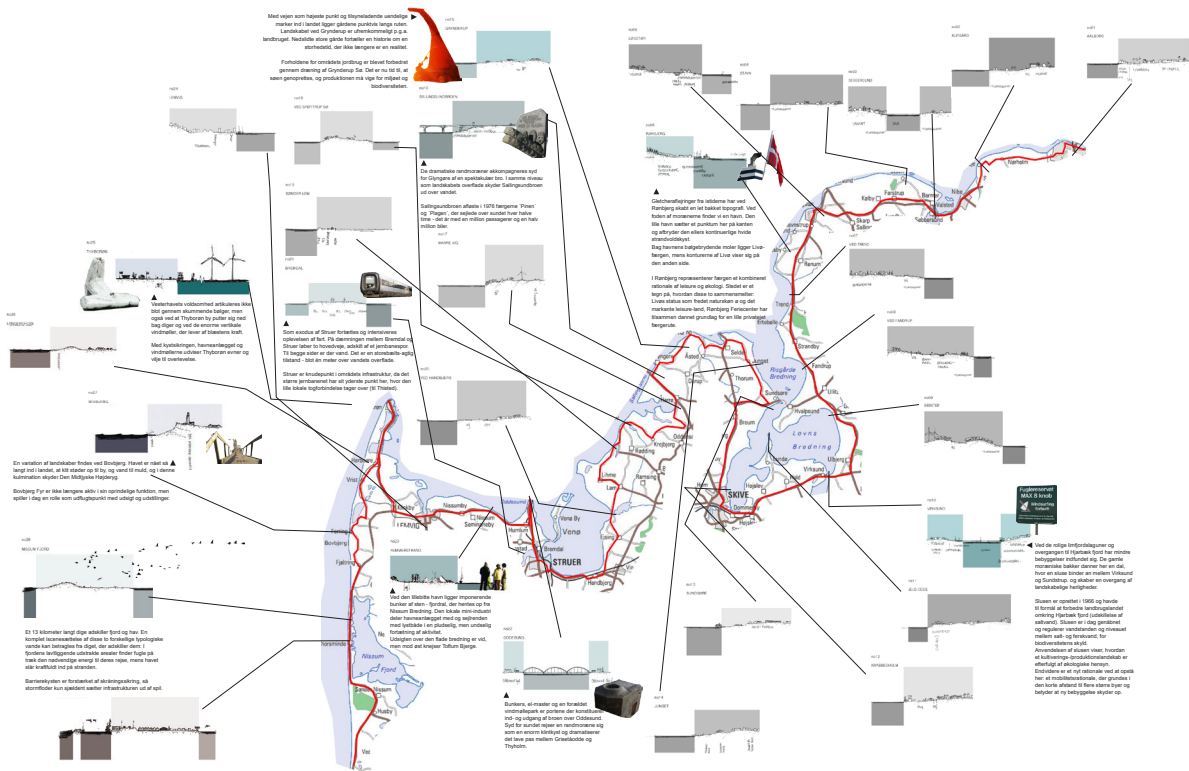© JENS REX CHRISTENSEN AND DITTE BENDIX LANNG

**Figure 3**
Mapping history of the 29 sites.
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**Figure 4**
Mapping spatial conditions: 29 sections where land meets water.
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10 sectional snapshots were identified as sites that showed underused potential for creative links between the energy of the functional-economic landscape and of the natural values of the same landscape. These sites were strategically selected as an outset for further analytical and interventionist studies through the development of 10 site-specific design scenarios, which map out a catalogue of possibilities for new energetic, architectural processes on the edge (see Figure 5).

The study sought to capture the urban landscape through a linear movement along which a series of *urban snapshots* reveal specific site conditions. This initiating methodological setup shaped a systematic starting point from which to move on to the identification of sites with a transformative design potential. It allowed the urban design students to encounter in situ a series of different site spatialities and temporalities. This resulted in the ability to map and unfold specific situations along the journey trajectory. The chosen sites were subsequently explored from a design perspective to appreciate and actualise the potentials of the sites. Thus, the initiating sequential selection approach made it possible to dive into the very complexities and dynamics of the urban landscape by enabling the urban designers to learn about some of the specificities of local sites while acknowledging their widely assembled relations. While this is one way to initiate a design process, it is also possible to select sites in other ways. In the following section, we outline three approaches that can help us tap into the urban landscape and discover sites with design potential.

Figure 5
Two examples drawn from the 10 site-specific scenarios.
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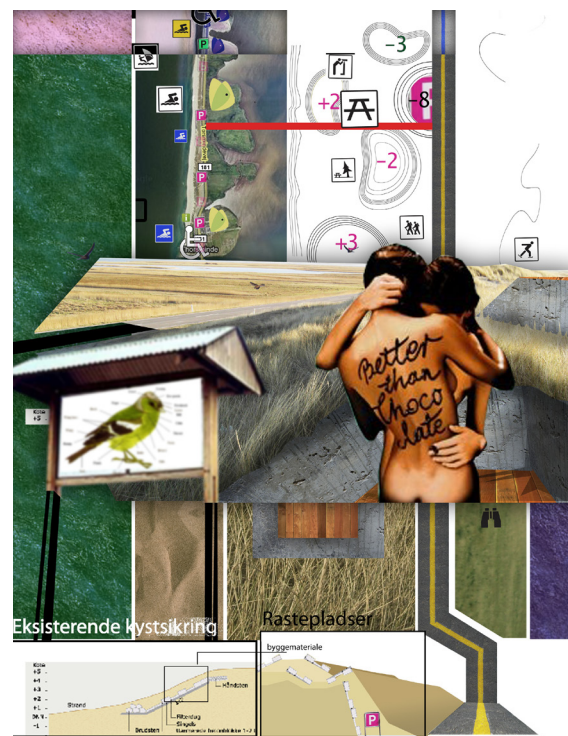
## 4  The creation of a field: different approaches to the selection of sites

The importance of engaging reflectively in the initial processes of site design can be related to James Corner's work on mapping in his essay *The agency of mapping* (1999b). Corner emphasises mapping as an indispensable part of urban design and landscape architecture. Through mapping we may be able to discover both "what is <u>and</u> what is not yet", and thus to *unfold* potential of sites (Corner, 1999b, p.214). Corner highlights that "maps present only one version of the earths's surface, an eidetic fiction constructed from factual observations" (ibid., p.215). Aligned with this, when we select and make an "urban snapshot" of a design site, we initiate the construction of images of the urban landscape – images that unpack certain features, stories, and potentials. These urban snapshots, however, might look different if taken on another day or with a different thematic scope for the design in mind. An important step in spurring the architectural imagination is taken when selecting a design site. The "formative and creative act of any design process" (ibid., p.215) has begun.

As a part of the mapping and design process, the selection of sites enters the three central mapping operations that Corner identifies in the following manner:

> *Thus, we can identify three essential operations in mapping: first, the creation of a field, the setting of rules and the establishment of a system; second, the extraction, isolation or 'de-territorialization' of parts and data; and third, the plotting, the drawing-out, the setting-up of relationships, or the "re-territorialization" of the parts* (Corner, 1999a, p.231).

Here, we concentrate on the first operation: the creation of a field. The selection of sites is part of this field, which Corner advocates should be as open, inclusive and non-hierarchical as possible.

> *Obviously, a field that has multiple frameworks and entryways is likely to be more inclusive than a singular, closed system. Also, a field that breaks with convention is more likely to precipitate new findings than one that is more habitual and routine. And third, a field that is designed to be as non-hierarchical and inclusive as possible – more "neutral" – is likely to bring a greater range of conditions into play than a field of restrictive scope* (Corner, 1999a, p.230).

Whether these considerations of an open, unconventional, and "neutral" site are fruitful must depend on the design task at hand. While an erratic or random approach to the selection of sites may facilitate the creation of an open field appropriate for discovering openly unknown qualities and potentials of the urban landscape, a much more scoped and

strategic selection of sites may help us to create a narrow demarcated field appropriate to a specific design problem. Below we outline three different, yet equally relevant, ways of selecting sites, which help initiate the process of designing sites in various ways.

### 4.1 Snapshots along infrastructural lines: sequential selection of sites

The first site selection approach is that of sequential selections, possibly conducted along an infrastructural line. The same interval in space or time (e.g. 1 km or a 10-minute walk) is repeated, and thereby a pattern of a line divided into sequences is created, shaping a systematic introduction to exploring the urban landscape.

The sequential selection approach relates to the seminal Las Vegas Strip study, developed in 1972 in the book *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour (1977). Along the linear Las Vegas Strip analytical design studies were conducted using sections that cut across the infrastructural line and its near surroundings, among other tools. Through these down strokes in the extreme case of Las Vegas the urban design researchers could investigate the modern city in relation to space, scale, speed, and symbols and learn about urban development tendencies of the time.

Architectural scholar Hans Ovesen (2007) has also investigated the urban landscape through a linear movement. In his study Ovesen made a selection of distinctive sites. By *distinctive* Ovesen means particularly interesting, characteristic or problematic sites when it comes to well-known architectural themes such as the identity, the physical, and spatial characters, as well as the topology and landscape of a site. Ovesen, just as the Master Thesis example (Rex Christensen and Lanng, 2008) earlier demonstrated, approaches the urban landscape through a linear movement along a major infrastructural line in greater Copenhagen, making sections. Ovesen focuses on one of the "fingers" in the Copenhagen *fingerplan* following the main road in the area and investigates the physical development of Copenhagen and the character traits of the different historical eras. He makes a sectional drawing with 1.5 km between them. In his own account, he does this to attain a certain degree of fortuitousness as well as to be able to call them exemplary.

However, this distance of 1.5 km is reduced as he enters more urban areas because the physical and spatial variations are larger in the denser city areas. The sections are investigated in words and drawings, analysing the street space, the architecture, the green areas, etc. in order to read the rhythm, the densification, the harmonies, the tempi, etc. of the city. Finally, Ovesen comes up with sketches of strategic design interventions. Among the sites chosen through the sequential approach along the road, Ovesen identifies the distinctive sites that he selects for

sketching out strategic design interventions. More than the architectural themes mentioned above, it is also the constant change and the relations between flows of people, traffic and activity that determine this selection of sites. The outcome of the study is a series of sequential sections in the urban landscape that together compose an image of the urban landscape at that given time.

## 4.2 The "bean method": random selection of sites

An outright random selection of sites can be found in the "bean throwing" method developed by architect Raoul Bunschoten and his architectural office, Chora (Bunschoten, Binet and Hoshino, 2001). This method was developed to detect what Bunschoten and Chora called "stirring a city" when doing fieldwork. By stirring a city, they meant stirring up different aspects of the city and reconsidering its conditions. The method, with its straightforward attention to specific sites, was intended to let the designers "touch the city and its dynamics directly" (Bunschoten, Binet and Hoshino, 2001, p.9). Thus, the bean method is a random way of finding and exploring sites:

> In order to detect new phenomena, to see what could not easily be seen, we threw forty beans onto a map. This created a random choice of sites – points in which an effect or effects are registered (ibid., p.206).

By throwing a number of beans onto a map, the architects created an initial set of points of interest. They then conducted an analysis of the sites where a bean landed. Consequently, each site investigation resulted in the construction of a mini-scenario, investigating the potentials of the site. The mini-scenarios were supposed to show the "different agents, users and caretakers, of which the object is a part" (ibid., p.209), bring hidden or unseen conditions forward, and use inherent potentials of the sites. Thus, the mini-scenarios had an analytical role in capturing present site conditions, but they also served to model proposals for future intervention:

*This "bean method" cuts through traditional categories, being based on random sampling and schematic description. A critical mass of small points and a description of the dynamic conditions found in them can form a model of the landscape of change, the metascape, in which the planner has to intervene* (ibid., p.206).

The random selection may be beneficial because it can introduce previously unseen sites with unexplored potential. It demonstrates that every site of the urban landscape tells us something that is relevant in our understanding of the urban condition, or that every site possesses a potential for future development.

## 4.3 Critical Points of Contact: strategic selection of sites

While the two previous site selection approaches have differing degrees of randomness, the third and final selection approach is more strategic. A developed scope of the design task at hand precedes the site selection process. In other words, the urban designer defines a set of selection criteria that meet the scope of a specific assignment or theme before making the selection.

An approach to a deliberate and strategic selection of sites of interest can be found in the field of mobilities research. Design scholars Ole B. Jensen and Nicola Morelli have developed the concept of *Critical Points of Contact* (CPC) (Jensen and Morelli, 2011). The underlying assumption in their work is that some nodes in the networked urban landscape are "critical" in terms of a specific point of view. These critical points are found where different systems, users, objects, or flows meet and inter-act:

> ... we claim that certain points, sites and connections are more inter-esting (or critical) than others. The many networks orchestrating and facilitating contemporary everyday life are dependent on the strate-gic sites where the networks meet and establish contact (Jensen and Morelli, 2011, p.37).

The *CPC* is also thought of as an interventionist concept that performs as a scaffold for intervention and re-design:

> CPC are to be understood as nodes where points in a network inter-face in such a manner that mutual exchange between networks and systems are established (this may be in all sorts of ways e.g. econom-ic transactions between market systems, ecological metabolism be-tween systems of ecologies, communication exchange between social agents or even non-human agents such as software driven interfac-es). The many networks orchestrating and facilitating contemporary everyday life are dependent on the strategic sites where these net-works meet and establish contact (Jensen, Wind and Lanng, 2012, p.67).

Thus, the key idea behind the CPC is to facilitate the analysis and design of networks (Jensen, Wind and Lanng, 2012). The emphasis is on the criti-cal points as sites of modal shifts, friction, or speed differentials (Jensen and Morelli, 2011). The type of CPC can vary according to a certain point of view in each specific design process; some issues and themes might be emphasised in one process, while others will be of concern in another process. An important aim is to find an underused potential and develop a creative strategy (Jensen and Morelli, 2011) on the back of that.

When looking at the critical selection of sites it also makes sense to examine planning scholar Bent Flyvbjerg's research on critical cases of

case study research (Flyvbjerg, 1991; Flyvbjerg, 2006). When selecting a site for a design process, we can learn from Flyvbjerg's developed reflections on choosing a case to study. Flyvbjerg offers different strategies for selecting cases and emphasizes that a strategically selected case that addresses a specific area of interest can contribute in-depth knowledge:

*When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given phenomenon or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied* (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.229).

In selecting a critical case Flyvbjerg advises one to:

*look for either "most likely" or "least likely" cases, that is, cases that is likely to either clearly confirm or irrefutably falsify proportions and hypotheses* (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.231).

Thus, like the concept of Critical Point of Contact Flyvbjerg´s critical cases indicate that sites with friction and intensity can indeed contribute to a relevant and curious field.

## 4.4  Selecting sites – capturing site conditions – designing sites

The approaches outlined above introduce different ways of selecting sites. They also have implications for the ways in which sites are analytically addressed once they have been selected for scrutiny. The selection of sites and ongoing work with them in urban design development are not entirely separate processes but may better be understood as a continuum. This resonates with Corner's three phases of the mapping process (see above) in which the initial creation of a field has a major impact on the subsequent processes of extracting and plotting.

The different selection approaches show the need for elaborately considering how we, in an urban design process, define relevant sites in accordance with a specified design challenge or with the desire to investigate the urban landscape on more open terms. Through the sequential and random selection approaches sites will often be addressed in an exploratory way. Urban conditions of the sites may be openly and equally considered and questioned. In the strategic selection approach, on the other hand, a large portion of preparatory work is made beforehand. The work that follows when capturing site conditions and unfolding them in design will maintain and deepen the knowledge of the defined scope or design task.

The example study (Rex Christensen and Lanng, 2008), outlined in chapter 3, employs several aspects related to the selection approaches above. In the initiating explorative field work, the 29 sections performed as a method to select sites along the road, with erratic traits from both Bunschoten's bean method and Ovesen's sequential sections. The resulting snapshots created the field for interrogating a broader pool of conditions and potentials on the edge. The 29 site snapshots were tangible depictions framing regional/national development challenges and local spatial conditions of the edge landscape, as well as an understanding of landscape and mobility corridors as a combination of operational space shaping and organising processes. These snapshots displayed a rich complexity of the edge; for example, by showing that the edge landscape in those sections is far more than a picturesque conception. In fact, it is a multifunctional space that may simultaneously be developed and utilised as well as protected and sustained. With the specificity of the site snapshots, and herein the situational and relational focus of the study, it was possible to let local narratives, concrete spatial conditions, daily life perspectives, and the possible unknown or unspoken potentials enter the agenda of large-scale regional development and political-economic concerns of the Danish periphery. Thus, these urban snapshots worked as a tool to mediate an understanding of the edge as a highly diverse field, a mosaic. They allowed an alternative point of view to surface, challenging conceptions of the outskirts as devoid of variation and potential.

The snapshots were used subsequently for more elaborate inquiry, looking at them as critical points. The 10 selected sites in this phase of the project worked as a a much more scoped field that allowed the urban design students to interact with the sites with a specific scope in mind, i.e. the puzzling question of whether infrastructure investment, coupled with the natural values of the landscape, could be the outset for the modelling of new spaces on the edge, attractive to visitors and residents alike.

## 5  Conclusions

This paper has outlined operational approaches to selecting design sites in the urban landscape. These may be useful in urban design education, when students need to be capable of exploring a large part of the urban landscape to discover where to enter it. They may offer a hands-on perspective to the kind of research-by-design practice that explicitly aims at challenging and developing our conceptions about the urban condition. They are also relevant to the processes of large-scale strategic urban development projects in which the selection and assessment of sites for implementing a strategy or for critically considering the strategy in relation to local conditions is imperative.

The approaches introduce a sequential, an outright random, and a strategic selection of sites. The sequential approach is related to the work of Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour in *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977) as well as the work of Ovesen on making sections along an infrastructure in greater Copenhagen. This approach creates an initial methodical structure and order in the urban design process by establishing intervals along a linear movement. The random approach is exemplified by Bunschoten's bean method. This approach rejects order and structure and highlights any site in the urban landscape as one with potential to teach us about the urban condition and with potential for design intervention. The final approach is the strategic site selection. This approach refers to Jensen and Morelli's Criticial Points of Contact and Flyvbjerg's critical cases. Strategic site selection works from a previously defined scope and possible set of selection criteria. Thus, this approach requires that relevant design issues are defined ahead of time.

Despite descriptions of these three approaches, the paper targets only a small part of the toolbox needed to articulate and practice urban design at sites in the urban landscape. The selection of sites is not isolated from the rest of the design process. On the contrary, it is an important part of the first formative and creative steps of designing for the future. The example study on the edge of Denmark shows how a series of sequential snapshots in the urban landscape can initiate the discovery of sites with design potential. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve further into the many other choices that are needed throughout the iterative and interweaved processes of designing sites.

Given the conceptual positioning of the paper, we suggest that subsequent choices in the design process should acknowledge that urban designers work with and in the fluid and complex urban landscape. Relational design sites constitute the geographical locations of the processes of analysis and design. It is important that we do not assume their stability or fixed position. Instead we should acknowledge the temporal and spatial relations of sites. The metaphorical denotation of sites as 'urban snapshots' addresses how we might capture sites in an instant, seek to unpack their assembled quality, and use this as a frame of possibilities for design intervention to initiate future realities. This conceptual understanding of the urban landscape and the relationality of sites is also part of the 'creation of the field', as Corner recommended as the first operation of the mapping process.

The landscape urbanistic movement (see Corner, 1999a; Waldheim, 2006) provides an additional – and significant – source for further developing design considerations that acknowledge the importance of processes and relations in the urban landscape. Through landscape urbanism attempts are being made to develop design approaches to the urban landscape, with the aim of involving the interconnectedness of spatialities of

different scales and temporalities of processes. Situations are grasped in their complexity, and tools are sought to "contain the dynamic multiplicity of urban processes", not in fixed, rigid, spatial frames but in a "dialectical understanding of how [spatial form] relates to the processes that flow through, manifest, and sustain it" (Corner, 2006, p.28). The landscape urbanistic approach thus seeks to capture and transform sites while keeping manifoldness and contingency in the design process and project.

## Acknowledgements

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