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^{*)}This is an interview. It has not undergone the same review-process as the scientific papers.
Photo on the front cover: Shelley Smith. *Relief – plaster and pigment*, Shelley Smith.

CONTRASTING LENSES – SITES IN NEW WAYS

MARIE MARKMAN

Abstract

This paper addresses how site transformations made by artists can expand notions of methodologies regarding site, as well as adding to present discussions about sustainability and research approaches. Based on experiences from two artworks – a landscape and a garden – the paper contributes to contemporary concepts of urban site thinking. The works were commissioned and made in 2012 and 2013 respectively as part of the transdisciplinary PhD project *Landscape sprawl – An artistic response to living in the anthropocene* (Markman, 2014) Aarhus School of Architecture (AAA) and Centre for Strategic Urban Research. The paper concludes that methods used by artists can provide a new concept for urban site thinking, namely *site making*. Site thinking and site making become unified in the artistic approach, and the making of even small site transformations enables the envisioning of possibilities for the larger urban area.

Keywords:
artistic research, activism,
site transformation, making
landscape, transdisciplinarity,
edible landscapes

1 Introduction

Alongside landscape architects, architects, geographers, sociologists and a range of other professionals, artists increasingly raise questions concerning urban areas and sustainability, and by doing so, they transform urban sites in a variety of ways. Works made by artists have been influential in creating debates about the role of landscape in this regard – both poetically and in very straightforward ways. Methods used by artists seem to represent the potential for expanding notions of site methodologies and address sustainability in new ways, yet we have little knowledge of how this contributes to existing discourses.

Based on a selection of positions from the last thirty years that have challenged existing norms and made alternative strategies, the theoretical framework for this paper addresses site methodologies, activist methods, the role of the researcher, and the concept of art. Additionally it discusses four examples of gardens made by artists within the last thirty years. Finally, as the core of the research, it presents and discusses relevant parts of two works: a landscape and a garden, both commissioned by the AAA in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

The first work is *Traffic Island Edible Landscape (TIEL)*, defined by the author and, the second work is *Edible Estates: Regional Prototype Garden # 14: Aarhus, Denmark (EE#14)*, defined by the American artist Fritz Haeg (Haeg, 2013a). The selected theories and works have been chosen due to their kinship with and relation to the artistic practice this research emerges from and to historically place some of the significant contributions in this tradition.¹ Throughout the presented positions the following questions are addressed:

1. What are the common characteristics of methods used by artists engaged in making landscapes and gardens in urban sites?
2. What impact does it have when a research debate is explored at 1:1 in various urban sites and as part of everyday life?
3. How can the making of even small landscapes and gardens based on methods used by artists expand notions of site methodologies?

2 Theoretical framework

Addressing how methods used by artists can expand notions of site methodologies is approached by adding to contemporary discourses about urban planning through a transdisciplinary research position.² The theoretical framework addresses content rather than discipline by using site transformation as a research strategy.

1 By kinship it is meant practices and thoughts that somehow correlate with the position taken in the PhD project. In a research context this would normally be defined as a research community.

2 Transdisciplinary position connotes a research strategy that crosses many disciplinary boundaries to create a holistic approach.

Landscape architect Kathryn Moore writes in the article “Nature culture” in the book *Ecological urbanism* from 2010.

The choice is not whether we work with art or ecology, with nature or culture, but how considerately, imaginatively, and responsibly we go about our business, because for every one of our actions there is a reaction in the physical world (Moore, 2010, p. 470).

There is a kinship between the statement by Moore (2010) and the artistic method addressed in this paper. Discussions about discipline are secondary in relation to “how” considerately we work, and the reaction a certain action causes in the physical world. Likewise this paper has a kinship with the approach taken by Robert Gottlieb (2013), professor of Urban & Environmental Policy, and director of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College, Los Angeles. In 2013 at the 5th AESOP Sustainable Food Planning Conference held in Montpellier / France he states:

The role of the researcher is not only the one of describing but as participant and agent for change (presentation).

Gottlieb’s statement (2013) regarding the role of the researcher correlates in many ways with approaches used by artists. Within the artistic tradition of using urban sites and plants, artists have taken the role as ‘participant and agent for change’ in their art practices since the seventies. In the book *Relational aesthetics* (2002) curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud describes a contemporary art direction – defined as relational art – that brings art out of the art institution and into the private sphere and the social areas of society with their interpersonal relationships.

The role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist (Bourriaud, 2002, p.13).

Both perspectives, Gottlieb (2013) and Bourriaud (2002), point towards respectively the researcher and the artist as someone actively involved in influencing the existing real. The perspective from Bourriaud further suggests (as one could argue that the consequences of the perspective from Moore (2010) does) that the format chosen by the artists could just as well be research as any other format. Rather than it being about from which discipline or method a topic is approached, it is about how responsibly it is approached.

Moore, Gottlieb and Bourriaud all put forward perspectives which could be seen as having relevance in relation to site thinking, and how artists engage in making landscape or gardens in urban space contribute to this. Focusing on urban sites, site thinking is addressed, among

others, by educator, scholar and design communication strategist Andrea Kahn. Therefore, it could be useful to discuss how artists contribute to site thinking in relation to her theory, seeing what this perspective could add.

In *Defining urban sites* Andrea Kahn (2005) discusses two drawings: a 1713 anonymous plan of the ideal Renaissance plan of Palmanuova, and a sixteenth-century Leonardo da Vinci sketch of Milan. Kahn concludes that whereas the drawing of Palmanuova depicts the urban site as a clearly bounded place, in da Vinci's drawing of Milan there are no borders dividing site from situation. Kahn then states that "Urban sites are dynamic rather than static, porous rather than contained, "messy" like da Vinci's sketch rather than 'neat' like the ideal plan of Palmanuova" (p. 286). Kahn then combines this with the idea of representation being not about depicting reality but about developing knowledge, and presents and reflects upon five concepts for urban site thinking, which she calls: *mobile ground*, *site reach*, *site construction*, *unbound sites*, and *urban constellations*. Kahn ends by stating, "that for urban design what matters is gaining understanding of the city *in* the site" (p.295). The question now arises of how this would be stated, if urban site thinking were to be described from the perspective of art.

Historically artists have challenged the format of their work. Two theories, dating back to the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s in America, by art critic and art theorist Rosalind Krauss (1979), and writer, art critic, activist, and curator Lucy R. Lippard (1997), are relevant to the context of this paper in addition to the perspectives of Moore (2010), Bourriaud (2002) and Gottlieb (2013). In the 1979 article "Sculpture in the expanded field" by Rosalind Krauss, a model showing sculpture as just one category of what she calls an *expanded field* is presented. Krauss adds to a discussion about sculpture seeking to "escape" the limitations / notion of sculpture as an encompassing term. She argues that sculpture by 1970 had become a category that almost anything could be piled into, and it was in danger of losing its meaning, thus there was a need to discuss sculpture in a more nuanced manner. In 1984 Lucy R. Lippard, who addresses topics on feminism, art, politics and place, and how artists increasingly use activist methods, wrote in the article "Trojan horses: Activist art and power":

Art originally meant 'to join or fit together' and 'culture' comes from cultivation and growth. An artist can function like a lazy gardener who cuts off the weeds as a temporary holding action or s/he can go under the surface to the cause. Social changes can happen when you tear things up by the roots, or – to collage metaphors – when you go back to the roots and distinguish the weeds from the blossoms and vegetables...the Trojan horses from the four horses of the Apocalypse (Lippard, 1984, p.358).

Though Lippard's statement is to be understood as a metaphor, it /she emphasises two ways of approaching the artistic task: 1), the lazy gardener temporarily holding action and 2), going back to the roots and distinguishing the weeds from the blossoms and vegetables. Following and extending the rhetoric of Lippard one could ask, whether a certain group of artists actually practice a kind of public "site thinking" where hidden layers of urban structures becomes visible through site transformations, while soil is fertilized / matured for new approaches to become possible.

3 Artistic framework

3.1 Fritz Haeg and Camilla Berner

Throughout the past forty years artists have transformed urban sites in numerous ways. The approaches that visual artists offer are numerous, but it is evident that, rather than building on a certain tradition of using plantings, they use them in assorted ways and in diverse urban sites to discuss aesthetic, ecological, political, and social issues related to urban areas. Many of the works also share the condition that they, as a starting point, were made in opposition to existing urban development and to political climates. Significant examples of this approach are represented in the works *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn* (2005–2013), *Black Box Garden* (2011), *Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden* (1974), and *The Garden of Eden* (1975–1986).

"This is crazy" is the first thought of American artist Fritz Haeg when George Bush is elected president in 2005 and America is divided into blue and red states. As a consequence, he decides to address how we are all living and to penetrate and engage within it. He initiates the project *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn*, a project he describes as being about him trying to figure out something he would like to see in the world as a non-professional. His first gardens are made in an American context, with the transformation of traditional front lawns in suburban areas into gardens planted with edible crops.³

Later gardens are established in Europe, and in 2013 Fritz Haeg completes the project, with one of the last gardens commissioned by the AAA. Adventurous residents in each town offer their front yards as prototypes for their region. Each of these highly productive gardens is very different and site specific: designed to respond to the unique characteristics of the site, the needs and desires of the owner, the community and its history, and the local climate and geography. The gardens are simple and inexpensive, implemented in cooperation with local families and designed to inspire others. The gardens point out that it is possible for anyone with some unused land between the house and the street, and the desire, to grow food. *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn* is an

3 The lecture by Fritz Haeg was presented at a Seminar (Available at the library of the Aarhus School of Architecture) which consisted of: 1/ Urban Agriculture: Edible Estates and The Mega Cities of Tomorrow (1/2013) Lectures: Brandt, Juliane, Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning / Open Space Design, TU-Berlin; Haeg, Fritz, Los Angeles / Californian; Krasny, Elke, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna; Nielsen, Tom, Aarhus School of Architecture; Nette, Svenja, Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin. (Brandt, et al., 2013a) 2/ Urban Agriculture: Edible Estates and the Mega Cities of Tomorrow (2/f2013) Panel discussion: Brandt, Juliane, Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning / Open Space Design, TU-Berlin; Haeg, Fritz, Los Angeles / Californian; Krasny, Elke, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna; Markman, Marie, Aarhus School of Architecture; Nielsen, Tom, Aarhus School of Architecture; Nette, Svenja, Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin. (Brandt, et al., 2013b).

example of a small-scale art project that presently plays a leading role in discussions on the landscape in the field of art.⁴

In a Danish context at a wasteland site, Krøyers Plads, situated by the harbour in central Copenhagen, the Danish artist Camilla Berner begins in April 2011 to cultivate a garden out of existing vegetation and materials that she finds on the site. She entitles the work *Black Box Garden*, and throughout the growing season, Berner works a couple of hours every day in the garden and writes about her experiences of the day's work in a diary/blog afterwards.

I meet people who say they go for a daily walk in the garden, and I've heard about children who play robbers and soldiers here. The plants are so high now that an-eight year-old can easily get lost, which clearly increases the level of excitement in the game. Though they move through the vegetation and you generally see the paths left between the plants, it does not seem like violence against the garden, the leaves fall off and the whole thing collapses anyway. And maybe is a good thing that I am less visible – people take the garden to themselves in their own way, using it as needed. As such, the garden really shows its worth; can it transform and inspire behaviour in the public space? (Berner, 2011).

Throughout 2011 a beautiful garden grows out of the wasteland site and Berner registers ninety-two species on the site (Berner, 2012). Both the work of Haeg and Berner represent a discourse in art emerging in the 2000s making site transformation through gardening; a discourse linking back to the 1970s, where the tradition of community gardens began in New York as a consequence of agendas set by artists. These agendas are reflected by both Krauss (1979) and by Lippard (1984).

3.2 Liz Christy's Bowery Houston Garden and the Garden of Eden

What was to become the first community garden in New York, was made by art student Liz Christy and the gardening activist group the Green Guerrillas in 1974: the *Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden* (from 1986 *Liz Christy's Bowery Houston Garden* (Loggins, 2007)). In 1973 Christy and the Green Guerrillas plant window boxes and vacant lots with seed bombs. In an area lying on the corner of Bowery and Houston Street, they see a potential garden. On 23 April 1974 the municipality arranges to rent the land out to the Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden for one dollar a month. Volunteers remove garbage, spread topsoil, and install a fence and start planting. Three raised beds are planted with vegetables, and trees are added. In 1975 this forerunner of today's Community Gardens wins the first "Dress Up Your Neighbourhood Award," (Loggins, 2007) and people from other parts of New York see how the slums can be transformed and begin requesting information on how to start similar projects.

4 Another work by Fritz Haeg is Everton People's Park: Foraging Spiral and Basecamp (2012). The series of projects was developed in partnership with James Corner Field Operations, which is working on a long-term master plan for the park.

Around the same time, also in New York, another significant work evolves. Whereas *Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden* defines the community garden movement, *The Garden of Eden* is the work of one person, where the artistic practice is inseparable from the artist's life. From his apartment on 184 Forsyth Street in the East Side slums of Manhattan in 1975, artist Adam Purple sees how children are playing in dirt and waste in the yard while being watched by their mothers from the windows. Being from the countryside, he thinks that it is a "hellish" (Brost, 2011) way to grow up, not being able to experience the earth beneath their feet or gain any knowledge about growing plants. As a result, he begins to process horse manure that he collects in Central Park, and throughout the years 1975–1986, creates *The Garden of Eden*, a garden that, when demolished in 1986, contains berry bushes and fruit trees growing out of the East Side slums of Manhattan.

4 Artistic methods

All the mentioned works approach urban areas in some of the same ways. Looking into the methods used in the projects it becomes clear that there are six common characteristics within this kind of visual art, which are quite similar despite of the span of almost forty years:

1. Defining the context is just as important as defining the work.
2. They are made in urban sites that are not considered valuable or not even defined as landscapes/gardens.
3. It is rather likely that only the artist sees a necessity in realizing this landscape/garden.
4. The artist is often present in the landscape/garden, and dialogue is possible.
5. These landscapes/gardens are realized on a very small budget.
6. The transformation of the site becomes an impulse in and beyond its physical placement.

The artists were the ones seeing a necessity in transforming the sites. Christy and the Green Guerrillas as well as Purple decided singlehandedly to start their projects based on social indignation and lack of access to experience the soil or local cultivation. Haeg and Berner were both invited by art institutions to create new works.⁵ They also chose sites and defined their projects themselves.

Three of the works were made in urban sites that were not considered valuable or defined as landscapes/gardens before the sites were transformed by the artist. One was made through the transformation of an existing garden. *Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden* was made in a vacant lot on the corner of Bowery and Houston Street where Christy and the Green Guerrillas saw its potential as a garden. Purple made *The Garden of Eden* out of the east side slum of Manhattan in the

5 The first "Edible Estates Prototype Garden" was commissioned by Salina Art Center in 2005. "Black Box Garden" was made in the context of "publik" (an independent Danish Art Gallery producing contemporary art in public spaces).

yard next to where he lived. *Black Box Garden* was made in a wasteland site situated by the harbour in central Copenhagen, next to where Berner lived. *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn* the work of Haeg is the only one differing since it was made in existing private gardens.

Christy and the Green Guerrillas, Purple, Haeg, and Berner all were present in their gardens in order to create a possibility for dialogue. Christy and the Green Guerrillas when they made *Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden* in 1974; Purple from 1975 to 1986 when he made *The Garden of Eden*; Berner in 2011 when she made *Black Box Garden*, and finally Haeg was present in all the processes of establishing the 15 *Edible Estate Prototype Gardens*. After the establishing of the *Edible Estates Edible Estate Prototype Gardens* Haeg turned over the maintenance and harvest of the gardens to the estate owners and they were the ones present in the gardens.

Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden and *The Garden of Eden* became sites contrasting with the surrounding context of slums, which were the situation in Manhattan in the 1970s. *Edible Estates Prototype Gardens* became sites contrasting suburban landscapes of front lawns and inner city concrete. *Black Box Garden* became a site contrasting with what kind of landscapes we would normally invest time in. All the works 'became' throughout the artists' effort and persistency in maintaining and structuring them as sites contrasting with the established way of using land. In the case of Haeg the owners also contributed.

All the landscapes/gardens were made at a low cost. *Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden* and *The Garden of Eden* were mainly made out of found or donated things. *Black Box Garden* was made entirely by restructuring existing things found on the site. The work of Haeg operated within a different economical scale but still with limited resources. Common to all the site transformations was that they demanded an enormous investment of time.

Linking to this tradition of artists working with landscapes and gardens TIEL is made in 2012. EE#14 by Haeg is commissioned the year after because it represented the possibility to broaden the insights in the methods used by the artist in this field. In this way, the strategy of *site transformation* – of making landscapes, drawing on artistic methods – is used as the central research strategy and research method, in contrast to a purely theoretical, analytical approach.

5 Site transformations as research strategy

In 2012 *TIEL* is established in the middle of the road called Nørreport – one of the most heavily trafficked roads in Aarhus, Denmark, by the AAA. The work extends over approximately 100 square meters and forms a long strip along Nørreport. This road area is a traffic junction and each day thousands of road users – passenger cars and heavy traffic – pass through the area. Nørreport is an important and highly visible public space. Furthermore it is where the AAA is located. The landscape in 2012 is comprised of flowering plants, which are not immediately recognisable as roadside plants. When passing the landscape, you would see that the landscape did not only consist of beautiful and colourful ornamental plants, but that most of the plants have an additional quality: they were edible.

In 2013 *EE#14* is established in a private garden in a typical Danish single-family housing area located in the town of Hammel, 25 kilometres northwest of Aarhus. The garden is established in cooperation between Haeg, the author / AAA, and the Pedersen family. The home and garden of the Pedersen family represents the most popular dwelling form in Denmark. During one week in May the existing front lawn of the Pedersen's family garden was replaced with edible plants. During the growing season in 2013 neighbours and others could follow the garden's evolution, how it was cultivated, and how the Pedersen's harvested it (Haeg, 2013c).

Since 2012 and 2013 *TIEL* (Markman, 2012a) and *EE#14* (Markman, 2014c) have been documented in weekly pictures and in diaries – by the Pedersen family and the author. In addition, secondary material has been collected from sources commenting on the works. Throughout the experiences arising from the making of *TIEL* and *EE#14*, and emerging from the documentation, the transformations point towards an important matter. Rather than pointing inwardly towards the sites themselves, the two works point toward the surrounding urban area and enable an experience of the surrounding urban areas in new and different ways.

The following sections summarize the documentation of the two works – *TIEL* and *EE#14* – between 2011–2014.

5.1 Traffic Island Edible Landscape (TIEL)

Estate owners: Aarhus Municipality

Location: Nørreport / Aarhus, Denmark

Commissioned by: The Aarhus School of Architecture

Established: April 25th–27th, 2012

Size of garden: 100 m²



Figure 1
(TIEL / The site before the transformation)

After initially considering the general concept of making a kitchen garden somewhere around the Aarhus School of Architecture (AAA), it soon seemed inappropriate to consider sites located in the backyards or hidden from general view. More and more it seemed obvious to use a specific site between the traffic lanes of Nørreport, a site that also functioned as one of the most important public spaces of the AAA. Since the school's buildings are divided by the road, students and employees cross the street several times daily, and at the same time it is the public space where the AAA intervenes with the public space of the city of Aarhus. It seemed working in this context was an opportunity to start a debate also addressing traffic infrastructure, pollution and public spaces. In April 2012, the final permission to establish *TIEL* in Nørreport was obtained.



The making of *TIEL* was organised as a course in which second and third year students at the AAA could volunteer to participate. It was explained to them that during one week in April a 100 square metre edible landscape in the traffic Island in Nørreport would be established. The overall concept of the work was finalised, but during the one-week where the work was to be established the students would, among other tasks, make the final decisions about soil and plants, paths through the landscape, documentation of the work, communication strategy, and the opening.

Figure 2
(TIEL / The site while being transformed)



During the three days where *TIEL* was established the atmosphere in Nørreport totally changed. Though it was obvious that it was a visible area, and also was chosen because of this, it seemed that the site transformation was extremely exposed to the entire school due to this location. Due to security reasons the students and I started each morning by blocking one lane in each direction of the site. The empty lanes around the site became not only our working space, but also a space where students, colleagues and passers-by could follow the work, ask questions and start dialogs about what was being done. People went from being quite sceptical about the endeavours to a situation where some really reflected upon the work being made. Discussions about both the role of public spaces and how they were physically affected by seeing edible plants in this road junction merged with and became just as an important part of the work as the establishment of the landscape itself. It was an eye-opener to experience how the students led many of the discussions with fellow students, and with other passers-by, while continuing digging and planting. At the opening people were wandering between the landscape and our serving table in Nørreport, as if it had it been a more conventional public space.

Figure 3
(*TIEL* / Final planting and opening)



(Diary Marie Markman TIEL / Friday, 1 June, 2012)

A middle-aged man grabs hold of me. He can't understand why I've made an edible landscape there, in the middle of the road. "You can't be serious! There are so many other places you could have done this!" I tell him that the choice is conscious, and that I think the collision between the landscape and the traffic can open up for new thoughts about how we want our cities to be, and also about how we grow – or don't grow – our food. He's really persistent, and follows me onto the bus. He keeps saying the same things. He seems aggressive, in contrast to the open attitude of others, where the landscape and its location seem to have been accepted (Markman, 2012b).

Figure 4
(TIEL / A month after transformation)



(Diary Marie Markman: TIEL / Thursday, 21 June 2012)

Around noon I started gathering the garden waste. Half of it was put in a plastic box that I had brought along and when I was about to take my bag and go, a woman crossed the road and came towards me. She told me that she could see the site from her apartment and was following how the landscape evolved; she thought that I needed a bag for all the garden waste, which I had collected, and brought me one. She said that it was really nice to follow the development of the landscape from her window. She had taken careful note of the rape seed plants and explained that she thought that there might have been some seeds in the soil that we had delivered. I told her about the path that I was trying to make and about gathering the plants in different areas. She told me about parks in France – I think Paris – where she had been quite taken by the fact that a few places in plant beds had ornamental plants different types of beet and beetroot, placed there because they had beautiful leaves. She mentioned that she had taken some pictures, and that she would have copied the idea if she had had a garden of her own. She got my e-mail address and would send a picture – I really hope she does! Then the plant waste was carried away – I had to make two trips. I thought that there was something hilarious about the scenario – me with a huge backpack and a giant plastic box as well as a plastic bag with plant waste. But during the day a group of gardeners

Figure 5
(TIEL / View from the inside of the landscape towards the context)

nearby had trimmed beech hedges along Nørreport, and no one came to their aid. I actually think that there is something disarming about this amateurish approach towards the work that opens new situations (Markman, 2014b).

5.2 Edible Estates: Regional Prototype Garden #14 (EE#14)

Estate owners: Dorte and Carsten Pedersen

Location: Hammel, Denmark

Commissioned by: The Aarhus School of Architecture

Established: May 15th–16th, 2013

Size of garden: 100 m²



As part of making *EE#14* an Open Call was published to citizens in Aarhus. The announcement was made through household deliveries, radio broadcasts, and newsletters distributed through the AAA. Around 10 families responded to the open call and Dorte and Carsten Pedersen and their two daughters were chosen as project partners. During one week in May *EE#14* was made in their front yard in Hammel – a town with 7000 inhabitants, 25 kilometers northwest of Aarhus, Denmark. The making of the *EE#14* garden was organised as a course that second and third year students at the AAA could volunteer for and co-corporate with Haeg in establishing.

Figure 6
(*EE#14* / Dorte and Carsten Pedersen and their two daughters in front of their house)



During the process of making *EE#14* the students volunteered for and worked with different tasks described by Haeg. One group consisted of photographers and videographers documenting the entire process of making the garden (the pictures in this paper) as well as a documentary about Dorte and Carsten Pedersen, the area they lived in and the transformation of their garden.⁶ A group worked on the garden plan and the registration of all the plants and material used. Another group worked with soil and made the garden ready for planting. Some students group worked with material sourcing, and went to gravel pits and collected stones and went into woodland where they found branches and leaves. A group of builders made a greenhouse and a compost bin. The planters ordered plants for the garden and established them. During this process the exhibition group collected material from all the other groups and used it in an installation they built to represent *EE#14*

Figure 7
(*EE#14* / Students in the forest next to Dorte and Carsten Pedersen's garden collecting material – branches and leaves)



In the process of creating *EE#14* it became clear that from the inception of the idea to its realisation that drawing plays another role than it normally does in processes of site transformations in landscape architecture. Rather than functioning as a plan of what had to be done, the drawing functioned as a way of capturing what had been done. The garden was composed on site with all the collected materials, and the 'drawing' group made the final plan based on the work actually done and registered where all the different plants were placed.

Figure 8
(*EE#14* / students working together
with Fritz Haeg)



(Diary the Pedersens: EE #14: Aarhus, Denmark / Week 9: 15 – 21 July 2013)

The weather is still very hot. After 3 days away on a canoe trip, it was almost the end for our tomatoes. They were rescued with a lot of water, and now we have removed the plastic covering them. Grandma cooked for us when we got home. She had harvested some of the rhubarb and made compote. She also had made spiced butter out of several different herbs incl. nasturtium. Yum! The peaches have grown a lot and everyday the kids are harvesting and we are almost self-sufficient in salad. This week we have also sown a little more salad so that we can be completely self-sufficient. Perhaps it is too late this year, but we thought it would not hurt to try. We only got two cherries – the birds beat us to it... By contrast, almost every flower in the garden is now in full bloom and the garden stands out again. The people who had become accustomed / used to the sight, are now driving slowly by when passing. People ask: “Are the flowers also edible?” One lady said: “Is it really true? They look poisonous in all their colours”. – She got a taste (Pedersen and Pedersen, 2013).

Figure 9
(EE#14 / View from the inside of the garden towards the context)



(Diary Marie Markman: EE#14 / Sunday, 15 June 2014)

I received the final diaries from Dorte Pedersen and the message that she was in the garden half an hour ago cutting a bush when someone approached her saying “You have taken your sign down...Is it not an edible garden anymore?” Dorte Pedersen explained that the person had passed last year and said that he was looking forward to see how the garden would evolve. She comforted him by saying that even if the sign was gone it was absolutely their plan that the edible garden should continue, and they talked about the projects while he tasted some of the garden’s edible flowers (Markman, 2014c).

Figure 10
(EE#14 / View towards the garden from
the context)

6 Discussion: Traffic Island Edible Landscape and Edible Estates: Regional Prototype Garden # 14 as Contrasting Lenses

The insights from both *TIEL* and *EE#14* are that they create a confrontation or context clash. Fragile edible plants exist by a heavily polluted road. An ‘ordinary’ person is collecting garbage and maintaining a public road space. An open edible garden in a housing area where all the other front yards are hedges and lawns. Throughout this confrontation and context clash new conversations and discussions about topics that may seem fairly abstract to many suddenly become possible.

One outcome of the research is the conclusion that certain types of works made by artists become impulses in larger discussions beyond their physical placement and the concept *contrasting lenses* evolved by the author. The concept of *contrasting lenses* describes certain kinds of works of art, for example in the form of a landscape or a garden as a space one experiences the surrounding context from or through. Here the focus point is turned into the relation between the viewer, the work and the surrounding context, rather than just towards the relation between the viewer and the work of art. It is in the contrast between the transformed site and the context that the work finds its meaning. Questions arise as a result of the contrast the work creates to the surrounding area. The concept of contrasting lenses relates to the experience of a specific work in a specific context that makes you see or experience the gap between the work and the context – yet it shows the gap is possible to overcome (can be closed) as exemplified in the transformation of the specific site. The urban area you did not really see suddenly stands clearly before you – because parts of it have changed – and the contrast becomes as it were, a lens through which you see the urban area in new ways.

Both *TIEL* and *EE#14* have a dual quality derived from the blending of the physical and spatial elements but there is also the sense of an entity detached or demarcated from its context. The incongruity between the works/plantings and their contexts draw one's attention to the quality of the urban area surrounding the work. In being something different from the surrounding environment, the works address what the surrounding environment is and is not, and creates and provokes questions. The transformations of the sites become occasions to talk about the urban area, and our approach towards it in general. In the road context the subjects were concerned about traffic and pollution, the edibility of the plants and the nature of the public spaces. In the housing area one was encouraged to consider aesthetics, habits, the relationships with one's neighbours, sources of food, and connections to the natural environment immediately outside one's front door. It seems that working in a public or a private space made public, with something different from what we would normally see, gives rise to conversation and communication. This is exemplified by the conversations that Berner refers to in her blog. It is also shown in the experiences noted when establishing *TIEL* in Nørreport, where people approached with questions about the purpose of edible plants in this context related to pollution. And it is showed by Dorte Pedersen's experiences when she took the garden sign down and a passer-by posed the question "You have taken your sign down...Is it not an edible garden anymore?" (Markman, 2014c).

TIEL and *EE#14* become contrasting lenses through which one is enabled to see the surrounding urban area in a different light, just as the works of Christy and the Green Guerrillas, Purple, and Berner did. Rather than

solving the problem of only one specific site, a specific site instead reflects the surrounding urban area. The area can be eaten and enjoyed as well at the same time.

One could argue that as a starting point all the gardens/landscapes mentioned have been contrasting lenses. The works all raise general questions about landscape and its role in urban areas as much as they transform a specific site. As such (despite of their differences and how they relate in different ways to the six approaches stated as a common denominator within this kind of visual art), the works generate reflections and discussions. Although, it seems that all these gardens and landscapes which started as “contrasting lenses” will over time become familiar, and the discussions they raised will “melt” together with the surrounding environment and seem less obvious. *The Garden of Eden* entirely became part of everyday life for people living in the neighbourhood, as *TIEL* has done for passers-by and students from AAA, and *EE#14* for neighbours and others passers-by in the town of Hammel. When this happens, I would argue that it is time for the artist to find a new space and/or method to create questions from.

From a research point of view, working and using works of art as manifestations i.e. landscapes /gardens in a 1:1 scale offers new knowledge opportunities. This is linked to ethereal and immaterial qualities and possibilities of (both) recognition and confrontation through the senses, and to a straightforward approach where the discussion is positioned directly in visible spaces in our environment, by the making of landscapes and gardens.

In this research approach there are no paradoxes (conflicts) between abstract discussion and concrete function. On the contrary, it is one of the inherent qualities of the method. One could say that abstract discussion becomes possible to grasp through the landscapes/gardens in a specific context. Furthermore, the landscapes and gardens are given meaning by the discussions they raise because of their very placement. Form is placed against the form of others. The arguments and questions concerning the environment are placed in the context that they address, and the discussion starts taking place right there, on the site. This means there is a potential for a very direct debate on site, a debate that can alter both the understanding of passers-by and the artist/researcher.

From an educational point of view there is a special possibility to increase the level of critical reflection among students by involving them in these kinds of projects. Furthermore this approach contributes on a larger scale to the community educational level, and gives laymen the opportunity to influence both the mind-set of students, artists and/or researchers involved in site transformations. Through this approach educational institutions and researchers become actors for real change.

Through this approach the urban area is discussed, through offering the opportunity of a physical and bodily experience that enhances the questions and discussions the projects raise, both within the educational/research context itself and in the public sphere in general.

7 Conclusions

Within the scope of the research framework of this paper, it has been put forward that artists working in the urban area concentrate on two factors. On the one hand, through site transformations raising questions about the urban area and, on the other hand, transforming sites in ways so that they can be eaten and/or enjoyed too.

When a research debate is unfolded in full scale in various urban sites and as part of everyday life, the role of the researcher is not only the one of describing and reflecting but also as a participant and actor for change. The researcher becomes directly confronted with questions, situations, and circumstances that alter one's perspective. I will suggest that this research is not just seen as a strategic means, but as an end in itself. The approach offers an opportunity to raise critical awareness, and it points towards methods that are sustainable in combining and addressing aesthetic, ecological, economic, and social problems.

The making of even small landscapes and gardens can expand notions of site methodologies when considered a process of generating knowledge through working directly on transforming an urban site. In *TIEL* and *EE#14* questions concerning accessibility to edible plants, the value of certain sites, and one's role as public are addressed through form. By introducing the experience of a transformed site in a context constantly reminding one of what the city is not, one is encouraged to think about what the city could potentially be, because the site transformation allows one to experience glimpses of that alternative condition.

Returning to da Vinci's drawing of Milan, Kahn (2005) argues that there are no borders dividing site from situation, a perspective that the site transformations put forward in this paper offers as well. Present in an urban site making a landscape or a garden, the urban situation is both revealed and influenced by the transformation. In the process of transforming an urban site, or even being confronted with the contrast a certain work causes, one becomes part of this urban situation – one both adds and receives knowledge, and the two are inseparable. Adding to the perspective of Andrea Kahn's five concepts for urban site thinking, the conclusion is that methods used by artists in site transformations reveal a sixth concept for urban site thinking namely 'site making' by using methods where the transformation of certain sites becomes 'contrasting lenses'. Site thinking and site making become unified in their approaches and the making of even small landscapes and gardens envision within the site a possibility for what the urban area could be.

As described in this paper ‘contrasting lenses’ is both an outcome of a certain way of practicing and thinking, and a method. Whether the one or the other, the concept can contribute to new ways of making and discussing the urban area. The approach offers an opportunity to raise critical awareness, and the examples in this paper points towards methods that are sustainable in combining and addressing aesthetic, ecological, economic, and social problems - one of the most urgent tasks of our time.

However there are challenges in the sense that all the mentioned works question conventional ways of doing things and to some extent operate from a marginalised position. This is strongly emphasised in how artists themselves define even the tasks they undertake, and therefore often work outside established structures. Copying the methods described as common characteristics within this kind of art will not necessarily make transformations of sites appear as ‘contrasting lenses’.

The potentials and the perspectives in art and the methods artists employ can include for thinking urban sites – thinking them in new ways and/or developing methods for doing so – and is linked to stepping into the urban arena generating knowledge while sharing ideas as physical form possible for others to experience. It is about daring to displace established discourses of ‘how we do things’, and in this process risking being displaced oneself, while being present in the urban situation and learning.

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TIEL

Credits:

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EEL#14

Credits:

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