

THE BACKYARD

*A vision for the transformation of an
abandoned railyard in central Copenhagen*



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Master Thesis
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July 2013

PREFACE

Within the next decade DSB (Danish State Railways) are expected to leave the Central Maintenance Facility (Danish: Centralværkstedet) located at Otto Busses Vej in Copenhagen. In this light the Municipality of Copenhagen has labeled it an area of high potential where development can happen after 2021.

The Central Maintenance Facility which largely closed in 1988 was for almost a century the heart of the Danish railroad system. Left today is a unique post-industrial landscape with abandoned depots, workshops, run-down obsolete trains and overgrown rails. With its central location just 2km from the city center of Copenhagen the area is becoming increasingly relevant to the city as it looks for space to expand and meet the demands of its growing population.

Title:	The Backyard
Module:	Master Thesis
Theme:	Urban Transformation
Period:	February-July 2013
Group No.:	ma4-urb3b
Supervisor:	Nicolai Steinø
No. of pages:	57

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the help of my supervisor Nicolai Steinø for his skillful guidance and ability to gently push me when I was timid at key moments during this process.

To all my friends at the school a sincere thank you for all the knowledge you have imparted and the support you have given.

Timo Hollmén Olesen

MOTIVATION

In the light of the sporadic high-end residential developments found along Sydhavn it has been my motivation with this project to come up with a proposal that works for the common good of the city. With a development lead by profit-seeking landowners rather than the municipality many civic interests such as a green infrastructure and public access to the waterfront have been somewhat overlooked and I find it to be one of the foremost obligations as an urban designer to make my contribution here.

Apart from that I'm generally intrigued by the contrasts of the city, the colorful neighborhoods, the quarters and the cracks in the urban fabric. Therefore I chose this site which sits in the wonderful "second row" from the water. To begin with I worked with fellow urban design student Felix Egestad. Unfortunately we had to split our group midway into the project period due to disagreements on the direction of our work and my original intention suffered a setback. Nonetheless I returned to the drawing board and within 6 weeks time this is what I have collected to present for you. Please enjoy the reading!



WELCOME TO THE BACKYARD!

The Backyard is the 21st century urban park - a park for the entire southern part of Copenhagen. Divided into three zones the park is a compound of contrasting landscapes in which people from the surrounding neighborhoods can meet across cultures, ethnicities and generations. The Backyard not only captures the areas mystical character and secluded nature, but also the feeling of escape from the city, that you get as you enter the area. The Backyard is an intriguing "space" and hardly visible from the city it seems like you almost need an invitation to get in. It is a place where the weeds grow untamed and the order of the city is challenged by a different aesthetic.

Otto Busses Vej

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Introduction



Copenhagen Central St.

Kalvebod Brygge

Vesterbro

Orto Bussens Vej

Sydhavn

Baunehøj

SITE DEFINITION & PROBLEM STATEMENT

The site addressed in this project is constituted by the abandoned Central Maintenance Facility (from here on the CMF) located at Otto Busses Vej in the southwestern part of Copenhagen. This 30 hectare post-industrial landscape lies caught between major railways on one side and a control center for the Copenhagen Metro (currently under construction) on the other. Despite being less than 2km from the Copenhagen Central Station the site seems far from the city. It therefore has an unusual and almost undiscovered potential of recreation for the city's residents.

I will in this project attempt to give a fulfilling answer to the question:

How do we transform the Central Maintenance Facility at Otto Busses Vej into an active and integral part of Copenhagen?

Because of the area's extensive size I have chosen a conceptual approach with a focus on the landscape while the buildings on the site are treated as Exhibition Halls in line with their current use and not addressed in any further detail. The private residences of "Den Gule By" with connected outdoor spaces (located in the northwestern corner of the site) are likewise included in the site but treated as "fixed".



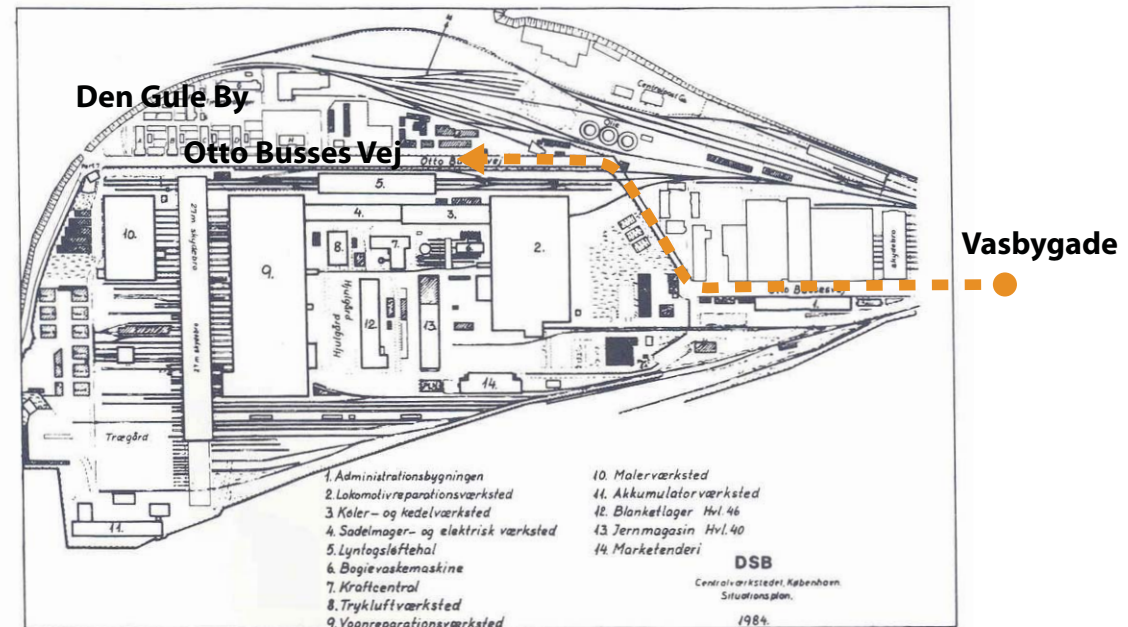
1-10000

ANALYSIS

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

At the first encounter with Otto Busses Vej the area doesn't present itself in the most charming fashion. The access from Vasbygade is difficult to spot and going by car it is most likely that you will just whizz past without realizing that this bumpy asphalt road will actually lead you into one of the best kept secrets of the city. But seen from a bike it's a different story. A few pedal strokes and you are suddenly in a different world, with green groves and "ruins" of a bygone era. This is the CMF which for almost a hundred years was one of Copenhagen's largest work places and the heart of the Danish railway system. Here all kinds of tasks that were necessary to maintain railway operations in the country were undertaken (Frandsen 2008). Nowadays, the area lies quiet and forgotten with the only buzz coming from the trains in the distance and the few remaining workers you meet here and there.

Otto Busses Vej (named after former Technical Director of DSB, Otto Busse 1850–1933) is an approximately 1 km long dead-end road that cuts off from Vasbygade just south of Dybbølsbro. Along Otto Busses Vej you find several large workshop halls and Den Gule by (trans: The Yellow City), which historically housed a division of DSB staff members. At its eastern end a narrow pedestrian tunnel passes under the railway connecting the area to Baunehøj.



Hand-drawn map of the Central Maintenance Facility with my initial route into the area.

The Draw Bridge is one of the most characteristic elements of the railroad era. Built on two parallel rails with an approximate span of 20 meters between them, it can move trains between tracks. The picture is taken outside the steering house of the bridge and looking south across the underlying rectangular basin which over time has been covered by wildly growing weeds.



HISTORY & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Until the mid-1800s, the grounds on which the CMF is located today, were a low lying beach area named Kalveboderne where the sea in some places reached a depth of 3 meters. Due to lack of land and the rapid expansion of Copenhagen during this time, a comprehensive land reclamation project was undertaken and in the course of a few generations the harbor front changed significantly. This explains the sites flat appearance.

During the same period the railroad became the prime mode of transportation in the country and in this context it was decided to establish the CMF on the reclaimed land. When the CMF opened in 1909 it covered an area of 30 hectares and included a wide range of specially designed workshops, each of which represented a different part of the railway/train repair and maintenance process.

The CMF was an example of some of the most advanced technology in the country at the time and was built to handle all conceivable tasks that were necessary to maintain rail operations in the country. The work force counted several thousand and was dominated by a broad group of craftsmen including black smiths, electricians, carpenters, masons and many more (Frandsen 2008).



Picture of the CMF in the beginning of the 1900's. Den Gule By with its village style architecture is seen in the foreground standing in sharp contrast to the Train Workshop and the Draw Bridge behind it.

THE AREA TODAY

The CMF officially closed in 1988. Today the area contains just a few smaller specialized workshops with no more than 40 employees and the Danish name (i.e. Centralværkstedet) is solely used as an informal reference to the old complex. This reveals the truth of a place that has lost its name, its role in the larger city and public awareness. Over the years several ambitious proposals to its transformation have been made (including DSB's own Baneby-project from 1991) but either due to political hesitance, poor economic perspectives, or most likely the complexity of cleaning up the area nothing that extensive has happened.

Instead (and positively so) large parts of the area have been opened to the public and you can rejoice in its impressive buildings which remain a testimony to the industrial age and a time when the railroad was the main artery of the Danish society. The Locomotive Workshop has been refurbished and become a popular venue for exhibitions, larger meetings and cultural activities. While the Train Workshop now contains a division of the Danish Railway Museum. The building mass is described in more detail on the following page.



Apart from being a popular exhibition venue the refurbished Locomotive Workshop also provides a wonderful raw setting for the arts. Seen here is a dance team getting ready for a film shoot.

THE BUILDING MASS

The building mass of the CMF comprises a number of different workshop halls of which most date back to the beginning of the 1900s and were built with inspiration from England. The entire facility was of a size that at the inauguration was unprecedented in Denmark (Frandsen 2008). The buildings vary greatly in size as they served different purposes. Nine of these buildings, I have assessed as being particularly worthy of preservation. To this category I have selected buildings which I consider to have either historical or functional value. On the following page these buildings are depicted to give a better impression of the site.





1. The Locomotive Workshop (1907)



2. The Power Station (1908)



3. The Iron Storage (1907)



4. The Boiler Smith (1907)



5. The Train Workshop (1910)



6. The Wood Storage



7. Den Gule By (private housing)



8. The Water Tower (1913)



9. The Main Office Building (1908)

LANDSCAPE

The landscape at the CMF has remained largely untouched by man since the facility closed in 1988. Since then, nature has slowly returned in the form of weeds and bushes creating an exciting clash between the organic and the raw, man-made materials. This is particularly pronounced in the area around the Draw Bridge. An interesting feature is the so-called “Boneyard” (also found in this area) where several obsolete trains have been parked decades ago. Here the original railscape is almost invisible underneath the grasses.

Scattered throughout the CMF you also find a number of trimmed green spaces with great amenity (which you surprisingly have almost to yourself) such as the lawn outside the Locomotive Workshop, and in the central part of the facility smaller well-kept “stamps” of green between the asphalted parking lots and smaller workshops that lie in this area.





1. Wilderness in the far western part of the area.



2. The "Boneyard".



3. The Draw Bridge.



4. A green pocket outside the Power Station.



5. Otto Busses Vej looking east.



6. The Gas Tanks.



7. Lawn in front of the Locomotive Workshop (south)



8. Lawn in front of the Locomotive Workshop (north)

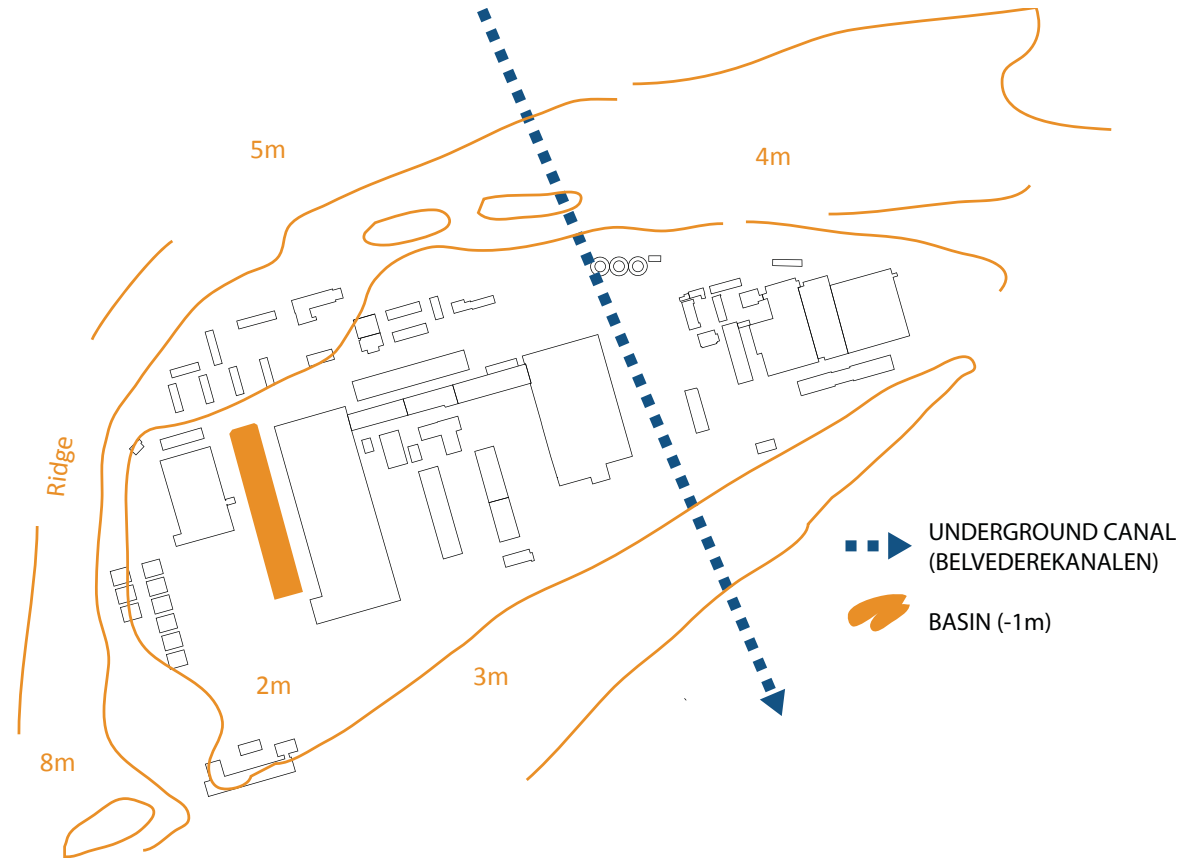


9. The Merry-go-round near the entrance.

TERRAIN

The area on which the Central Maintenance Facility lies today is the result of a comprehensive land reclamation as described earlier. Therefore the site is entirely flat. The only exception is the rectangular dugout (basin) that underlies the Draw Bridge. Along the northern and western edge of the site (i.e. where the historic coastline was found) the terrain inclines significantly to create the ridge on which the railway leading into Copenhagen lies. This works as barrier effectively hiding the site from the surrounding quarters and contributing to its secluded feeling. A similar effect is created by the southern boundary where a new control center for the Copenhagen Metro is being constructed slightly above terrain.

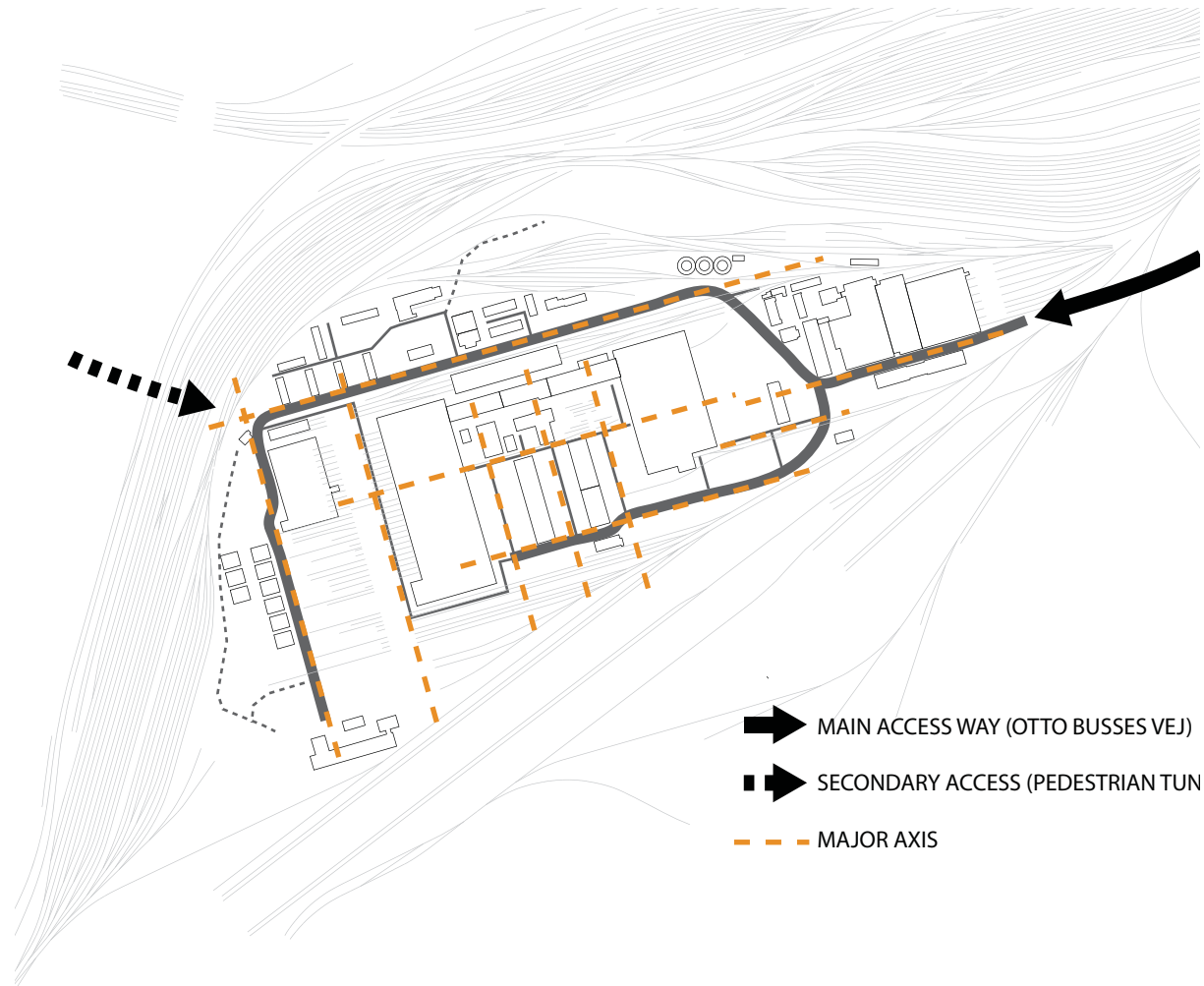
An interesting yet hidden feature with roots in the days of land reclamation is the underground Belvedere Canal which runs under the site and into the harbor only a few hundred meters to the south (København Kommune 2012).



ROADS AND PATHWAYS

The roadscape is very limited in relation to the size of the area as a whole. It basically consists of Otto Busses Vej which wedges into the area and a minor branch that reaches into the central part of the facility. However, large areas especially those between the workshops at the center of the facility are asphalted, which has historically allowed convenient access between them.

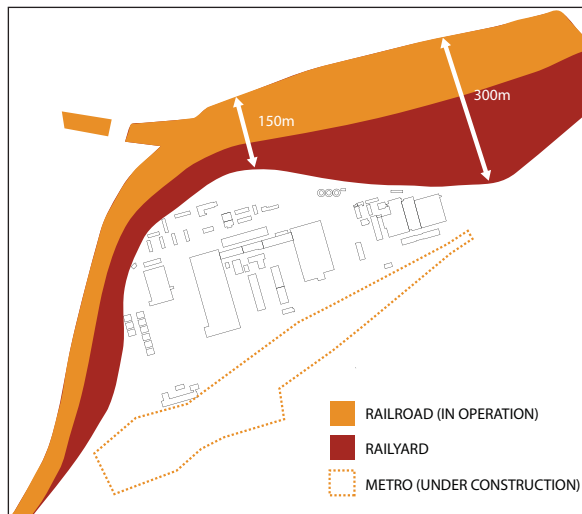
Otto Busses Vej has long been a sealed road and is primarily used by residents of Den Gule By and cyclists passing through the area from the tunnel in the western end to Vasbygade and vice versa. With its dead end car traffic is limited but the delivery trucks that pass from time to time, and frequently during exhibitions, make it inconvenient for pedestrians.



BORDERS & BARRIERS

The CMF is as previously mentioned very isolated from its surroundings by railroad tracks to nearly all sides. However, this also means that the area is unusually calm and by many experienced as an oasis in the city. This particular quality must not be compromised by the construction of major access routes, but a certain improvement of accessibility is obviously required if the Municipality wants more people to enjoy the area.

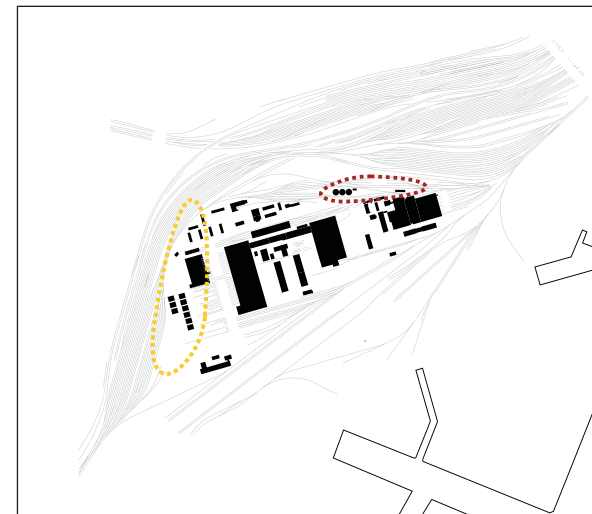




Railroad Barrier Effect: At its widest the railroad terrain that divides the CMF from Vesterbro reaches approximately 300m. To the south is the new control center for the Copenhagen Metro which is currently being built.



Noise Levels: Daily noise (measured at 4m) from the railroad and larger roads surrounding the CMF reveals the quieter areas near the center of the area. Yellow marks the highest level (source: www.noise.mst.dk)

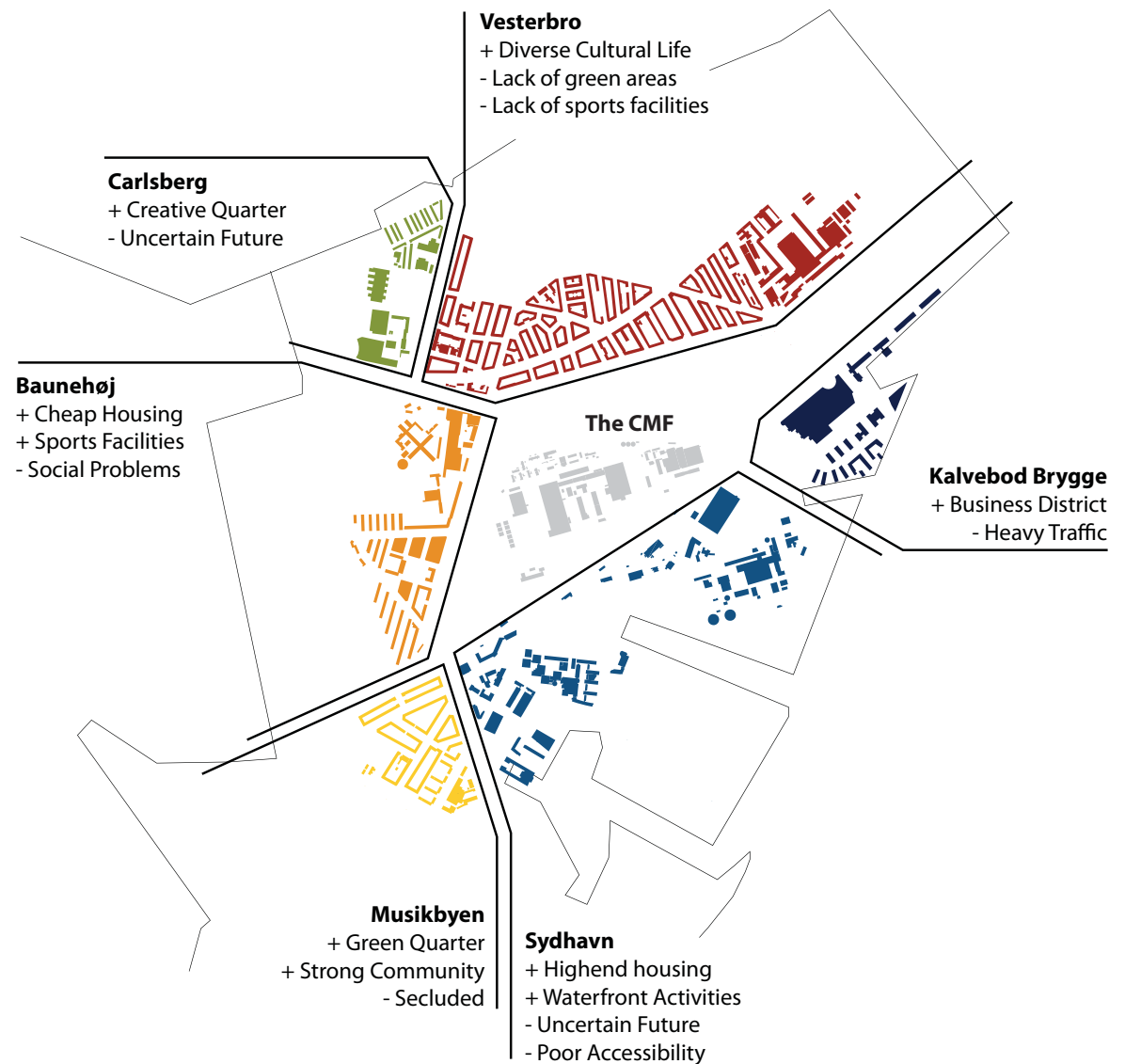


Soil pollution: The area marked with yellow is a former landfill. Marked with red is an area with soil pollution which has been identified around The Gas Tanks (Københavns Kommune 2012)

THE DISTRICT

Administratively the CMF belongs to the district of “Vesterbro & Kgs Enghave” which was born as the result of a merger between the two formerly independent districts in 2006. Vesterbro which extends from the Central Railway Station to Carlsberg is a culturally diverse and highly urbanized area that over the past decades has undergone major changes. Following a long run of socioeconomic growth it is today one of the most popular quarters of Copenhagen. Kgs. Enghave is in comparison to the dense Vesterbro more open and green. The urban area however is perceived as cut off from the rest of Copenhagen, and many of its inhabitants are therefore oriented towards Vesterbro rather than their own urban area, when it comes to shopping and culture.

The main intention of the district merger in 2006 was to create greater cooperation and cohesion in the southern part of the municipality and “pick up” the detached quarters found along Sydhavn. However, this has yet to materialize. The district now under one roof, remains highly fragmented with what behind the political maneuver is actually six distinct quarters. In this context the CMF lies in a no-mans-land, not really belonging to any of these but appealing to all of them. (Københavns Kommune 2010)



MUSIKBYEN



Musikbyen with its streets named after classical composers contains low story dwellings with small front gardens built in the 1930s functionalist style. It is a quarter with many elders and deep roots in the socialist worker movement.

BAUNEHØJ



This quarter emerged in the 1920s with a mix of housing cooperatives and municipal housing. The area today appears somewhat isolated from the city, with some social problems.

VESTERBRO



One of Copenhagen's most hip quarters which over just a few decades developed from a socially challenged part of the city to being a vibrant quarter with great shopping options and a lively cultural scene.

CARLSBERG



Conversion of the old brewery to a new and vibrant cultural quarter with a high urban density is slowly progressing beyond the design phase. Architects Entasis have prepared the masterplan.

KALVEBOD BRYGGE



The quarter along the harbor consists of a number of large corporations and hotels. Unfortunately the area is without much charm offering scarce public space and little urban life.

SYDHAVN



Sydhavn has been labelled a growth area and the establishment of Dutch-inspired canals give fantastic access to the water. Unfortunately, the area seems cut off from the city in terms of public transport.

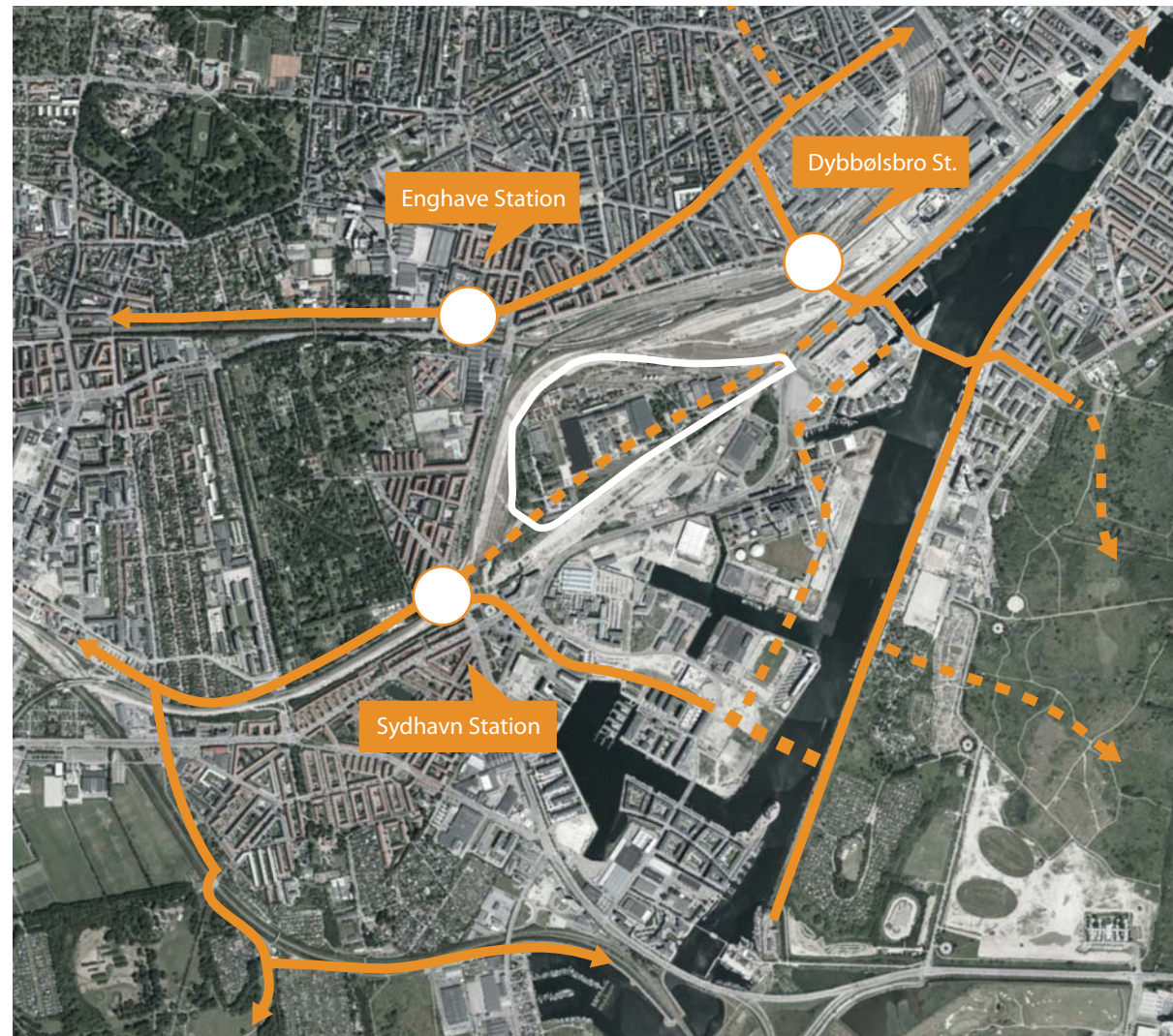
GREEN STRUCTURES

It is a declared goal of Copenhagen to become the world's eco-metropolis and for this reason the municipality has a strong focus on preserving and strengthening the dispersed green structure of the city. (Københavns Kommune 2009) Unfortunately with the development of Sydhavn having been dominated by private land-owners seeking profit in high-end residential developments on the waterfront, the green element has been neglected. Zooming out, this leaves the picture of a district which lacks accessible public parks (most parks are located on the rim or even outside of the district boundaries). It is in this context that the publicly owned CMF is particularly interesting. In its current situation it does have some recreational function but poor accessibility and popular knowledge of the area hinders it from reaching its full potential and usage is limited to a narrow group of locals from the immediate surroundings.



NEW CONNECTIONS

Copenhagen is internationally known for its many cyclists and has an ambition to further strengthen this profile. To do this the municipality has proposed a number of new bike routes as shown on the map (Københavns Kommune 2009). This is especially relevant as one of these is projected to pass straight through the project site. Particularly interesting is that these so-called “home to workplace” routes are planned to carry a large number of cyclists through the site on a daily basis which will naturally give it a lot of exposure. The challenge then lies in designing the new connection without compromising the site's unique qualities.

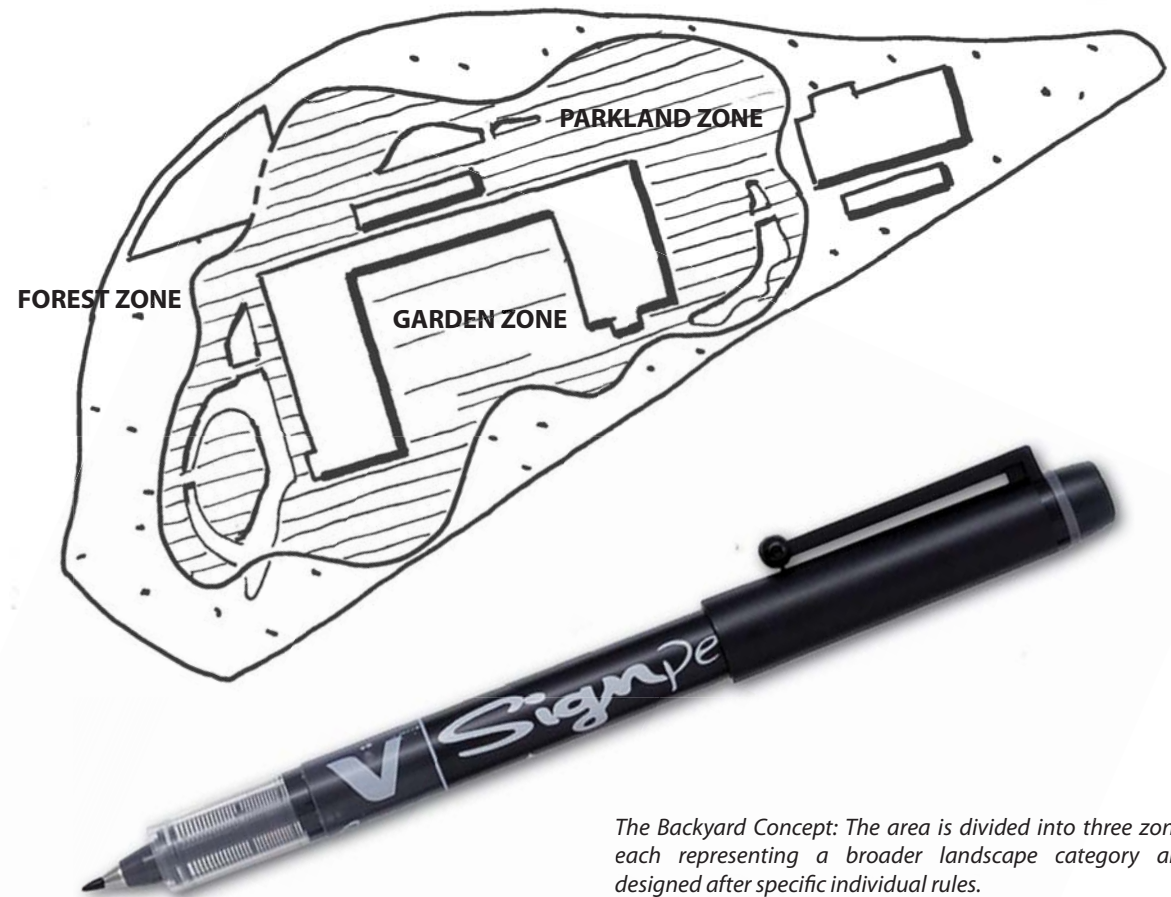


CONCEPT

THE BACKYARD - ONE PARK, THREE ZONES

Carrying a history of almost a century as one of Copenhagen's largest employers the CMF is currently in a peculiar vacuous state cherished by the immediate neighbors for its privacy but in general unknown to the larger public. Over the years several proposals to a full urbanisation of the area have surfaced but since the facility closed in 1988 nothing has happened in that direction. In the meantime nature has crept in on the man-made and today the area possesses a unique and contrasting aesthetic. When you enter the site through the narrow tunnel at Enghavevej the contrast is probably most profound. Within less than a hundred meters you leave the orderly urban structure of Baunehøj and step into an entirely different world surrounded by wildly growing gardens and the idyllic village atmosphere of Den Gule By. Since the CMF has lost its name and public awareness, people talk of the area as "a pocket in time", "an oasis", "an island" and much more along that line. But in my mind it is a backyard to the city – and not only that but "The Backyard". Surrounded by ridges to nearly all sides and lined by a rim of trees, the basic premise is already there - the hedge.

"The Backyard" is my vision of a future park on the area that not only captures its mystical character but also the feeling of escape from the city you get as you enter the area. "The Backyard" is an intriguing "space" and hardly visible from the city it seems like you almost



The Backyard Concept: The area is divided into three zones each representing a broader landscape category and designed after specific individual rules.

need an invitation to get in. It is a place where the weeds grow untamed and the order of the city is challenged by a different aesthetic.

“The Backyard” is divided into three zones, each representing a broader landscape category:

1. Forest Zone (the natural landscape)
2. Parkland Zone (the ruderal landscape)
3. Garden Zone (the horticultural landscape)

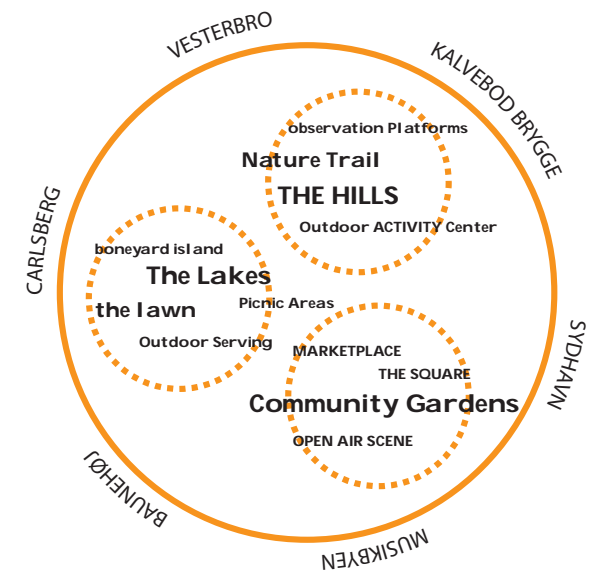
Each of these three zones offers different physical and experiential qualities to the visitor and is addressed according to specific individual rules (which I will cover in the following section). The application of these zones works on two levels, locally in capturing existing spatial qualities and valuable historical elements, and globally by binding the area together to create a wholesome destination that conveys the idea of “The Backyard” beyond the district boundaries.

With the strong presence of the green element throughout the area today, the idea of a transformation into a park has good reason. But it is the area’s central location, caught between six distinctly different quarters and behind a “fence” of railroad tracks, that is the best argument for doing exactly that.

“The Backyard” opens the fence so to speak with a number of new bicycle connections and transforms what until now has been an inert edge of the city into an active border-land which can act as a driving force for cultural exchange and create greater cohesion across the district. This is an idea that is supported in theory by American sociologist Richard Sennett who advocates for locating new community resources at the edges *between communities*, rather than at the *center* of one (web1).

At a smaller scale “The Backyard” works well alongside the emerging exhibition activities found at the site today, ideally allowing outdoor showrooms in which visitors from near and far can interact in the beautiful surroundings.

An alternative to the proposed park could be a decidedly urban development with a high residential density. However, this development path would most likely reinforce the already fragmented urban structure.



Programs of the three zones are aimed at citizens of the surrounding neighborhood and shuffled for mixed-use.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

THE BACKYARD

1:5000

The masterplan for The Backyard contains three zones.
Each representing a broader landscape category:

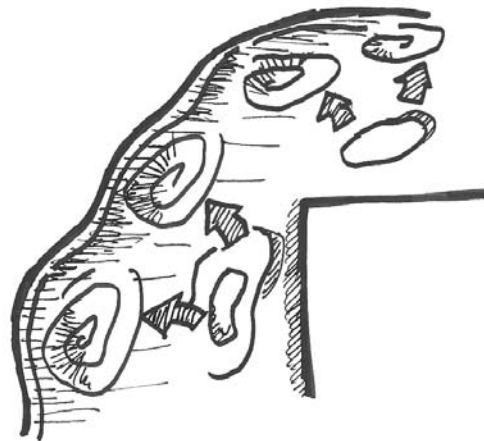
1. Forest Zone (the natural landscape)
2. Parkland Zone (the ruderal landscape)
3. Garden Zone (the horticultural landscape)



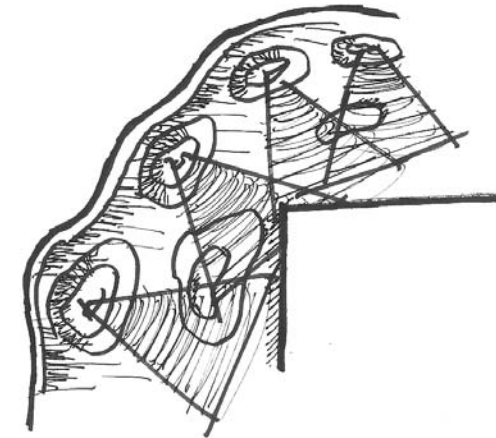
TERRAIN TREATMENT

To address the noise problem from the railway, provide an overview of the park and give the surrounding neighborhoods a tease of its hidden presence, the northwestern rim of “The Backyard” is lined by a belt of four small hill-tops which climb in height from 4m to 10m to just slightly peak over the railway ridge. The hill-tops act as a binding structural element that contributes to the park’s backyard feeling. The terrain is created by the displacement of soil from adjacent areas (particularly from the basin around the Draw Bridge) which in turn creates three small ponds which emphasize the monocentricity of the park like a moat to a castle.

The hill-tops are placed in dynamic extension of each other and carefully so, to frame the industrial relics found along its path. This is probably best exemplified by the Boneyard Island in which the obsolete trains to the west of the Draw Bridge have been entirely detached from the surrounding land by a narrow canal creating a deeper sense of mystery around it and inviting visitors to further exploration.



1. Displacement of soil from selected areas around the central parts of the park creates a belt of hill-tops along the northwestern rim of the park and leaves several small ponds for the public to enjoy.



2. The hill-tops create visibility of the larger buildings at the center of the park and across the otherwise uninspiring, flat terrain.

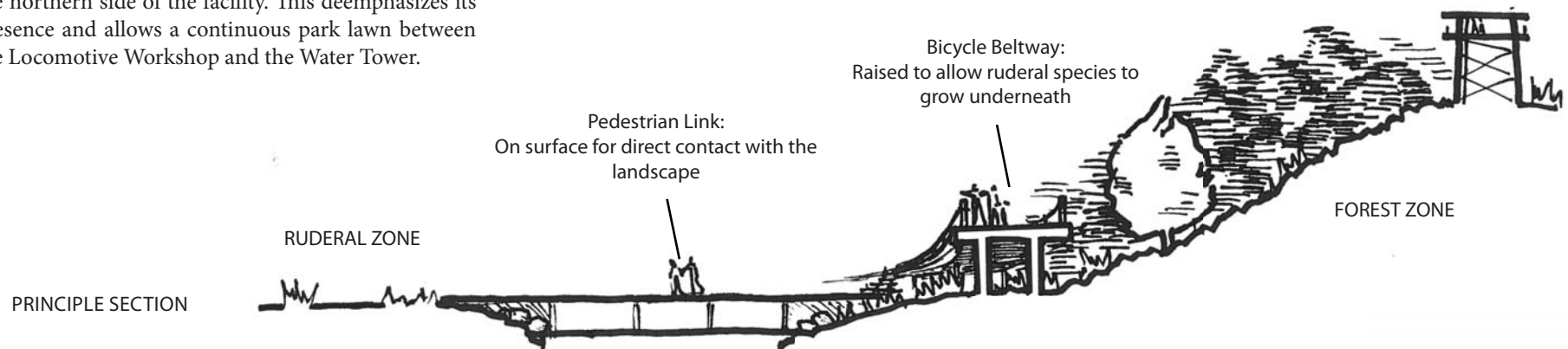
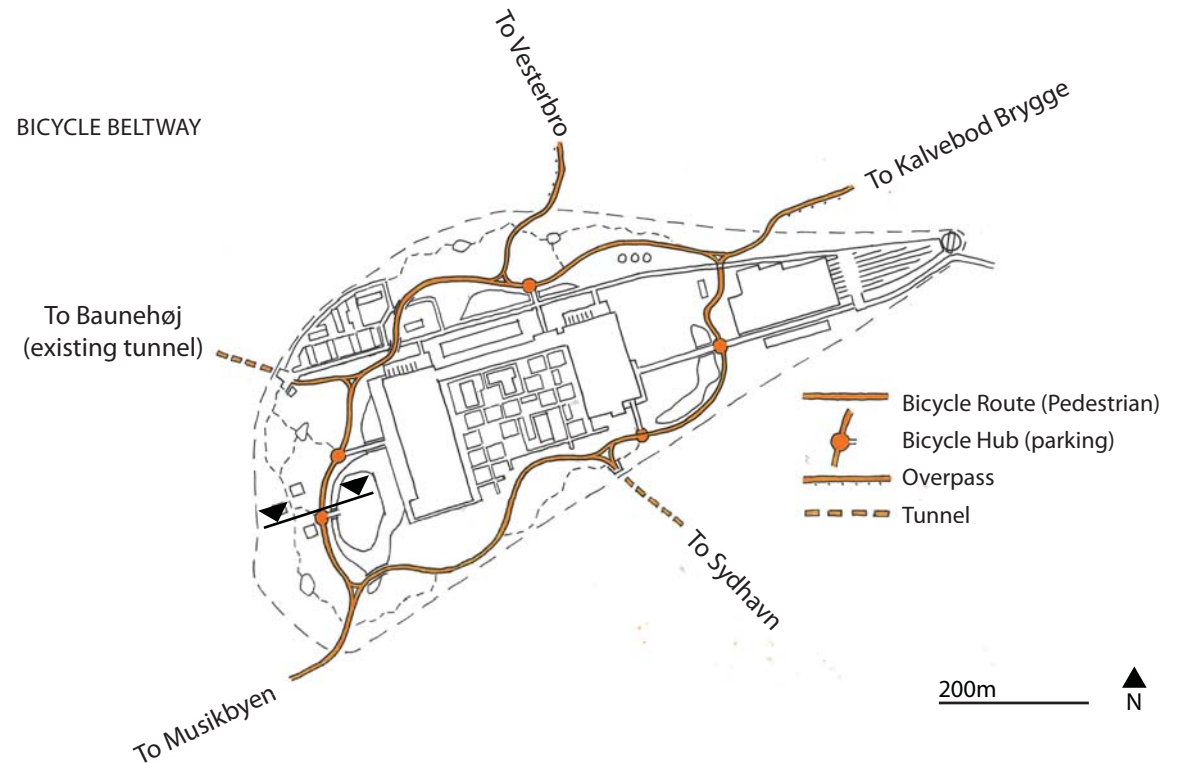


THE FOUR HILL TOPS.

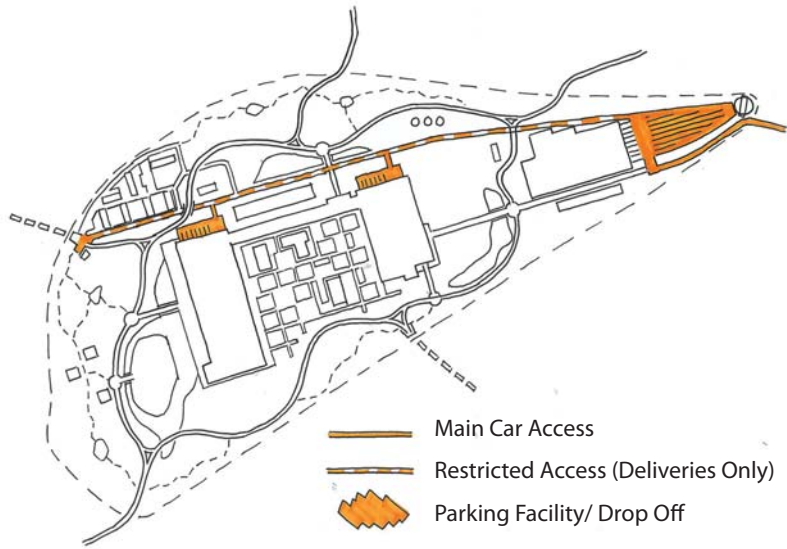
CIRCULATION

The Backyard has a circulation system based on bicycles and pedestrian routes while car/truck access is limited to exhibition deliveries and residents of Den Gule By. With the park's central location in the district the system is designed with a double agenda of providing both internal and transversal connections. This is done by the introduction of a bicycle "beltway" which runs around the central part of the park and has branches which lead off to each of the neighboring quarters. The beltway follows a dynamic curved path, designed to expose unique park features to the bicyclist and at the same time provide a close-to frictionless transversal flow through the area that makes it a convenient link in to the Municipality's larger network of bicycle routes.

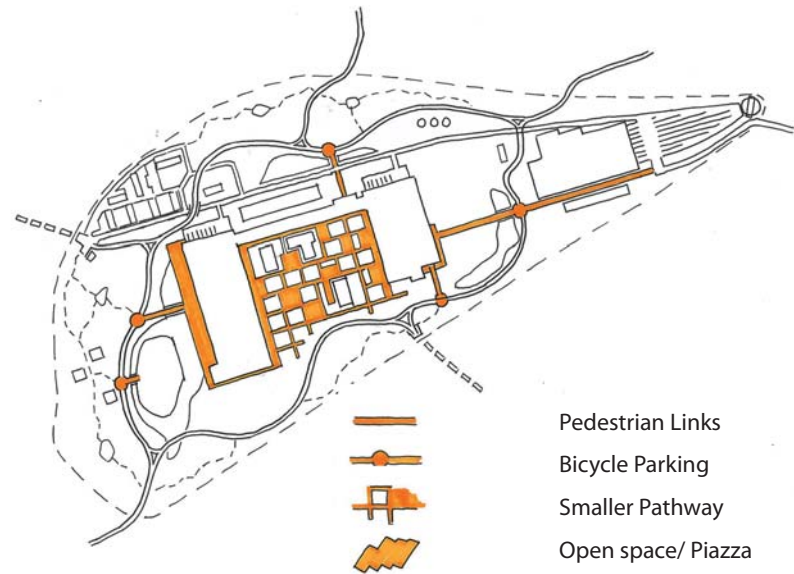
Car access to the park is done via the existing eastern entrance of Otto Busses Vej where a parking facility is established in the existing yard (see next page). Otto Busses Vej itself is redirected with the first part (i.e. leading up to the Locomotive Workshop) moved to the northern side of the facility. This deemphasizes its presence and allows a continuous park lawn between the Locomotive Workshop and the Water Tower.



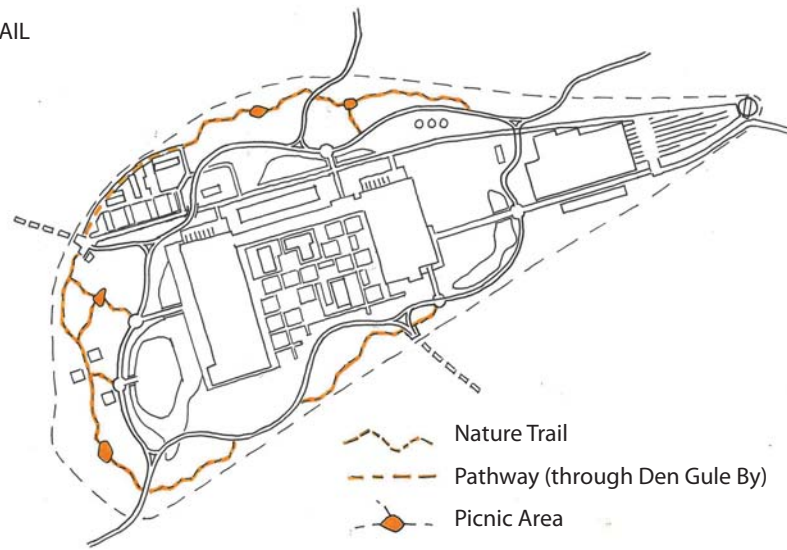
CAR/TRUCK ACCESS



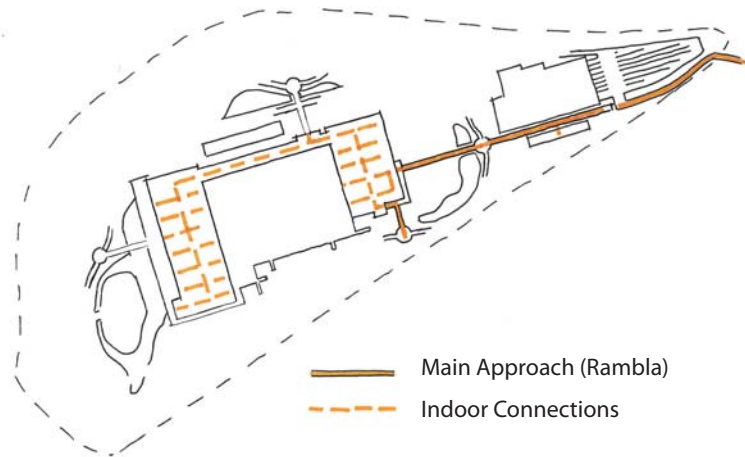
PEDESTRIAN LINKS/ZONES



NATURE TRAIL

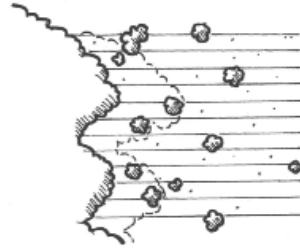


INDOOR LINKS

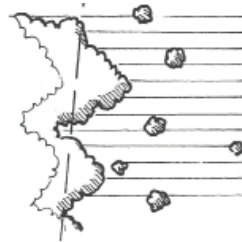


FOREST ZONE

The Forest Zone (the natural landscape) represents the return of the untouched natural forest to the city. It lies along the rim of the area and has the belt of four small hill-tops as its main structural element. This zone offers direct contact between the visitor and the natural elements and is designed to accommodate predominantly individual activities. When fully grown the forest zone will offer an exciting contrast to the concrete jungle of the surrounding urban areas. With its location adjacent to the railroad it acts to absorb noise pollution and thus provide a quieter and greener park. On an experiential level the forest vegetation works to emphasize the feeling of escaping the city and helps to frame the entire park as “The Backyard” contributing to its new sense of destination. Preserved building elements such as the abandoned woodshops are reused to house new functions which relate to outdoor activities. On each of the four hill-tops a sightseeing platform is placed to offer visibility in all directions and give a teaser of the otherwise hidden park to passengers in bypassing trains and people in the surrounding neighborhoods. Circulation through the forest zone follows an unpaved pathway (i.e. nature trail) allowing the visitor to be in direct contact with the elements and potential activities such as mountainbiking, tree climbing, and sledding depending on the season.



Extension of treeline by simulated organic growth



Trimming of new forest edge along the perceived mean to preserve underlying ruderal landscape.



Introduction of bicycle/pedestrian path along forest edge to contain its growth and emphasize contrast between zones.



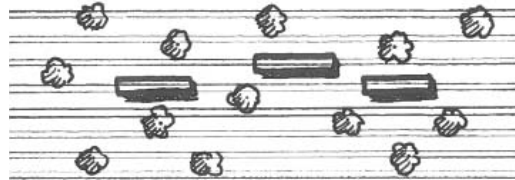
The Forest Zone runs along the rim of the park and stands in sharp contrast to the trimmed vegetation of the Parkland Zone. Depicted here is the northern most part with Vesterbro's skyline and the Carlsberg Tower seen in the distance. The bicycle beltway is seen at the center of the picture.



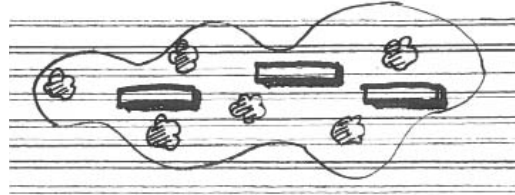
PARKLAND ZONE

The parkland zone (the ruderal landscape) lies between the forest zone and the garden zone and has a system of several small ponds as its main structural element. This area is designed for activities such as sun bathing, yoga practice and fishing. The current pathways are largely removed to create continuous parklands such as “The Lawn” to the east of Locomotive Workshop. Thematically this intermediate zone plays on the surprise element in finding industrial elements in a traditional park setting. Freestanding and seemingly misplaced objects from the past not only tell the story of the long-gone industrial age but also provoke the visitor to contemplate over environmental concerns and his or her understanding of nature. As if a recent flood had drowned the low lying areas of the site the ponds of this zone seem to flow deliberately around the elements framing them for public appraisal. Similarly unique historical elements such as the Gas Tanks and The Water Tower are selected and framed according to the principles described to the right giving the zone a mystical character.

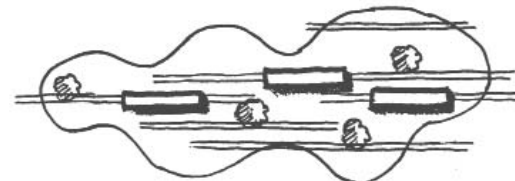
1. The key railscape element is identified.



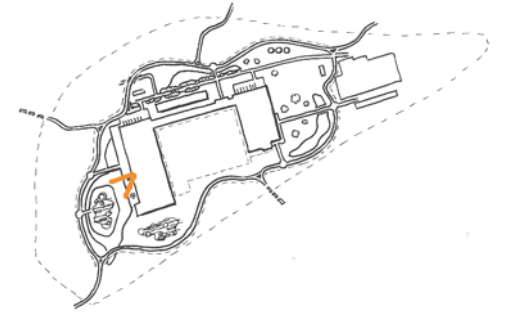
2. The surrounding ruderal vegetation is trimmed to make it stand out from surrounding grass lawn.



3. Selected rail segments are removed to emphasize natural degeneration and create a dynamic appearance.



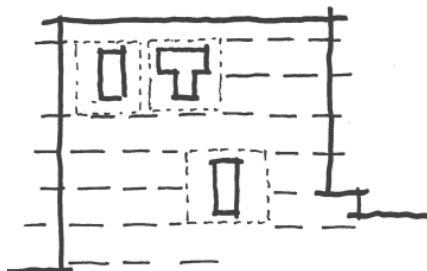
The Boneyard Island: Railroad relics, such as the characteristic Boneyard depicted here are framed to let them stand out like works of art. With this radical cut into the landscape the Boneyard suddenly becomes an island with a mystical atmosphere drawing people closer.



GARDEN ZONE

The garden zone (the horticultural landscape) lies at the center of the CMF in the space created by the two large workshops and the narrower concourse of buildings that connects them. This zone which historically was the most active on the CMF with a constant flow of workers is likewise imagined to have a central “courtyard” function in “The Backyard”. For this reason a number of community gardens are installed. These community gardens serve to bring together people from the surrounding neighborhoods to work on the gardens and create new social connections across diverse backgrounds. The gardens which lie on top of the asphalted surface in rectangular wooden frames are scattered across the plane (i.e. around the smaller preserved buildings) in a pattern as shown to the right. This gives the otherwise inhospitable 200m courtyard a more humane spatiality, leaving a system of parallel pathways and several smaller pockets for longer stays between the installed gardens. Thematically the green element kept within strict boundaries tells the tale of mankind’s attempt at dominance over nature. Aesthetically the community gardens give the otherwise unappealing and asphalted square an energetic boost and makes a suitable complement to the buildings around ideally allowing exhibition guests to take a walk through the area.

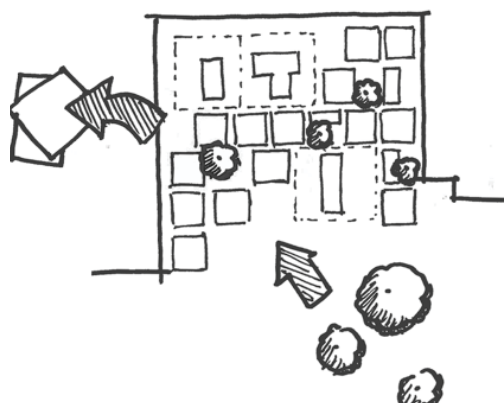
1. Identification of parallels on plane.



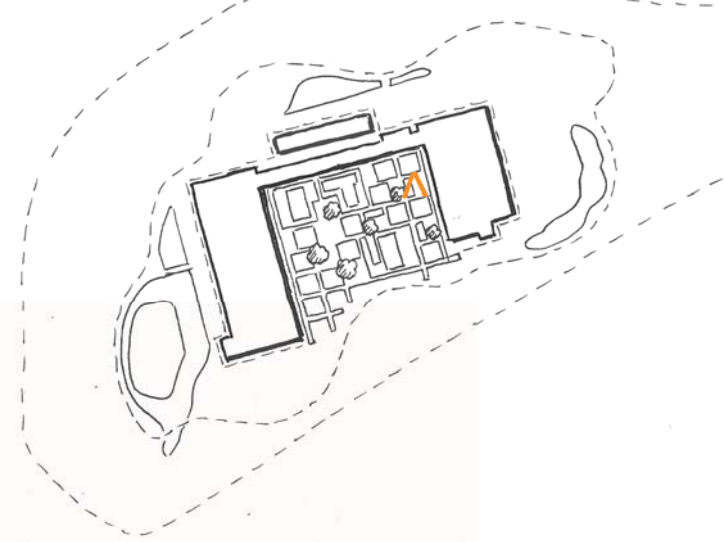
2. Introduction of community garden cubicles.



3. Extraction of selected units to create irregular pattern of spaces and break repetitiveness.



The Community Gardens: The space between the two large workshops and the concourse that connects them is transformed into a courtyard with a number of community gardens with a reference to this area's hectic atmosphere in the prime years of the CMF.

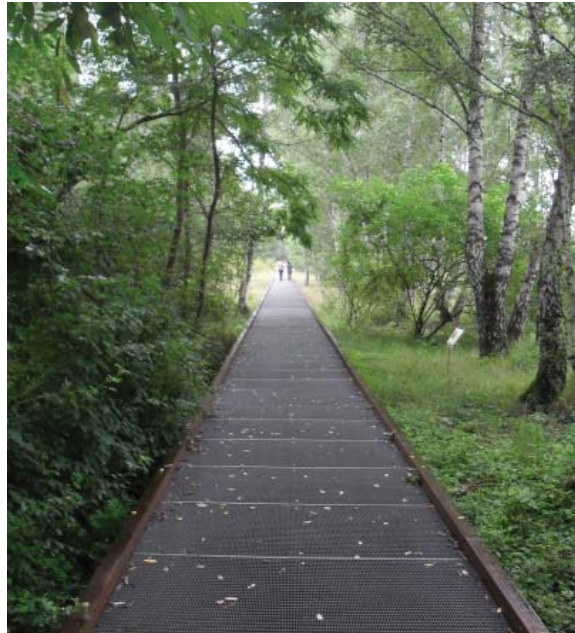


REFLECTION & CONCLUSION

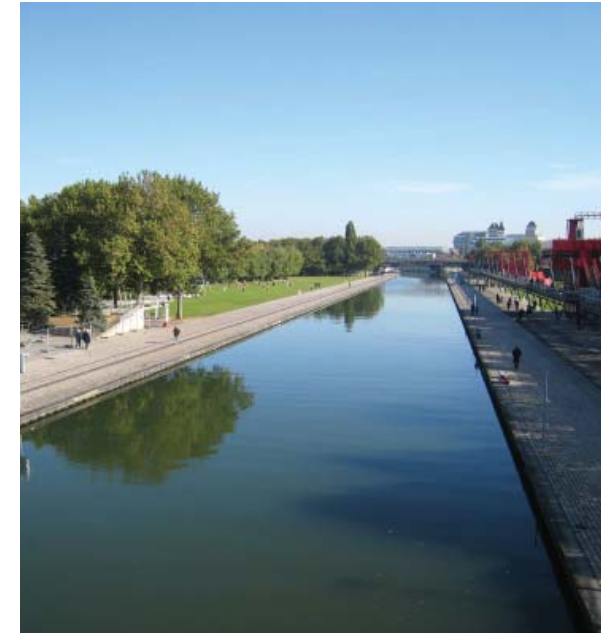
SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Empty factory halls, rusty masts and overgrown train rails: Are they disruptive elements or valuable historical relics? Thanks to New York's award-winning High Line Park which has transformed an abandoned railway track into a post-industrial park that meanders through the dense city, many cities across the globe have started investing in the recycling of disused industrial landscapes.

When designing "The Backyard" I found inspiration in studying some more popular examples of this category especially the Natur-Park Schöneberger Südgelände in Berlin. This park which runs along an old trainyard in Berlin's Tempelhof quarter, has after decades of abandonment been engulfed by the natural elements and now exists in wonderful harmony with these, thanks to a clever design scheme. I have also looked at the famous Parc de la Villette designed by Bernard Tschumi. Located in the northeastern part of Paris, this park is a unique hybrid of green areas and several large cultural venues built in an impressive deconstructivist style which makes them stand in sharp contrast to the soft landscape they sit on.



The Natur-Park Schöneberger Südgelände has let nature rule. At least that is the impression you get as you walk along the old tracks in the lush surroundings.

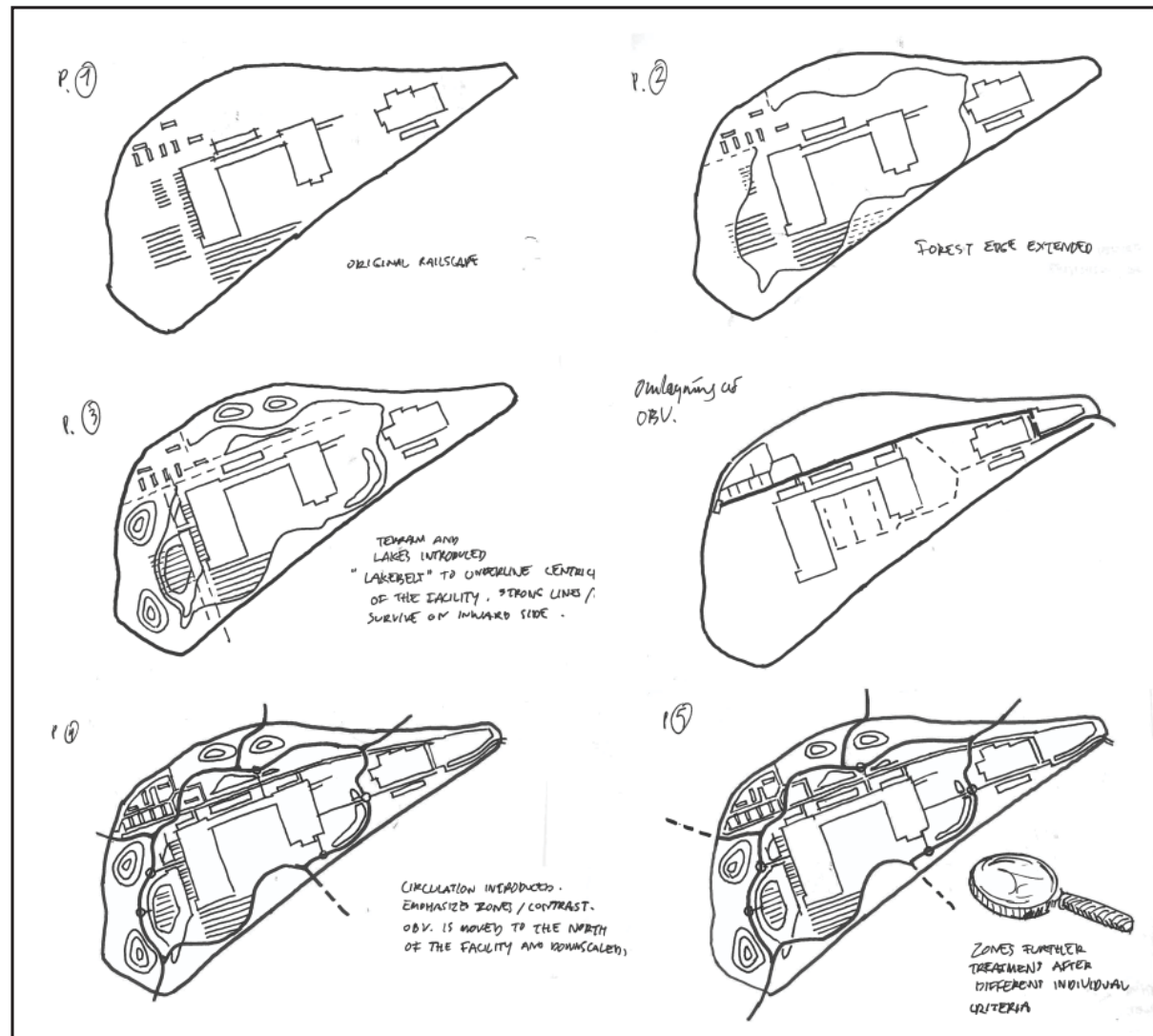


The Parc de la Villette follows a deconstructivist design scheme. Seen above is the Canal de l'Ourcq which cuts sharply through it. In the right side of the picture some of the parks iconic "follies" can be seen.

DESIGN PROCESS

Leading up to the final three zone division for “The Backyard”, I experimented with a *palimpsest* in which I addressed different layers of the site individually and superimposed them onto each other. It was in most cases a task of trial and error until I found an aesthetically pleasing layout that also fulfilled the basic functional requirements I had set up for the plan. The result of this approach is almost identical with the final plan.

If you look at the northern and western pond you will find that they hold sharp edges towards the workshops. These sharp edges are “surviving” elements from an earlier sketch in which I identified and preserved a number of strong lines on the site. The approach did pose some problems when it came to designing the circulation and especially the course of Otto Busses Vej was tricky to settle on. On the other hand it challenged my aesthetic sense which has definitely brought some valuable perspective to the design.



Working with the *palimpsest* involved the identification of several layers, one at a time, extracting strong geometric features, and super-imposing them onto each other to create a deconstructivist aesthetic.

SURVEY BEFORE PLANNING?

When I first visited the CMF at Otto Busses Vej on a bitterly cold February day in 2013 I went around the deserted area and imagined a future, green and vibrant district. Working with fellow urban design student Felix Egestad at the time, our approach was very much in line with the Scottish town planner Patrick Geddes famous admonition “survey before planning”.

To get a proper understanding of the site’s potential we made several trips to the site during the first few weeks and additionally arranged to take part in a workshop arranged by the research network Supertanker to develop ideas for the area and interviewed representatives from the Copenhagen Municipality, Danish Rail Service (transl: DSB’s Hjælpevognsenhed which still resides in the area) and the chairman of the residents association of Den Gule By.

In this way we amassed a great deal of knowledge of the area. Unfortunately we also discussed more than we designed in the first month or two and had very different visions for the area. I guess the analysis and the disagreements along the way ended up draining my creative energy because at a certain point I had to throw it all aside, completely stressed out and unable to continue working. This also meant that we decided to split our group in the beginning of april. When I returned to my work room at Nytorv in early May I



Representative Jørgen Johansen of Danish Rail Service (DSB’s Hjælpevognsenhed) shows a small crowd of freezing workshop participants around the site. The author is the rather skeptical looking man at the back in the light grey jacket. (Supertanker Workshop, February 2013)

started over on my own. The thorough analysis we had done during the first two months of the project period came in handy later but at that time I made a decision to leave it all in the cupboard. Instead I took out my pen which by then had started to dry out in my bag, and let my intuition rule. Within a few days I changed direction entirely from what we had discussed earlier in the process and started designing what would become “The Backyard”.

It was a fantastic feeling. Suddenly I felt the areas wealth of historical elements and old building structures fell in harmony with the strokes on my paper and as an urban designer with a background in landscape architecture it felt natural to pick up the green colors again. Over the next few weeks my work progressed steadily, Leading up to the three-zone concept and the vision I have presented.

Generally my experience was one of flow and productivity when I put the analytic mindset aside and this has since made me review my approach to urban design. When working with complex sites I have found that you often need to stick with your intuition because a systematic approach can kill any vision before it really starts to unfold. This does not mean however, that the analytical toolbox which I have greatly expanded during the master program at Aalborg University is less

important but it is essentially more handy in refining a design once it has already been born.

In the relatively short period of time I had to finish my project, I feel I managed to solve most design issues I encountered, but I would have liked to look deeper into the three zones and especially the overlap between them. I feel this is a part of my project which can be improved and I am not completely satisfied with how it has been solved. In particular I find that the bicycle beltway has become too dominant in this version, almost acting like the separator of the zones which was not the original intention. A solution could be to let it weave between the zones.

That having been said I’m content with my output. The final plan for The Backyard can be further developed in terms of detail and layers but under the circumstances this is how far I came. Completing a thorough masterplan based on detailed investigations in a relatively short period of time would require a large team. Unless you forget all about Patrick Geddes famous words - survey before planning, and with my experience you might sometimes want to do that - for a little while atleast.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES

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Lokalplan 433, Otto Busses Vej, Københavns Kommune, April 2012

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ILLUSTRATIONS:

All Orthophotos are from Google Earth

- p.10 Jørgen Weber Luftfoto
- p.11 Google Earth
- p.14 <http://www.vesterbrolokaludvalg.kk.dk/vesterbrosgader/om-otto-busses/>
- p.15 Authors Own
- p.16 Af Banen - DSB's Centralværksted i København
- p.17 Felix Egestad
- p.18 Authors Own
- p.19 Authors Own (1-9)
- p.20 Authors Own (1-9)
- p.21 Authors Own
- p.22 Authors Own
- p.23 Authors Own
- p.24 Authors Own (1-3)
- p.25 Authors Own
- p.26 Authors Own (1,2,5,6), Københavns Kommune (3), Entasis Architects (4)
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