

Things for Collective Gathering:
Bosquets in the Nordmarka

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Project site:
2x2km frame in Nordmarka, Oslo

Project description (122 words): The Osloomarka (peri-urban forest) is the quintessential public space in Oslo and an object of cultural construct. It is designed and managed to create a notion of a natural forest through actively limiting clear geometry and linear planting patterns.

The project aims to embrace the artificiality of the forest. Thus if we can consider that forestry is an act of design, what other spatial opportunities does the forest provide? The project uses the industrial action of timber extraction as a design tool to create bosquets, open air rooms in the forest.

The rooms increase formal legibility while embracing the environmental conditions of the site. Set within the rooms, a new set of objects are placed, making for a new cultural sceneography.

Dale Wiebe

Things for Collective gathering is a speculative design project discussing public space, forestry practices and the relationships between objects and the Nordmarka.

Historically Nordic 'tings' (Norwegian for thing) were landscape assemblies where people gathered to discuss matters of importance. These meetings are similar to southern European agoras, or forums. Nordic things gathered around megaliths, fields, large trees, or clearings. Today the modern meaning of 'thing' often associated with objects, or physical matter, as in "can you pass me that thing (cup)". The method of exploring the forest uses this linguistic trick, the forest as both a 'ting' - space for gathering - and the 'things' that appropriate space in the 'ting' (objects inside the forest).

In Oslo the peri-urban forest is the quintessential public space, one is able to freely roam the forest without restriction. The forest is the plaza, the forest is the square, the forest is preeminent public space in Oslo. While we view the forest as synonymous with nature the forest is an intensely designed condition. The spatial form of the forest reflects political agendas and environmental philosophies. These shifting agendas and philosophies can be physically experienced inside the cyclical growth of the forest. Spaces in the forest are an articulation between the changing clearings and the objects found inside them.

Today the forest is an outcome of superimposed logics. First, the forest as an environment for the production of timber. Second, the forest as an aesthetic experience - a city park. The superimposed logic results in a zoning plan and management scheme that aims to reconstruct the notion of a natural forest. The zoning forms are an outcome of the diametric forces.

The forest zoning shapes are generated using 4 main rules:

- 1) Limit size of the clearing;
- 2) Limit orthogonal cuts, and try to follow natural contours;
- 3) When replanting, use no straight rows; and
- 4) Maintain a buffer of trees along paths.

These rules are an attempt to hide the pseudo-industrial environment, while culturally constructing wilderness.

The goal of the project is to embrace the artificiality of forestry. If we can confess that forestry is an act of design, what other spatial opportunities does the forest provide for the citizens of Oslo? The project aims to use the industrial action of extraction as a design tool to create bosquets, open air rooms in the forest. Sites were selected by their given topographic characteristics, Site 1, with a view towards Oslo, Site 2, tucked into a northern slope, Site 3, along a southwest facing slope towards the sunset. Each site works within the age of surrounding growth, to accentuate the edge condition of the clearing. The design process for the triptych of clearings begins with the zoning shapes found in the forest today. The new governing forms change the existing shapes, embracing greater spatial legibility.

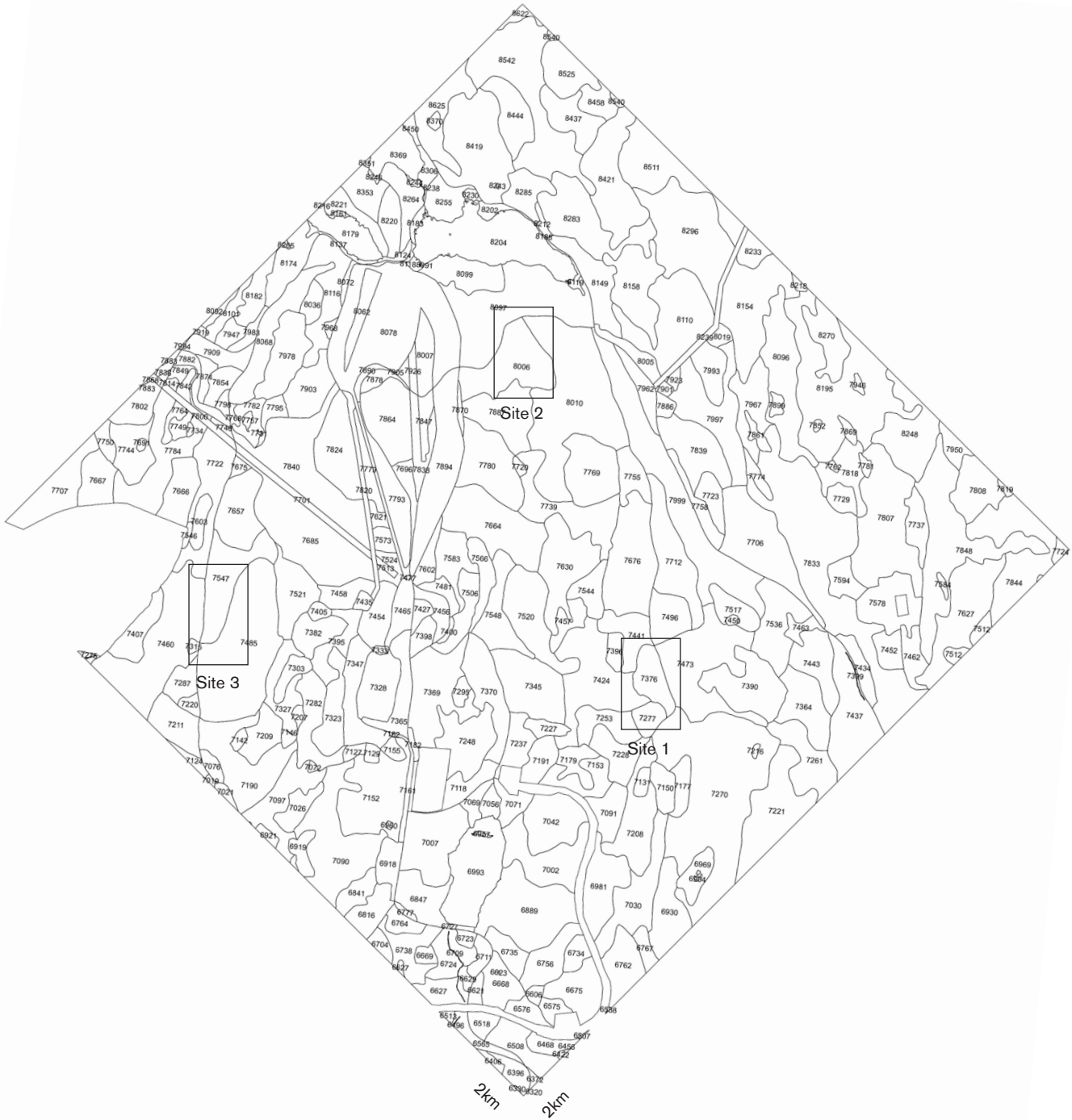
Set within the clearings, a new set of objects are gestures which reflect the new culture-to-nature, urban-to-forest relationship. Each site is covered with a temporary, modular system. The paving plates sit on stilts and float about the surface, modulating the topography and suppressing the forest growth. The paving surface is interrupted where tree stumps exist. Armatures are attached to the tree stumps, these objects are social instruments that encourage activity: places to sit, lighting devices, fire pits, and roofs. The stumps become architectural foundations for new activity while revealing the pattern of the forest that was.

Similar to the design of the clearing, the design of the inserted furnitures use the existing zoning plan and alters the shape to accommodate the implied use of the object. The outcomes are surreal domestic objects that are as natural as the forest. Each site uses a different collection of objects to appropriate the clearings:

- Site 1: light fixtures + steel plates
- Site 2: light fixtures + roof + firebowl + steel plates
- Site 3: chairs + steel plates.

After each clearing is cut, and objects are inserted, a new planting logic then accentuates the orthogonal expression of the paving plates. Highly ordered rows of young picea are planted at varying densities and directions.

Things for Collective gathering confronts the divide between nature and culture, industry and recreation - composing a new scenography inside the peri-urban Nordmarka.



Left) The 2x2 km project frame with governing zones. The site is at the end of train line 1, 30 minutes away by public transit. This is where the city and the forest meet. Currently the forest is governed by this zoning plan, the zoning plan gives the forest a scalable graticule. Each site changes the geometry of the zoning, to create open air rooms with legible form.

Right) 1:20 objects found inside the clearings. The objects use the cut stumps as foundations, the design of the furnitures and social devices reference the zoning plan.



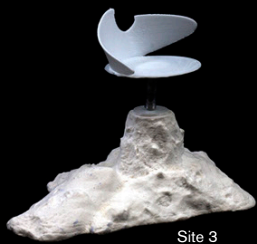
Site 1



Site 3



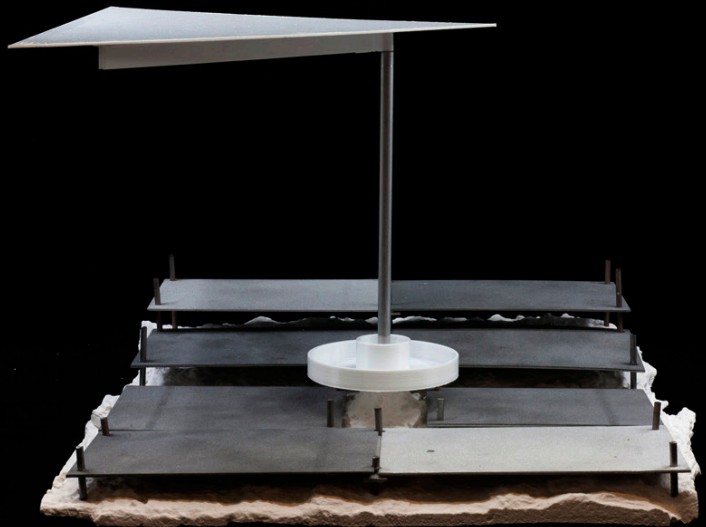
Site 3



Site 3



Site 3



Site 2



Site 3



Site 2



Site 3



Site 3



Site 3



Top) aerial view of site 2. Inside the clearing is a covered folly. The column placement is predicated by the location of stumps, objectifying the previous pattern of the forest. Certain columns are adorned with fire pits and light fixtures. Inside the clearing white dots form a constellation of stumps.

Left) Aerial view of folly , site 2

Right) Inside view of clearing and folly, site 2