

## LANDSCAPE SPRAWL – AN ARTISTIC RESPONSE TO LIVING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

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This dissertation addresses how landscape can have a more prominent and present role in the urban space and create new connections in otherwise fragmented urban areas. The dissertation is based on three artistic works made during a PhD employment at the Aarhus School of Architecture (AAA) in the years 2011 – 2014: The first work is an edible landscape made in collaboration with students from AAA in between the lanes of a road with heavy traffic / *Traffic Island Edible Landscape* (2012). The second work is an edible garden in a private garden, made by the American artist Fritz Haeg and as well in collaboration with students from AAA / *Edible Estates: Prototype Garden #14: Aarhus; Denmark* (2013). The third work is a public seminar where it was discussed, whether urban agriculture positively can have a more pronounced role in urban planning / *Urban Agriculture: Edible Estates and the Mega Cities of Tomorrow* (2013).

Based on the process of the making of the works, reflections about the artistic methods used in the project and their contribution in a research context, the content of the dissertation is as follows:

At the seminar *Urban Agriculture: Edible Estates and the Mega Cities of Tomorrow* (2013) the Anthropocene (in the meaning that human activity has made change at a planetary level) is stated as a possibly starting point for new approaches towards forming the urban space - a starting point that involves aesthetic, ecologic, economic and social aspects. In the dissertation it is addressed, how during war and crises, there are examples of urban areas being remodelled by small-scale changes, individual projects of *making landscape* in light of social objectives. Historical urban gardening projects related to periods of war are one

example of changes during crisis initiated in order to survive or/and to create a sense of unity. Another example is how artists throughout history have pointed at necessary changes in society, among others by transforming urban sites in order to discuss aesthetic, ecological, political and social issues related to urban areas and planning. Furthermore it is pointed out that today globally there is a gap between informal, bottom-up urban developers and national development programs and legislation. This gap could benefit from being bridged in the ethics of the architectural profession.

The Anthropocene addresses new knowledge and methods. The approach in this research is thinking and working transdisciplinarily and creating new perspectives through transformations of urban places. Here the imagination of what the urban could be, has a central role.

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The term *making landscape* is introduced as a way of influencing behaviour, values and ways of living. The method explores the boundaries between practice and research and uses displacements of familiar ways of working to discuss the role of landscape. The term *landscape sprawl* is introduced as research strategy and as a countermove to urban sprawl and defines aspects of transdisciplinarity. The method, which is based on an artistic critical practice, leads to a different form of planning by generating new questions. The works *Traffic Island Edible Landscape* and *Edible Estates: Prototype Garden # 14: Aarhus; Denmark* bring the discussion further and point at new displacements and questions.

The political discussions about urban agriculture, ideas about urban and rural areas as opposites is touched upon, and how transformations of the urban space can create new images that help transcend the familiar to in order to see new opportunities is presented.

Finally it is concluded, that the making of works such as *Traffic Island Edible Landscape* og *Edible Estates: Prototype Garden # 14: Aarhus; Denmark* engage the people who experience them in thoughts about the future, and in thoughts about the chain of thoughts and critical questions leading to new thoughts and questions. Furthermore it is concluded that besides landscape sprawl is seen as an artistic response to living in the Anthropocene, landscape sprawl also describes the phenomenon of urban agriculture, farming and gardening projects, which need to be regarded with more nuances.



People's involvement and the influence it has on the questions we ask, is the central axis in building theory in the dissertation. The results of the research are presented, and the conclusion is that methods behind small-scale projects add knowledge to large-scale planning. The result leads to the question *what now* and to new possible starting points.

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