
Feminism by Design.

120 Days of Building Feminist Landscape Architectural Practice

by

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Abstract. This essay is the academic anecdote about spending 120 days on building a feminist landscape architectural practice in Copenhagen, Denmark. My aim as a female landscape architect was to encourage a caring and holistic approach to landscape architecture and challenge normative frameworks regulating behaviour and use of public space. The exploration happened based on building a 1:1 intervention. Here I aimed to explore the significance of thought and practice during a design process and analyse upon design, which supports liminoid spaces, marginalized user groups and any spatial transformation caused by the intervention. My conviction was that the responsibility of the landscape architect reaches beyond the physical design and that it has the potential to be more generous at its aim if freed from utilitarian convictions and the programming of a space. I integrated feminist ideals and theory supported by performative, queer and affect theory to investigate the performative dynamics on site and my own role in the process. The project explored the cognitive space as well as the physical spatial design, causing the building process to become a performative platform and transformative laboratory on creating a feminist landscape architectural practice. I was seeking a caring building process with a holistic approach on creating a cognitive space reaching beyond the physical spatial creation. The process resulted in an unconventional intervention installation illustrating what arises when we expand the boundaries of architecture and design development, while actively and genuinely engaging with the process and the people on site. This translated into the design causing the user group to appropriate the intervention during both during and after the process. The pilot project served as a starting point for further discussion and exploration on how to build a feminist landscape architectural practice and what this transformation means for gendered urban design in general.

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Introduction

A landscape architect is the creator of physical spaces, as well as social and cognitive ones. The landscape architect therefore either promote or inhibit certain behaviour and use in a given space (University of Washington s.d.). With that responsibility comes the realisation that any form of manipulation with physical or social conditions poses necessarily ethical as well as political questions (Jacques 2015).

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of using architecture to influence our public and social framework (Taylor & Levine s.d.). The current link between utilitarian ethic and architecture has its origin in the welfare state, as the architect is one of the actualizing powers of the welfare state and is therefore schooled in utilitarian convictions (Nielsen 2016). The utilitarianism as a moral doctrine involves acting towards maximizing the positive impact for the most amount of people (Träskman 2020). That means, that the architect ought to always act upon an expectation of realizing the needs and desires of the largest number of people possible. My claim as a landscape architect is, that aiming towards working for the majority, causes the architect to maintain rigid and normative structures of use and behaviour in public space.

Last year, I spent 120 days on building a landscape architectural practice in Copenhagen, Denmark. My motivation during the project was to build an intervention process, where I as a landscape architect and feminist explored how landscape architectural practice can integrate with feminist theory and challenge the utilitarian aim and normative framework of spatial design. In this process, I integrated feminist ideals and theory, as I believe in feminism as a powerful movement of social justice, as well as a broad vision scope for the rights of all bodies, identities, voices, and viewpoints. I used feminism as a landscape architectural tool of activism, as well as an ideology melting into my landscape architectural intervention process and object of design. I collaborated with a live action role play association called Rollespilsfabrikken situated in Copenhagen.

The intention was to challenge the innocence of 'neutrality' in terms of building spaces based on median-seeking use and desire. To support this explorative intervention building process, I had to nuance the feminist aim with performative –, queer –, and affect theory to investigate the social dynamics, my own role on site, and how the dynamics and roles blur and intertwine between me, Rollespilsfabrikken and other people on site. This turned into a performative laboratory on how to build a caring creation process approached holistically and creating a cognitive space beyond the physical one. The project was therefore questioning, as well as demonstrating, the theoretical and practical landscape architectural tools and is an ode to the possibilities of landscape architecture.

I acknowledge that my own bodily position and experiences comes from a privileged space as a white, cis, able-bodied woman. I do nevertheless also find the rigid expectations of heteronormativity to be restricting for my position as a female but am aware of my presence leading to further marginalization of already marginalized groups. Throughout the project, I therefore aimed to be transparent about my role and perspective as well as what it offers and obscures in my work in general. I

acknowledge that all knowledge is situated and that my perspectives aren't definitive and are rooted in Nordic spaces and Western bodies of research. However, with my privileges intersecting with my experiences as a feminist, female landscape architect, I hope that this work may encourage more nuanced viewpoints and lived experiences within the architectural field.

I advocate for a feminist approach to the changes that are called for, in order for public spaces to appear more approachable to a greater variety of people and their desired use and behaviour. I believe that a feminist approach challenges the frames of our collective space, and that part of the challenge is to recognize that many changes are already taking place but may need help being scaled up and adapted to different contextual settings.

Reflections on method and approach

My project was aimed at investigating how a feminist approach to landscape architecture can be explored by building an intervention in public space; feminism by design, so to speak. My aim wasn't to prove a hypothesis nor prescribe a particular methodology or contribute with a set solution to a problem. Neither were reflections or explorations intended to create a foundation for a feminist approach to programming a space. Instead, the aim was to encourage critical and (self)reflective modes of thought and movement towards a more sensitive approach to landscape architecture based on a feministic approach.

Within landscape architecture, I claim that there exists a gap between theory and vision and the actuality of practice, which I was seeking to explore how to lessen. I therefore built a feminist landscape architectural intervention to explore the significance of sensitive thought and practice as a response to support experimental creation and use of public space. By selecting a specific user group, I was prepared to build a space targeting their specific horizon of experience along with exploring how to build a spatial practice, while emphasizing the possibility of creating physical and cognitive spaces pushing against rigid normativity establishing a spectrum of 'correctness' in behaviour and use of public space (Carmona 2015, 399-401).

I used feminism as a prism, where the value foundation of feminism directed the scope and approach to the intervention and assessed the direction of process and design. I've thought of the project as a contribution to the emergence of cases of feminist research and projects within the academic architectural field. In the process of feminist projects emerging, a professionalization of the feminist methodological work is establishing (Sabbarwal 2000). While such professionalization is of great innovative importance, I argue that the risk may be a mainstreaming of the academic feminism, which establishes a less sensitive and more presuming approach to space creation.

My project therefore met other methodological fields such as the queer approach to space and landscape architecture. I used queer theoretic Jasbir Puar's 'objectless queer theory', which I adapted into a practice approach; objectless queer theory doesn't lean against queerness as a sexual orientation, rather, I used it as a tool for an open and continuous positioning (Nebeling 2016, 63-64). The es-

sential idea behind queer theory is to be boundary seeking within academic professions as well as breaking down dogmas by the help of skewed angles of approach, remaining unresolved and seeking to expand the professional horizon (Bissenbakker 2006, 10-11). Furthermore, this approach was intended to be a political strategy and course of action by building a landscape architectural installation, which consisted of renegotiating the role, approach, and practice of the landscape architect, as well as renegotiating the performative practice in public space and the possibilities of personal expression and behaviour.

The theoretical framework and the experimental analyses on site were the fundamental work, which the concept and design choices of the intervention rested upon. Some of the analyses were based on essential landscape architectural tools; practical as well as theoretical. Classical landscape architectural analyses, maps, plans, models, and diagrams were incorporated, modified and built upon to support and clarify the theoretical analyses and choices of design.

As the project was cross-disciplinary, levitating between landscape architectural practice and feministic vision, the theoretical foundation was built upon a patchwork of transversal theory. A critical palette of feminist reading led to the theoretical interweaving of queer –, performative –, and affect theory to support and nuance the feminist scope. All theory was accessed with a feministic reading and approach, translated into spatial landscape architectural design and execution. The theory was meant to direct my concrete observations of events, social relations, and structures on site into an actual landscape architectural intervention and was the visionary foundation, which the intervention and experimental approach rested upon.

Throughout the project, I created visualisations of spatial and social moments, captured as snapshots, and examined, in order for me to have tangible material emphasizing and clarifying the spatial and social impact of the intervention as well as testing my role as architect. These visual snapshots were intended to support my continuous analyses in the project, and I ‘queered’ the visualizations to stress the social performativity in public space. I visualized the theoretical arguments and incorporated them with fabling visuals of my observed meaningful dynamics on site because I intended to build upon the insight, I got to the specific user culture and their cognitive space unfolding on site. Illustrating more than what visually appeared on site, was therefore a part of building a progressive approach to landscape architecture and its qualities. Oftentimes, what we see is connected to our relation to the place, the users and our own biases, which I wanted to stress and push for the landscape architect to be more transparent about his or her embodiment.

My internal communication during the project, as well as external communication about the project, was and is varied in tone and composition; the communicated ought to fit a given aspect of the project. This means that the wording in this academic anecdote is intended to vary from being academic to resembling the wording of a manifesto or even storytelling to get both the sensorial, ideological, and theoretical points across. I justify this method based on gender studies scholar Nina Lykke who argues on language being an active slippery phenomenon, from where ethics, politics and methodology emerge and are interwoven (Lykke 2016). The visualizations and language of the project was and is therefore intended to inter-

twine and present nuanced aspects of what happened on site from a physical and cognitive perspective.

By queering the visualizations and use fluctuating structures of language, I argue that I incorporate my own performative and autoethnographically relevance in the project. In autoethnography, the traditional approach to academical professionalism is challenged by using subjective orientations considered valid in an academic context (Strynø-Christensen 2018, 36-37). My defence of adopting this method in landscape architecture is, that the design for social, sensory, emotional, and embodied experiences at all times will lead back to my profession as landscape architect, as well as me as a human being and not solely the academic messenger. Furthermore, intersubjectivity and responsiveness towards experiences is an established part of the feminist tradition (Furlin 2015), which I sought to incorporate.

Process as critical practice

A part of the analyses process was building a landscape architectural intervention in a 1:1 scale.

The building process and its spatial qualities were as important as the design result itself. The building of the project happened along with the building of the intervention as it became a laboratory on process and co-creation within a feminist landscape architectural framework. The design was co-created with the intended user group and the actual execution of the intended design was important in order to explore the gap between theory and practice. As a landscape architect we rarely get to experience the creation of our design as something actual and physical, even though creation is the traditional core activity of the field. I therefore wanted to challenge this distanced position, by being the driving force behind all aspects of the project, which I believed to increase the integrity of the project as well.

The process of developing a landscape architectural intervention was a continuous critical spatial practice, where I strived to be performatively involved by working on building the intervention, while socially engaging and observing the everyday practices and dynamics on the site. My performative role in the process became a body of thinking, stressing the complexities and the numerous of ways in which a space is 'textured'. Being personally as well as academically involved in building and developing the project from end to end was a tool of exploring the aspects and nuances of landscape architectural qualities, where a conventional concept and design developing process would pass on the responsibility for the design to be executed.

The building process was a laboratory of practice for me to explore and created a natural mode of personal engagement as researcher and landscape architect, which established a fluid and caring way of working with the project. This personal involvement initiated social interaction with the intended users of the intervention, which caused a transformation of the research from being a backstage affair to a performative and feministic tool put into use. That didn't make the process any less sincere, but the performative, exploring way of working is itself a critique of the landscape architectural programming of spaces. The process emphasized how subjectivity and performativity can be translated into form and cognitive space crea-

tion and illustrated how the nuances of use and behaviour in a social and political context can become apparent when personally involved on site.

I argue that this critical and caring mode of operating was an important starting point for a continuous evolvement of landscape architectural practice, as well as for inventing new feminist approaches to critical spatial practice.

No aspect of the project was intended to be didactic or final, but to point towards tools and approaches to be experimented with and encourage the landscape architectural profession to take its responsibility for just spaces seriously. A feminist approach to the landscape architectural profession will challenge - and thereby broaden - the conventional method of privileging singularity, coherence and definite spaces and make the profession more generous in its aim.

Theoretical framework. Feminism as theoretical foundation

As the project was based on feminist theory and feminist visions for landscape architectural practice, it meant challenging a set of entangled power relationships existing in public space, which covers much more than the question of gender. It is the acknowledgement of any intervention in public space being a value-laden inscription of societal structures at a place (Kern 2020, 13-14).

This means that barriers, which are socially, economically, symbolically, and physically conditioned, shape the range of possibilities of certain individuals and groups. Therefore, any change in space also maintains the actual or perceived access of some people, which leads to the fact that physical places and our approach and design of them matter when seeking to create a social change. Many of these barriers are not invisible to the ones of privilege, whether it being privileged in terms of gender, sexuality, or race etc. as they rarely encounter them (Kern 2020, 2-6).

What is being reclaimed in feministic architecture is the personal, lived experience and truths of more than the privileged median user of public space. Instead, the centre of attention is shifted towards the marginalized and overlooked lived experiences, to create a reality with a new and embracing 'normal' (Kern 2020, 6-10). I argue that considering marginalized experiences is important when aiming to ease everyone's coexistence in public space, as all bodies 'store' the stories and experiences they have encountered. This leaks into our intuitive behaviour and our contact with spaces. Our encounter with others is impacted by how much we feel in control over our personal space and the experiences our bodies store; if we do not feel in control of our personal space, we are more likely not to be open towards breaking down social barriers and seek out contact with our surroundings (Ahmed 2014a, 3-4). The embodied politics of displacement is a form of social control, which is a part of a larger system that seeks to enforce other forms of exclusions, segregation, and fear of difference. Going against oppressive structures asks for large-scale changes at the societal as well as the individual level. However, universalizing and programming feminist utopian schemes is not a sustainable or desirable solution (Kern 2020).

What is important for a feminist landscape architectural future is to identify and recognize the range of alternatives for spatial experiences and use that are already

unfolding. Then these alternatives need the architect's support to scale up and adapt these cognitive spaces into different environments to create a greater variation of representation in our notion of what a public space is and can be.

Queering space

Traditionally, the semantics of architecture draws on the idea that gender is a binary opposition, where different forms and aesthetics are described as either masculine or feminine and thereby implicitly attributing architecture several qualities of association within the binary categories (Kern 2020, 13-20). Introducing queer qualities to a space dissolves the heteronormative binaries by inviting marginalized groups that otherwise seem to 'misfit'. Academically, queer theory oftentimes places the body at the centre of critique of gender. It is a concept, which has been taken to heart by the margins of gender to contest the binary categories as natural and with political innocence or social utility. In relation to architecture the most radical possibility of the term may lie in its perspective of a way of being, a way to do and act bodily, as well as experience and challenge the production of heteronormative sex-gender-sexual identities (Jacques 2015).

With a fluent and inclusive term such as 'queer' it is important to stress that a 'queer space' is not equivalent to 'queering a space', as a queer space is either a physical or mental space where the non-conforming genders and identities take hold. Queering space is instead a formation of a way of life and being in the world, from where one's experience is lived and taken seriously. It involves an appropriation and transformation of the straight, hierarchical space. In the interstices and margins of a dominant space it pushes for the creation of a counter, queer, autonomous space, from where the proliferation of new subjectivities, behaviour and use leaks out (Jacques 2015). The fluidity and elasticity of the term 'queer' allows the queering of a space to be at the threshold between order and disorder, the liminal point of freedom, formed and yet formless at its core.

The feminist and the queer agenda both arise from political oppression and the belittling of lived experiences. Furthermore, both agendas believe in the subversion of norms, practices, and the normative institutions of oppression (Kern 2020) (Jacques 2015).

To queer a space is therefore a ceaseless criticism of the existing space, as well as a reflection of the problems posed by the structures within the normative. I sought to queer the landscape architectural process by incorporating expressive and affective experiences to add a deeper creativity of animation and push the normative way of life, which we all performatively are responsible for designing.

Performativity and citing

Our collective responsibility of designing the social frameworks, which we operate within, refers to performative theory arguing that we are no more than the sum of the expressions, which we perform (Salih 2006, 59). Especially queer-theoretic Judith Butler maintains that gender to a large extent is

performative due to how our bodies are always constituted in the act of their description. From birth, we are assigned a gender based on our genitals and from there, the process of discursively shaping the body to fit the gender begins.

Our assigned gender governs the collective formation of a corporeally enacted masculinity or femininity, which can never fully live up to 'the norm'. However, the gendered body is compelled to 'cite' the norm through a disciplinary and regulated performance to qualify as a viable subject within heteronormative frameworks of existence (Salih 2006, 60-65). We perform and cite our expected gender to 'prove' our gender as well as 'citing' someone else's heteronormative expectation of us, which becomes the natural frames the majority expresses themselves within. It is the sum of our citations that constitute us as subjects, which then dictates the discourse of us, rather than the discourse being the cause of our citations. This means that we all are gendered bodies inseparable from these performative acts, which constitute us and reproduce this discourse of a primary gendered and stable identity. There is no existence, which is not social, we just repeat acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame defined by the median culture (Salih 2006, 53-57). Gender and the body are instituted through a stylized repetition of acts, hereby supported by clothes and objects, which then supports our bodily gestures, movements, and enactments, which all together builds the illusion of a stable gendered self. However, the stability in gendered identity is a performative accomplishment (Jacques 2015).

The architectural responsibility concerns the gendered boundaries that are upheld by built structures supporting patriarchal family constellations, gender segregation and public spaces supporting median-use (Kern 2020). All forms of architecture are within performativity theory considered a built event or situation, where the users become necessary for realising the intention of the installation or intervention. What space is created, is therefore not only up to just the architect, but also up to the users to appropriate the installation. When considering architectural spaces as a platform of performativity, the responsibility of the architect is emphasized. This allows for social reflection as well as personal reflection and the presentation of alternative social/design arrangements and embodiment in public space.

Approaching a space as performatively constituted allows for the architect to explore the possibility of conservation or transformation of these cognitive spaces created within architectural frames (Bruun Jespersen 2010, 38). Performativity and interventions may explore the ability of maintaining or obstructing social and bodily interaction through built what-if-situations that address or challenge the current social reality. Including performativity in architecture is a tool to challenge and express critique of the heteronormative social frames and the limitations it maintains, as performativity is a flexible and nuanced scope to incorporate as everyone become participants of the space by just the bodily interaction (Bruun Jespersen 2010, 38). The interest in public space with the incorporation of a performative lens can develop new innovative experiences of architecture, introducing new types of approaches to what architecture is and can be, by whom it can be used and how (Bruun Jespersen 2010, 25).

Affective boundaries in space

For new approaches and experiences of landscape architecture to be introduced and support a diverse space creation, I argue that it requires an understanding of the architectural and public ordering of a space as produced by being, behaviour, and use and thereby of affective responses as well (Jacques 2015). Looking it up in the dictionary, the word 'affect' is multifaceted, but I gravitate towards the definition 'to move emotionally' (Collins English Dictionary s.d.). Moving emotionally emphasizes the dynamic power of emotions, which the word affect presents. Within Western culture, the semantics of 'feelings' and 'emotions' are oftentimes expressed as something, which the subject possesses inside like an identity-shaping core, while affect is considered more extensive and caused by external influences. Within affect theory, what the shifting of external influences do, is produce the boundaries and frictional surfaces, which then delineates the social and individual cognitive spaces within reality (Bissenbakker 2012, 8) (Ahmed 2014a, 10).

According to performative and affect theory, a space consists of its use. This perception translates a physical space into a cognitive space. This cognitive space is determined by human relations, the expectations we share amongst each other, how we approach friction and how we perform affect; all these complex practices and responses sets the boundaries of the potentials of a space.

In public space, our affective responses are oftentimes heightened, due to the performative presentations and responses, which constantly shape and establish the appearance of individuals and relations. This often results in everyone limiting and coordinating affective responses to the expectation of our surroundings (Ahmed 2014b, 25). This happens because of the 'stickiness' of affect, as our emotions are relational and therefore citations transfer affective responses between subjects (Bissenbakker 2012, 5-8).

Since affect is politically mobilized, it is a great position of rebellion, considering how affective behaviour historically have a larger (performatively) gendered (and racialized and classified etc.) division between affect and rationality (Bissenbakker 2012, 5). Traditionally, the white, Western, heterosexual masculinity has been a natural equivalent to rationality and objectivity belonging to the masculine public domain. Anyone with another gender, race, culture, or sexuality has been considered the 'subjects of emotions' and therefore less rational and in control. The display of affect is therefore expected to be kept within the private domestic and feminine domain. Even the most natural emotions such as 'anger' or 'care' are gendered and expected to be performed accordingly. This means that a power imbalance occurs in society and becomes particularly prominent in public spaces as the distinction between rational and emotive expressions uphold our heteronormative performances of behaviour (Bissenbakker 2012, 5).

For landscape architecture to become feministic, an understanding of performative and affective behaviour as well as the identity politics behind them, is crucial when aiming to contest and challenge the stereotypical performativity in public space. Pushing the boundaries of affective performance requires for landscape architects to build a 'safe space' where this is encouraged and create a space where users feel comfortable pushing the socially and bodily engagement in public space

and create a less heteronormatively confined lived experience. I argue that the landscape architect ought to take responsibility for challenging the normativity of public spaces by supporting the subcultures that are already challenging the gendered identity politics, the value systems of emotion and the naturality of our performative regimes in public space.

Project case

I was keen on collaborating with a platform challenging the norms of behaviour in public space, as I wanted to create an intervention, which would support the challengers of the normative structures of society. It just so happened that my choice fell upon Rollespilsfabrikken, a live action role play association based in Brønshøj in Copenhagen, who fortunately agreed to share this experience with me by participating in my investigations and support me in my visions.

Rollespilsfabrikken (roughly translated into 'the Role Play Factory') is a voluntary driven live action role play association with approximately 1,500 members. The aim of Rollespilsfabrikken is to create long lasting memories for people of all ages and to empower especially children and young adults by developing their creative and social competences. They themselves explain that live action role play can:

- enhance one's understanding of other people and cultures by strengthening one's empathy and reflection.
- develop one's engagement in society and the outside world by teaching collaboration, taking initiative and showing a sense of responsibility.
- explore creativity, challenge the existing perception of reality, and develop new political and artistic forms of expression (Rollespilsfabrikken 2015).

The liminoid space of live action role play (LARP)

The term 'liminoid' is presented by anthropologist Victor Turner and has throughout time been embraced and modified by performative theory. 'Liminoid' addresses playful experiences, where the personal and social identity are suspended and open to transformational possibilities, such as with performance and arts. Within the liminoid practice, experience or space, the normative social constraints don't prevail (Lampo 2011, 98-99). Live action role playing (LARP) is a particular kind of expression, historically evolving from tabletop role playing games and into a hybrid form incorporating elements of fantasy/war drama, visual arts, theatre, strategy, and rituals. It typically unfolds in forests, on fields or other open spaces such as schools or parking lots where the LARPer create a liminoid world of their own (Regitzesdatter 2011, 74). The LARP milieu in Denmark has developed from being an underground subculture in the 1980s into today's mainstream culture for all ages. Oftentimes, subcultures are understood as responsive and even critical towards mainstream society. The Danish LARP milieu was well established by 1991 and the initial response from society was alienation of the culture. Over the years

the response developed into assimilation - a typical pattern for mainstream society's response to challengers of normativity (Müller 2011, 32-40). Being an underground subculture does however still seem to be a core value in the self-understanding of Danish LARP participants, even though LARP is struggling to maintain its subcultural identity. A reason for this self-understanding might be historical clashes with mainstream society, where the milieu was misunderstood as actually violent, which forced the milieu to form a strong enclosed identity (Müller 2011, 42-46).

LARP as challenger of gender roles

The gender culture and norms of mainstream society naturally merges with the diegetic world of LARP and its social settings. Where Judith Butler claims that gender is not a performance, but rather a performativity constituting the very notion of a subject, LARP is playing with both performances of gender and gender performing. Inventing characters for role playing is a vital part of any LARP-milieu, which means that gender is a natural concern within the culture, as gender and mainstream gender perceptions oftentimes are frames and boundaries for behaviour and identity unfolding. Since the gender norms are dependent on the same paradigm as the culture it emerges from, the fictional characters invented for the liminoid experience are unable to completely free themselves from normative understandings and gender perceptions (Regitzesdatter 2011, 74-78). Yet, for practical reasons, most LARP-milieus are forced to make all pre-written roles available to all genders, for the role-playing scenario to be played several times and with whoever participants turn up for the event. This challenge the gender perceptions of normative society, as it removes the 'naturalness' about gender roles and creates a natural openness to gender fluid and queer behaviour, where no gender is entitled to certain privileges. Nevertheless, the questions of representation are just as complex within the LARP-environment as outside it, as fictional erasure of queer-phobia and heteronormative behaviour may dilute the complexity and seriousness of the issues existing and the lived experiences outside the enclosed LARP-milieu (Stenros & Sihvonen 2019). The Nordic LARP-tradition has historically had an inclusive attitude towards queer behaviour and play, as most organisations have explored queer futures and alternative histories for historically specific events. Some LARP-events may even be designed specifically to address queer themes and lived experiences. The intention behind this is for LARP to be a platform of self-exploration and discovery of identity by challenging their own affective and performative boundaries as the nature of pretend play allows for participants to try out different social roles and have them reflected in a safe setting. This setting however entails an underlying friction between the LARP-milieu and the social space, which is simultaneously real and fictional (Stenros & Sihvonen 2019).

The scale of the project

Rollespilsfabrikken's functional head quarter is a villa on a premise shared with a Community Centre run by Copenhagen Municipality. This means that my inter-

vention had to consider the nuances of a shared public space, which Rollespilsfabrikken used as a semi-private space of their own. Due to the small scale of my project, my primary focus was on the adjacent area of this villa.

For practical reasons and timely limitations, the project was a small-scale project. However, that does not mean that it couldn't add big scale value to the site or challenge the dogmas within landscape architecture any less. The intervention was intended to perform as a testing ground beyond a conceptual level, as it was a learning process and on how to combine values with concrete design. It served as a pilot project, where new explorations in values, process and form was meant to influence or initiate a debate about the practice of landscape architecture. The ideas and learnings from this project, I continuously try to incorporate in my professional life today.

Ideals and desires for the intervention

During my time of creating conventional landscape architectural site analyses and exploring the context, I was also continuously on Facebook in a closed Facebook group for Rollespilsfabrikken's members. I was presenting concepts and ideas, asking them about their use and perceptions of the space in front of the villa, as well as asking them about their desires for an intervention. My hope was also to make actual workshops combined with the online interaction as well, however, with COVID19 restrictions the workshops weren't an option. Rollespilsfabrikken desired an intervention...

...which could function as a visual characteristic

...that appealed to all ages

...with light sources

...with a possibility for casual seating

...with a mythical aesthetic

...with adding of vegetation

...which was lasting and durable

...without day-to-day running

While interacting with Rollespilsfabrikken online and narrowing down the essence of their desires, I began to define a framework of ideals for the intervention, which I hoped would steer my design to be merged with Rollespilsfabrikken's desires. My principles were as follows:

MY FEMINIST LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE OUGHT TO ESTABLISH A CARING AND COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

I wanted the intervention to be an opportunity to challenge my performative role as an architect and blur the boundaries as well as enlarge my responsibility, to expand my freedom of movement within landscape architecture. I was highly aware of how my experience of the case and context indisputably was linked to my position as a landscape architectural as well as my private being. I therefore wanted to try and embrace both my profession and my personal integrity to stay authentic and vulnerable in my process and be responsive to Rollespilsfabrikken's desires for the intervention, as well as their continuous formal and informal feedback. The fact

that I oversaw building the intervention on site myself and not plan it from afar and have a professional building it, gave me an extra sensitivity towards the people I was in contact with on site and their existing use and dynamics.

THE INTERVENTION OUGHT TO ENCOURAGE A COGNITIVE SPACE THAT CHALLENGES NORMATIVE USE AND BEHAVIOR

Even though I would want to be able to solve structural inequality issues of public space and the entire society, my understanding of feminist landscape architecture is that its aim is about making a difference in the right direction by making conscious choices against oppressive structures in society. In this case, my project was intended to challenge structures such as normativity, affective dualisms and behavioural dogmas narrowing our performative exploration of identity.

I found my case context to be predominantly heterogeneous but with a culture that entailed a naturalness towards radical performativity and with a norm-breaking approach to gender, affect, and behaviour in public space.

I also found a subculture with an open-mindedness towards creating alternative realities, which is what I hoped my installation to be able to support.

THE INTERVENTION OUGHT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHOM IT IS CREATED AND WHY

In this instance, the intervention was aimed at people associated with Rollespilsfabrikken. I naturally considered the spatial changes that will occur on the entire site when creating any intervention. However, I did not aim for an intervention, which necessarily had to appeal to everyone at the site such as the workers in the community centre. I wanted to take my responsibility as the landscape architect seriously by recognizing that pleasing everyone is not a realistic or desirable goal, but something that instead pushes forward median-seeking landscape architecture. It furthermore won't push the boundaries for what landscape architecture can perform and accomplish in a public space. In this instance, the intervention was supporting a liminoid space with alternative performativity and affective behaviour.

THE INTERVENTION OUGHT TO CHALLENGE THE PROGRAMMING OF A SPACE

A part of building a feminist landscape architectural practice is to challenge the utilitarian hegemony and I therefore wanted my intervention to be value-laden and intuitive, along with being a functional landscape architectural project. I don't believe that caring and attentive architecture that takes atmosphere and nuanced local dynamics into consideration can be programmed, and I therefore believe that creating an intervention with no monolithic use or a harmless appeal can push forward new directions of mindset of use and behaviour in spaces. My critical feminist practice is actively developed through my design build and thereby breaks down the control of a space and its optimization.

Preliminary reflections on the intervention

Entering the intervention project, my hope was to create a pilot project where it was shown possible to create a landscape architectural intervention that rested upon a caring creation process, a cognitive space creation and a holistic approach to the

field of landscape architecture. I believed in creatively and curiously engaging in the local culture and the social rituals of the site. Without the local anchorage and connection to Rollespilsfabrikken it wouldn't be an intervention reflecting an understanding and respect for the place or the people for whom the installation has been directed. I therefore was keen on spending as much time there on site as possible. Even though the intervention was a small project, landscape architecture can have a crucial impact on our life cycle and how people live, interact, and perceive the world. I incorporated my analyses of the immediate neighbourhood to take the locality into account and to analyse the site in a greater context.

Pilot project or not, I believe that human scale projects can have an actual impact by appealing to the individual instead of the majority and impact our approach to each other and our surroundings.

The concept

The concept of choice came to be a well in front of the villa, which was about creating landscape architecture shaped by the use at the site instead of vice versa. It was intended to support the existing use and rituals on site and thereby support the area adjacent to the villa in becoming a flexible space in its own right. The well was built upon a space being the exchange between the semi-private use of Rollespilsfabrikken and the public use in connection to the community centre on the rest of the site (see IMAGE 1 and IMAGE 2).



IMAGE 1: Rollespilsfabrikken's live action role players fighting near the well and the villa (Wendt 2021)



IMAGE 2: The well in front of Rollespilsfabrikken's villa (Wendt 2021)

Out of respect for the existing dynamics and use of the space and the whole site, I chose not to create an over-planned place but to create an intervention, which pushed the place to become a noticeable space, that yet reflected the existing conditions, as I was keen on the informality and flexibility of the place to remain.

I aimed to create an intervention which wasn't overly functional: Architecture is oftentimes associated with something obviously highly functional and the well thereby challenges the normative perception of behaviour and use of space, as it challenges people to develop their own use.

The mythical aspect of a well supports Rollespilsfabrikken's inspiration from the European folklore myths, where wells play a central role in folk tales and sacred stories. One of Rollespilsfabrikken's initiatives were called *Mimers Brønd* or *Mimir's Well*, from where the Norse god Odin sought wisdom from; Odin sacrificed one of his eyes in exchange for a few sips of the precious water from the nature spirit Mimir's well. Furthermore, the element of water was in many cultures associated with femininity and female nature, as well as associated with the idea of rebirth or regeneration through the well water. Both powers are echoed in tales connected to wells around the world (Windling 2013).

The well was intended to be a visual guiding post and trademark for Rollespilsfabrikken. It furthermore had an option of functioning as a seating space on the steppingstones by the basis of the well. The seating was intended to imitate the informal ambience around a stair step, where people sit with their coffee and a cigarette and either spectate the surroundings or have an everyday philosophical conversation with the person sitting next.

Since it related to the mythical world of live action role play, I thought it would support the activities of Rollespilsfabrikken and their affect intensive plays in front

of the villa; the well was intended to enable their performative obscurity and limi-
noid alternatives to reality.

It was meant to appeal to children and adults on different levels; a well is an artefact, which can be interpreted upon in a mythical, historical, and practical way, which creates an openminded and performative approach to public space. Inside the well I created the illusion of a water surface created by mirror mosaic and an eye in the middle to be freely interpreted upon. From afar, this element was hidden, and you therefore had to get close to the well and be drawn by curiosity to experience this (see IMAGE 3).



IMAGE 3: The inside of the well (Wendt 2021)

I draped the well in ivy and rocky plants were placed on the roof, adding to local biodiversity and to create an intimate and safe cognitive space. I covered the well in tar to impregnate the wood and add character. Tar furthermore has a distinct smoky smell, which can be associated to bonfire and some of the activities, which the LARPerS oftentimes organize in the forest. In the centre hung a small solar powered lamp for the intervention to have both diurnal and nocturnal relevance. During daytime the lamp moved oscillating in the wind and caught your eye.

As the sun goes down, the solar powered lamp would light up and the intervention be activated for the evening activities at site and invite the players to stay.

This element was intended to enhance the intimacy on site and for the intervention to become an architectural piece in transformation, as it animated the room by giving the possibility for evening activities to blossom. The intervention became both architecture and art, which meant that it had functional and aesthetical qualities complementing each other, but also became more than a functional space - it became a space of intention.

This evolving space of intention was none the less more regulated than the original starting point and targeted towards the people of Rollespilsfabrikken to support

their cognitive and liminoid space. This meant that the space also may have seem alienating as it enclosed upon itself; something which became both the strength and weakness of the intervention. As the architect behind the site transformation, I chose that the risk of limiting the range of use of the space was worth it in relation to the enlargement of possibilities, which could possibly occur by manifesting the area in front of the villa as connected to Rollespilsfabrikken.

Design considerations

The intentions behind the elements of design were numerous and many of the design choices made are rooted in conventional landscape architecture. The materials used for building the well were collected to be as sustainable as possible and with common landscape architectural design considerations and aesthetic opt-ins and opt-outs in relation to the existing site.

To assemble the intervention with the space in front of the villa as one, I sowed ruderal vegetation to strengthen the character of the place and create the perception of a unified space adjacent to the villa. I wanted ruderal vegetation to preserve the existing site expression and because I wanted a space that didn't appear regulated, as this could cause a greater shift in the use and perception of the space than I believed was useful. The space also wasn't intended to look as something to be preserved and cared for, but something which aspired the LARPerS to feel liberated to use the space as they desired and thereby encourage them to take ownership over the site and elevate their sense of culture.

Observed use and reactions

As it took more than a month for me to physically build the well, I began visually mapping the daily reactions I noticed concerning the well. I did this to process the unfiltered reactions, which I was only able to receive by having my daily appearance on the site. The mapping of reactions was intended to illustrate the subtle layer of impact that any new change in space may have on a site (see DIAGRAM 1a, DIAGRAM 1b and DIAGRAM 1c).

As early as during the building process of the well, it was interesting to see how children of all ages immediately took the installation to heart and used it for play, exploration, and watchtower function.

Only people related to Rollespilsfabrikken sat on the steppingstones while I was there and as my design process was open and transparent, many role players were aware of my intentions of the design and function, which is why they may have found it natural to sit by the well. Several times I observed and interacted with people studying the well closely; it received praises by people approaching it with curiosity, while also receiving polite scepticism and distancing comments towards its function and its relevance on a municipal site.

Any reactions and approach to the intervention is to be expected and justified; the well supported a particular cognitive and performative experience and is an in-

tervention that visually leans upon the users and may seem obscure if not visually connected to the live action role players.

Some people outside Rollespilsfabrikken were drawn towards its misplaced appearance on site and accessed it with curiosity. Others wondered what cultural and aesthetical relevance this installation had for the public and municipal use of a contemporary site. This shows that the installation 'shifts' who becomes 'othered', which stresses that this may not be avoidable; perhaps inclusion for some will always represent exclusion to others. Interestingly, it is not the LARPer that becomes othered in this spatial context.



DIAGRAM 1a: Children observed play on well (Wendt 2021)



DIAGRAM 1b: Rollespilsfabrikken's LARPer sitting by well (Wendt 2021)



DIAGRAM 1c: Observed scopsis and examination of well from people unrelated to Rollespilsfabrikken (Wendt 2021)

The impact on site

When intervening with a space such as with adding an installation, a spatial shift happens. Great or small, a dynamic process of change in space will inevitably be caused. What the intervention impacts is the historicity, as the intervention is created in an already existing space and there therefore is a 'before' and an 'after' the intervention creation. The spatiality is affected as well, as the spatial orientation may change and the perception and use on the site may be altered. Finally, the sociality on the site of which the installation was built, may be affected in terms of new social (and performative) possibilities and/or restrictions (Bruun Jespersen 2010, 34).

How the well impacted the site I tried to explain and analyse upon through a selection of snapshots conveying some of the scenarios experienced on site. I supported the snapshots with fabling visuals to reinforce the scenario and to process one of the many layers of a space, which the written word or the camera lens cannot accommodate (see VISUALIZATION 1).

An example of one of the snapshots:

THE WELL AS INTERFACE BETWEEN GROUPINGS ON SITE

"I realise today that the well has the potential to be more than a signpost - it is a manifestation of Rollespilsfabrikken's culture. I am hoping it will help the site be more transparent about the users, which will make the site overall seem more ap-

proachable and dynamic. If the nuances in difference of use and grouping on site are visible, the site will seem less atomised and thereby less fragmented and enclosed. The villa and the rest of the site are affected by the change in historicity that the well causes; I notice that the well make the site adjacent to the villa seem more potent, as Rollespilsfabrikken's creativity and lively behaviour outside now lean against the well supporting their narrative in public space.

I just witnessed a weekend game of petanque, where the well was naturally nothing but an object in the background. Yet, role players from Rollespilsfabrikken were fencing and yelling outside the villa and the well. Their intense and powerful energy was briefly acknowledged among the elderly in the petanque club. In this scenario, I find that the well supported the activity of the role players and justified their presence. Once the elderly finished their game and passed the well, they furthermore acknowledged that it was a new installation on site. The LARPer were continuing their activities as usual. Perhaps one day the well can be the interface or the marker of spatial transition between the role players and the petanque practitioners, by being a subject of conversation between groupings and thereby a subtle cause of change in sociality on site...or the well could be the interface between the municipality employee and the janitor on site...or between the normative experience and the liminoid one”.



VISUALIZATION 1: Petanque play, and live action role play in the background (Wendt 2021)

The area around the well became affected spatially as the well was an anchor point for the activities of Rollespilsfabrikken. It thereby extended Rollespilsfabrikken's semi-private space inside the villa to the adjacent area outside. That space then became a place of common ground for the people connected to Rollespilsfabrikken.

I was told by the LARPerS that the well itself had become a natural venue object to meet by and pick up the LARP-children. The well thereby became the object of transition between Rollespilsfabrikken's liminoid space and practice and e.g., the parents spectating from 'outside'. However, I recognized that the well may also have inhibited some spatial qualities, which may have existed before the building of the well.

The unsubtle character of the well aesthetically occupied the space, which may have deterred people who were not associated or familiar with Rollespilsfabrikken from using the well or the space adjacent to the villa. It furthermore might also have inhibited some intuitive and creative approaches to utilizing the space, as it became more controlled with an object regulating the spatial setting.

The anti-landmark

The term and concept of a 'landmark' (as introduced by Kevin Lynch in 1960) is a physical element contributing to imageability and recognition of a city or area. Landmarks possess defining characteristics different from their surroundings and are easily recognized in the landscape. Conventionally, landmarks are often buildings, squares, or cultural objects such as monuments, towers, or historically important spaces (Lamit 2004 66-67).

Half a hundred meters down the road from Rollespilsfabrikken was the local water tower shooting up from the villa gridded area. It was a grand, cylindric water tower put into use in 1931, measuring 25.5 meters in diameter and looming up approximately 34 meters over the area. The water tower was considered a contemporary landmark of the area, today functioning as a cultural venue-based community centre also belonging to the Municipality of Copenhagen (Askgaard et al 2020).

Considering what constitutes a landmark, such as a water tower, I considered the well to be an actual anti-landmark. However, I argue that it was still a landmark in its own right; it reflected certain features of a landmark, as it was a tangible element with characteristics that were physically (or spiritually) unique and generally in contrast with the characteristics of the surroundings. Landmarks do not necessarily have to be of pleasing nature to the eye of the beholder, as landmarks and their inhomogeneous nature sometimes generates social critique and is unable to please the masses (Lamit 2004, 74).

On site-scale it was the focal landmark of the space, which Rollespilsfabrikken utilize. It had the ability to promote interaction as it has an attraction quality through the semantic and design value of the object. The well was a small element at a large site and is in terms of size of no comparison to the neighbour landmark, the water tower. The well was however visible from many positions and angles on site and had features of a panopticon. Yet, it was not of a distinctive size in the overall landscape of the site and it was an inward-facing landmark in its expression, and could rarely be seen from the sidewalk outside the site entrance.

The well being an anti-landmark was also reflected in the narrow appeal and local culture it supported on site, rather than reflecting a more inclusive cultural identity of the site or of the whole area. The most obvious anti-quality of the well was the fact that it was a well – it was something which resembled a hole in the ground

with an inward facing feature, rather than a pillow into the sky, where a great part of its aesthetic quality being the mosaics could only to be seen if you were about 1.5 meters away – instead of demanding to be a focal point in the landscape.

Consequently, the well may have had qualities that asks for a re-evaluation of the conventional landmark and for the anti-landmark to be something new to strive for creating, to aim for adding great value rather than great volume.

Process & execution

My formal schooling in landscape architecture has given me a wide range of tools as to how to design and plan landscapes and public spaces. However, much less emphasis has been put on the challenges of implementing the design proposals, as this is typically executed by a third party. My experience during this project was, that this was the root of the gap between theory and practice. As it is not common for a landscape architect to execute the design by oneself, I had to draw on my own seemingly logic process development, as well as on my intuition in collaboration with my feminist principles and ideals. This unprogrammed approach entailed both challenges as well as rewards. I chose not to follow a structured framework of approach, as I wanted my intervention to organically evolve in line with my learnings, as well as the desires of Rollespilsfabrikken. I also didn't want to limit my process by making it fit a set framework of approach. I therefore had to be flexible and respond to the experiences revealing themselves during the process of learning by doing, as I didn't want my initial concept and designs to be too set and become a Top-Down approach, where most of the site got programmed. I decided not to approach my project with a fixed Bottom-Up approach, which is nevertheless a sympathetic approach intended to be a socially inclusive in the process and slow and careful in implementation (Ting 2015, 1-3). I was afraid of falling into the trap of treating the site as a complicated phenomenon, that I had to understand with the purpose of controlling, rather than a complex, dynamic system to be carefully influenced by both Rollespilsfabrikken and I in the building process.

Communication and trust

During the social restrictions of COVID-19, I was interacting with Rollespilsfabrikken through emails and their private Facebook group of 300 active members. In the beginning I posted proposals for intervention concepts and the members' feedback came to substitute the observations of Rollespilsfabrikken's use and behaviour on site, which wasn't possible for me to conduct during the COVID-19 assembly ban. Once I chose the overall concept of the well, I was prepared to alter and revise its design a numerous of times, for me to be responsive to the feedback in the Facebook group. The support and interaction I got from the posts were even greater than I could've imagined, which highlights the importance of reciprocal communication between the landscape architect and the users of the site. As the community centre on site was still in use during my time building the intervention, I was able to do observations of their use - formal and informal - and

initiate conversations about their daily use, habits and thoughts on the site and the intervention in general. As the restrictions of COVID-19 lessened mid-way through the project, I happened to bump into several of Rollespilsfabrikken's Facebook group members on the site. This allowed me to organically ask questions and get to know their cultural milieu and their habits concerning Rollespilsfabrikken and the villa. As none of these meetings were formally scheduled, it gave me an authentic insight to Rollespilsfabrikken's identity, which established a mutual trust between us as they experienced me working on the well every day. So much trust was established, that I was given a key to the villa for me to enter at any time with a formal as well as informal purpose. A mutual respect and trust were established, which is something a formal Top-Down proposal of an intervention wouldn't have been able to achieve. Rollespilsfabrikken currently valued and took ownership over the intervention even before I was finished building it. They watered the plants, they sheltered the well from rain before the tar had dried and made sure no one got too close to accidentally disrupt my work in progress. I believe they did this because they had invested in me personally and experienced the vulnerable position, I put myself in, by offering raw ideas and visions to be assessed. I believe that the fundamental strength of the project was in fact the vulnerability and approachability of it.

Informal contribution index

As the workshop process of co-creation was hindered during COVID-19, the building process, and informal contributions from people on site became a great part of my feministic process. I couldn't formally invite anyone to do a traditional workshop and therefore used the inputs of informal sources. The development of the well became a performative building laboratory of its own. During my time developing upon and building the intervention on site, the informal interaction, and discussions regarding the well made an actual impact on my process, where I compiled a compressed overview of the essential contributions that shaped my process. I wanted to stress how many valuable sources of co-creation that engaged in the process and helped establish an alternative to the programming of a space (see DIAGRAM 2).

THE COMMUNITY CENTER EMPLOYEE

Who curiously kept asking about the well and came for suggestions on what could and should be built next on the site.



THE PIZZA DELIVERY GUY

Who often delivered pizza to Rollespilsfabrikken and subtly illustrated for me, that my intentions of the well becoming an anti-landmark for Rollespilsfabrikken had succeeded, as he was directed towards 'the villa with the well in front'.

THE SCEPTICAL MUM

Who sceptically asks about the function and intention of creating a well? The critics set my thoughts and intentions in motion and illustrated how the well is not necessarily intended for everyone.



THE LARPERS

Who has encouraged me by baking cake, making me coffee, and set up barrier tape around the well while it was wet. Their praising words and appropriation of the well, as well as their willingness to discuss and communicate with me about their use and desires have been the key part in creating the well.

THE CHILDREN

Who were howling and crawling upon the well from before it was even done being built. They embraced the informal use, which I had not predicted and their curiosity and use of the well was surprising and showed me a new dimension of use, that I had

THE JANITOR

Who showed to me how Rollespilsfabrikken's respect for me translates into their respect for the well. I always made sure to clean up after myself immensely well, as his kindness to me made me go the extra mile to honour his work on site.

DIAGRAM 2: An overview of the informal contribution to the creation of the well (Wendt 2021)

Process challenging project management

I initially did a Top-Down overview for my spatial analyses, to analyse the site thoroughly and professionally. During the analyses of social dynamics and movement on site I used my intuitive sensitivity, which was required for the principles of a feminist intervention to be realised. My analytical work included the entire site, but with a continuous focus on how it influenced Rollespilsfabrikken and their villa. This way, I combined Top-Down thinking with a sensitive Bottom-Up action to proceed with the intervention within a professional context. My understanding of the site, the liminoid and cognitive space of Rollespilsfabrikken, as well as the LARP-milieu, became anchor points from where my prism of feminism could contribute to small scale changes. The hope was that the use and behaviour around this intervention was able to influence larger social systems of which it is a part of. It was challenging for me to replace most of the Top-Down approach with an open and wondering approach, as I still wanted Rollespilsfabrikken to establish a trust in me and my professional capabilities and know that I was solemnly dedicated to executing the project. I believe that I proved this over time with the consistent and continuous communication and the transparency in my process, while being open and responsive to their feedback and suggestions. The development process of the intervention was anything but linear. It was a constant shift between feeling focused and having clarity in relation to the project, while allowing the visions and creativity take over and gain new perspectives and insight. I reached many points of uncertainty and frustration regarding the further development of the project, but this project development taught me that my landscape architectural tools, my insight to feminist theory and my human intuition, was enough to steer me through such a purposely disorderly process. It became evident how much the process of building even a small-scale project requires steady nerves and a belief in one's professional abilities.

My position

The uncertainty of my approach towards the concept development made it nearly impossible to seek financial funding for the project, as I couldn't readily plan the list of materials that were needed ahead of time. The Top-Down approach is normally used by the landscape architect to ensure validity of the project, ensure funding, and an easier implementation (Ting 2015, 3). Yet, I chose not to limit my intentions of a holistic and caring process and co-creation with Rollespilsfabrikken, by having a fixed list of materials or concept. This meant, that I had to fund the project myself, which gave me valuable insight to the cost of anything from one square meter of asphalt roofing to a rock – a financial overview, which a building constructor would traditionally cover. Yet, my position as project manager, concept developer, landscape architect, urban designer, feminist activist, carpenter, and building constructor gave me great insight to both the strengths and weaknesses of the landscape architect as a hybrid profession and some insight to who had to know what and when in the process.

I faced the challenges and professional boundaries of the landscape architect and found that the boundaries for what a landscape architect is and does, can be pushed. Also, I have gotten a newfound admiration and understanding of the need for collaboration between professions. I teamed up with a carpenter, who happened to be my private friend also. My advantage of finding someone from my personal life was that he was patient and understanding of my intuitive approach to the execution of the intervention. I told him that the exact placement and height of the well was still to be determined and would be set once we had the materials to play around with on site. I prepared for creating the well by making a model 1:10, as well as sketches, renderings, and visualisations, but I wanted room for intuition and creativity when building. The process of building the well taught me to be humble of my personal and professional abilities, and yet be curious as to how to develop a wider range of abilities to support my profession further. It also taught me the importance of clear communication during the execution process and knowing when to step back and let other people put their skills to use in the process. This is especially a learning lesson that I have taken with me in my further work as a landscape architect.

Preserving integrity

During the process, I made a lot of effort in putting aside my personal aesthetics and architectural ego for the project to instead rely on my professional visions for the process. My aim of building an intervention with a feminist approach required for my professional ideals to be clearly defined for myself and required for me to uphold a caring and intuitive approach and create the cognitive space supporting a liminoid experience. I find that the landscape architect's personal aesthetic and ego are oftentimes fostered during the line of work we do. In this project, I had to be realistic about my design and the context in which it was placed, as the feedback and outcome was not something I would be able to distance myself from. I chose to be responsive to the feedback I continuously received from Rollespilsfabrikken; yet the final design decisions were however mine to make, and I was steered on creating an intervention, which I believed reflects my personal and professional integrity.

Ensuing reflections

My aspirations for the project were to create a discussion concerning the responsibility and the possibilities of landscape architecture and stress the option of creating value-laden architecture, which takes an ethical or political stance. I furthermore had the aspiration of supporting a liminoid space challenging normative frameworks in public space through design. The project was a platform for exploration on how to create an intervention driven by making feminist theory and vision meet landscape architectural practice. It was built during a time affected by social restrictions as a derived effect of COVID-19. I am sure that another layer of process exploration and co-creation would have revealed itself during different circumstances.

I don't consider my learnings and experiences regarding this project to be founded knowledge. A part of my desire regarding building a holistic and caring approach to landscape architecture requires that my experience is established as situated knowledge engraved in this project. I admit that the scale of the project was privileged when aspiring to build a feminist landscape architectural practice, as I don't believe the continuous planning of a project is sustainable or even feasible on a larger scale project. I do however believe that landscape architects ought to be involved in a greater part of the process and engage with the people we build for – as well as engage with the people we choose not to build for. I acknowledge that this feminist approach can be time consuming and that it is challenging to be rational and professional during this sort of project development. I do however plead for an approach where there is room for more than rationality; the nuance of a space comes to life by actively and genuinely engaging with the people on the site and the structural inequalities in our public spaces may begin to reveal themselves. The building process revealed how the personal involvement of a project such as this, can be both its strength and its weakness; the hybrid role paired with personal involvement meant that it was increasingly difficult to take a step back and analyse upon the process and the shifts in space. My lack of clearly defined boundaries for my involvement made it difficult to get a rational perspective and overview of the project, compared to if my project had been programmed on a computer and executed by someone else from afar. I choose to believe, that the respect we give the design process will be an important link between theory and practice and that this respect carries on from the architect to the space and its users and deepen their understanding and care for our designs. The well ended up being a manifestation of the liminoid culture of Rollespilsfabrikken and their performative activities. This pushes the boundaries for normative behaviour and use of public space, while exploring how to merge landscape architectural theory and practice without the programming of a space. The boundaries and the performativity of my own role as landscape architect was explored and challenged as well due to the personal involvement and nature of the project. This only enlarged my sense of responsibility and encouraged me to explore my role as landscape architect and feminism by design even further in the future. My hope is that my telling about this project can encourage a greater exploration of pushing against the dogmas within landscape architecture and express the possibility of merging the field with feminist values and potentials; a political potential relevant to consider when intervening in any space when aiming to evolve upon our professional integrity.

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