



Gini Lee & Lisa Diedrich

Travelling Transect

FINDING AND COMMUNICATING FRAGILE SITE QUALITIES IN WATER LANDSCAPES
THROUGH ARCHIPELAGIC APPROACHES TO FIELDWORK

PART 1 A CONVERSATION BETWEEN TRAVELLERS

Prologue

Gini: I have sent notes as promised. The open-ended curation is from *Stony Rises* (2010) — each time the exhibition was recurred to fit, and new narratives from the same material were superpositioned. Can this work in the translation from “exhibition as diary” to “drawing as diary” with the possibility for many diaries to emerge from one journey or site depending upon the situation at hand?

Lisa: Inspired by our conversation I produced another visual to bring that idea of the ongoing carto-diary into a picture, what I suggest is that the carto diary is an ongoing thing between us, never ending, transect after transect, and a *tableau physique* sometimes “drops out” in the form of an exhibition.

PREPARING FOR MOBILISING

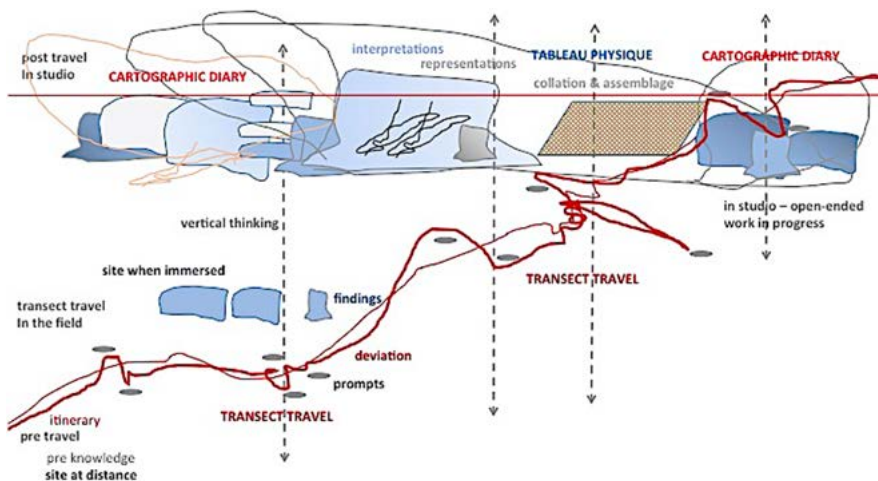
Travelling collaborations are long in the making and we have been exposing ourselves to landscapes over space and time for more than ten years now. Despite our physical distances across hemispheres, ecosystems and time scales, we have developed a working methodology that is both explorative and discursive — a conversational, visual approach to working between the field, the studio and the gallery.

Our guides are those who practice/d journeys over vast and intimate territories (Alexander von Humboldt, Robert Smithson, Nicolas Bourriaud, Rebecca Solnit, and Lucy Lippard). We appropriate their knowledge alongside practicing a weather eye to terrain dynamics

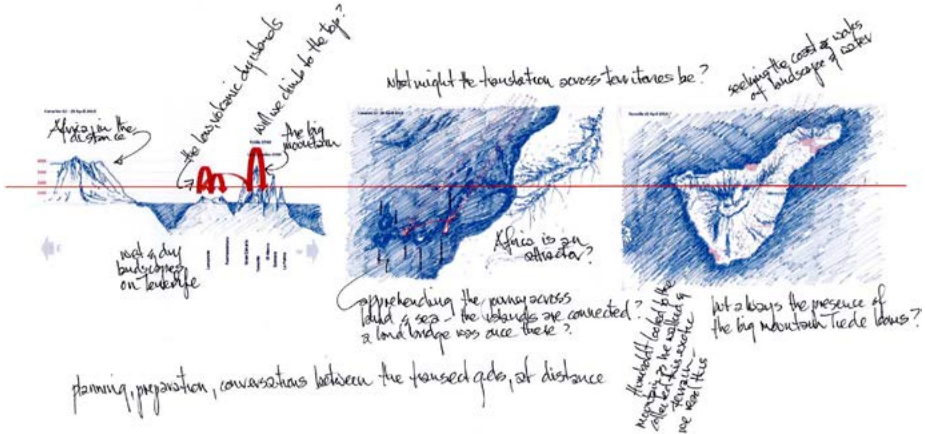


After the fieldwork – the Mount Noorat volcano – building a deep map: grounding mat, mapping, collection from place, others’ offerings, time passing . Gini Lee, ‘A Deep Mapping for the Stony Rises’ (2009). Photo: Gini Lee, 2010.

with the intent to map and communicate the atmospheres and ephemeral values that make places so distinct. Julian Raxworthy first introduced us to the notion of the thousands of kilometres transects, covering distances between the dry and the wet of Australia in a journey from city coast (Adelaide) to city coast (Sydney).



Methodological sketch to conceptualise the components of the Travelling Transect: transect travel, cartographic diary, *tableau physique*. Sketch: Lisa Diedrich.



Extract of the Canarysect's cartographic diary 2013. Sketch: Lisa Diedrich.

Learning from this expanded transect method we progress forward, tracing lines where water and landscapes intersect, preparing ourselves through making transects drawn from equal part research and equal part hunch. Our subsequent transects in the Canary Islands, southeastern Australia and the land/water interfaces of Sweden and Denmark, help us increasingly understand the serendipitous and deviant nature of a designerly



Rocksect exhibition Konstfack Stockholm 2015: assemblage as communication form. Photo: Gustaf Karlsson.

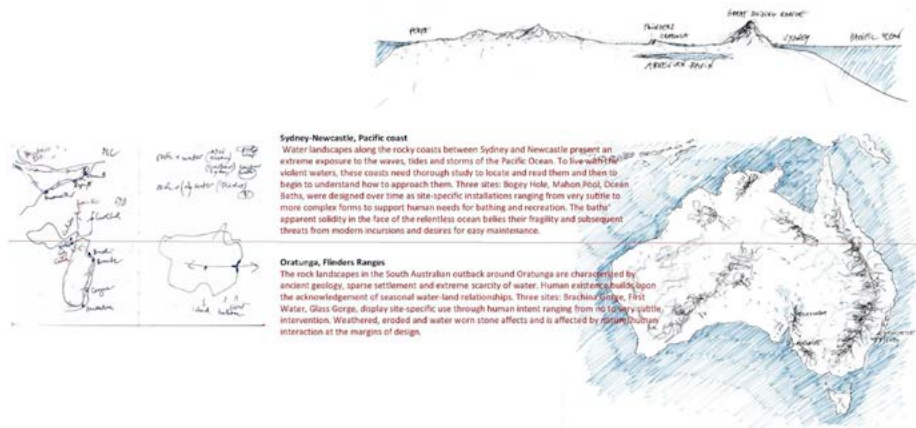
method that interrupts traditional transect concepts. Our fieldwork invites disruption as a necessary factor in gaining site knowledge of landscapes and peoples. We are challenged to find methods that assemble stuff and stories and to then find modes to communicate the material and immaterial complexities of places.



Finding the principle of deviation during the first research transect travel 2013. Sketch: Gini Lee.

AN ARCHIPELAGIC APPROACH TO FIELDWORK

We lack easy face-to-face collaboration as we need to correspond across the ether to document our physical and mental experiences through open-ended cartographies that express aspects of the physical, material, and temporal moments of places along our transects. This is a fieldwork method that relies on the specificity of place, individual re-collection and the process of exchange at distance. We share a contemporary understanding of Humboldtian science that defines knowledge generation as a mobile, transareal enterprise, moving across disciplinary and geographical boundaries and territories. Follow the line – and if there is something of interest to the side of the line? Deviate! That is the moment when on-site discoveries diverge, where exploration of new systems and situations found off the track allows new knowledge to arise.



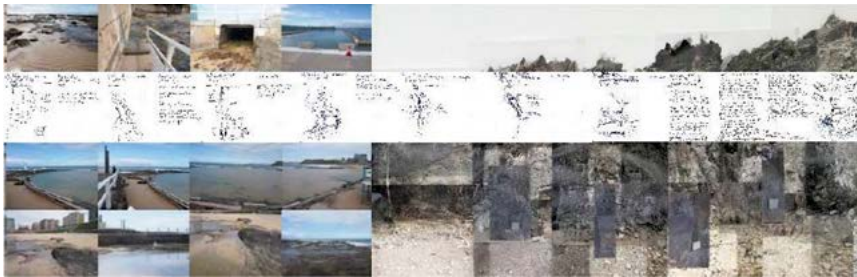
Sydney-Newcastle, Pacific coast
 Water landscapes along the rocky coasts between Sydney and Newcastle present an extreme exposure to the waves, tides and storms of the Pacific Ocean. To live with the violent waters, these coasts need thorough study to locate and read them and then to begin to understand how to approach them. Three sites: Rigby Hole, Mahon Pool, Ocean Baths, were designed over time as site-specific installations ranging from very subtle to more complex forms to support human needs for bathing and recreation. The baths' apparent solidity in the face of the relentless ocean bakes their fragility and subsequent threats from modern incursions and desires for easy maintenance.

Oratunga, Flinders Ranges
 The rock landscapes in the South Australian outback around Oratunga are characterized by ancient geology, sparse settlement and extreme scarcity of water. Human extremes build upon the acknowledgement of seasonal water-land relationships. Three sites: Bracks Gorge, First Water, Glass Gorge, display site-specific use through human intent ranging from no to very subtle intervention. Weathered, eroded and water worn stone affects and is affected by non-human interactions at the margins of design.

Excerpt of the Rocksect's cartographic diary 2014. Sketch: Lisa Diedrich.

THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE

We made a Rocksect *tableau physique* to express weather forming processes of rocky places where people go to bathe, for succour and where multiple stories underpin their emergence and possible decay over time. Our transect follows a sectional line of bathing rock pools along the east coast of Australia, and by contrast, exploring rock pools in shallow aquifers in the arid outback; a softly drawn line across dissimilar territories, each critical to the nature of contemporary water/land relations for a drying continent. We amassed digital images, hand drawn sketches, real time videos, samples captured in plastic bags, conversations and offerings from others, water samples, historical documents and temporal mappings.



Cartographic diary of the Rocksect from Sydney/Newcastle to Oratunga/Flinders, 2015.

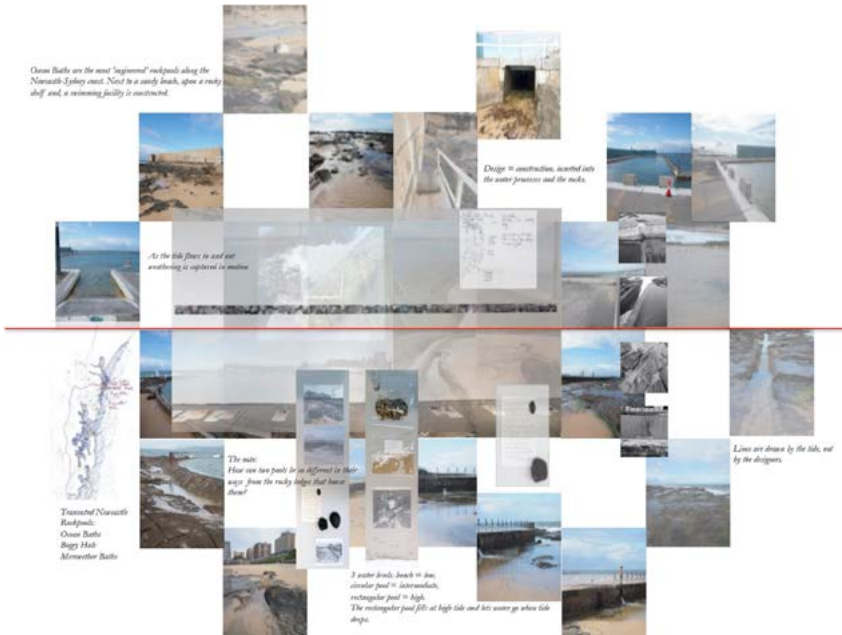


Tableau physique of Ocean Bath, extracted from the Rocksect 2015 cartographic diary.

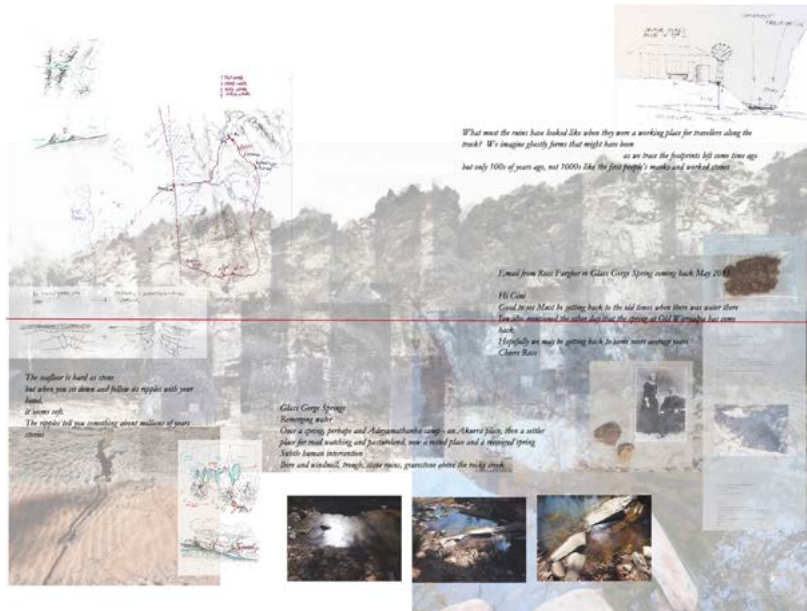


Tableau physique of Glass Gorge, extracted from the 2015 Rocksect cartographic diary.

We got our feet wet, were windblown and sunburnt. We took time to wander with intent regarding the distant view and the stuff under foot. Our conversations continued back home as we assembled our collections into an aesthetic of experience and material form. We made an opportunity to exhibit far from site and across hemispheres; a Munich studio our first making place for curating the Rocksect *tableau physique* of multimodal elements. Media are juxtaposed to make a tableaux sequence for six places and here we include two. One, for the Pacific Ocean in Newcastle, the Ocean Baths as a swimming place mediating the watery/sandy shoreline and another for Glass Gorge in the Flinders Ranges at a re-emerged spring where 19th century road makers found reliable water in the arid lands. Each tableau is co-made: Lisa's drawings, models and photos, Gini's photos, collections and story gathering, motivated towards revealing the critical nature of fragile water systems in the landscape. From the tableaux the cartographic diary reveals itself as a compendium of forms that may never be complete.

Currently we are working on a book on the (deviated) transect as a method to express the scope of the cartographic diary. Our representational references include Alexander von Humboldt's transareal mapping imagery, medieval *mappa mundi* and/or the types of archives that express complexity through visual immersion such as Gerhard Richter's archive or Hanne Darboven's installations.

Our Travelling Transects follow paths of co-musing upon fieldwork findings to represent the depth of landscapes to us, and to others through exhibition and publishing. In

voicing the dynamics of landscapes in the field (practical fieldwork) we then reprocess our collections in the studio (conceptual fieldwork) in a looping experiment that exposes an archipelagic approach to inhabited landscapes.

Epilogue

Lisa: Now we were driving always up from Adelaide to the Flinders Ranges, until reaching Oratunga. It seems so high and so far out, as if there were no higher and no farther, and the next discovery from here would be another world. Oratunga seems like an outpost for explorers. What lies farther north? My impression is that I might be able to discover an 'inner sea' somewhere out there...

Gini: In reality, Oratunga is the highest point in Flinders Ranges as part of the water system that drains into Ngarndamukia Lake Torrens and to Munda Lake Frome - further north the water is channelled into the Great Artesian Basin, an immense underground water reservoir. This was the inner sea that the explorers couldn't find as it was deep beneath their feet.



Water dynamics at the water-land margin, Canarysect 2013. Photo: Gini Lee.

PART 2: CROSSING HEMISPHERES – FROM ÖRESUNDSECT TO BAYSECT

TRAVELLING TRANSECT: FROM SITE TO NON-SITE

Defining the transect as a design analysis and production method involves inquiry into the natural and social sciences. The transect is an ordered spatial idea which makes use of the transverse section across a territory, along which points are located for observation and/or measurement. In the natural sciences this form includes observation of the distribution of object/element or creature of study, whereas the social sciences aim to reveal community practices along the line inscribed across the landscape. We developed a culturally-based transect method to capture site qualities through deep fieldwork-based empirical enquiry and interpretation as a critical component of the conceptual design act, calling this approach the ‘Travelling Transect’.

The cartographic diaries compile what emerges from the collections of material encountered pre- and during fieldwork journeys. Post-journey mappings are co-postproduced in their temporal and material form in response to the dynamics of places and networks experienced along an itinerary. Through combinations of mixed media and conversational annotation as journey-makers we seek to express the situational and the abstract in an open-ended way. In the field, we take field notes, photos, films, samples, interview recordings etc. and develop our thoughts further when off site. We look towards new insights visualised in an ongoing form of off-site notation and visual thinking along the guiding transect line, as if scripting music on the lines of a score. Notation techniques embrace analogue and digital collages, transformed into pdf or other digital image formats to be sent back and forth by email to geographically-separated authors. The arrangement of drawings, modeling, imagery, time-based recordings, text, and collections are made in a collaborative laying out of the material at hand. Techniques enabled by computer-based systems support the collation, and in some senses, abstraction and layering of the material, but we seek always to represent the anecdotal and immediacy of the analogue, as drawn from site experience. The cartographic diary is stored in a computer archive, is extended/updated after each transect travel, and accompanies our collaborative research over each transect. But also, along all transect travels together, as an ever-forward moving line, or an ever-ongoing musical score. Many cartographic diaries of many different transect travels form one single cartographic diary of our collaborative research. At precise moments, for exhibitions or publications, snapshot-like excerpts are distilled from the cartographic diary, named ‘tableau physique’ after the Humboldtian imagery.

TRAVELLING THEORIES AND TRAVELLING PRACTICES

Alexander von Humboldt, the early nineteenth-century traveller, writer, explorer, and scientist serves as critical inspiration, and in practical ways, as a transareal travel guide in the journey to develop and refine methods and theories to shape practice. Contemporary scholars in many disciplinary fields have recently rediscovered and adopted Alexander von Humboldt’s understanding of science as a mobile, transareal enterprise that moves across disciplinary and geographical boundaries and territories ([Potsdam International](#)

[Network for TransArea Studies](#)). In his day, Humboldt operated within an environment characterised by intense global movement effected through seafaring and increased colonial trading. Today, similar dynamics are in play; movements driven by the globalised economy, the enormous changes inflicted by climate change, its attendant demographic shifts and altered human imaginaries, alongside destruction and disappearance of ecosystems and biodiversity at alarming rates.

Humboldt, a travelling scientific figure, responded to a radically changing worldview by advancing two ‘epistemological revolutions’. First, he rejected science as pure reflection at a distance, advancing on-site empirical exploration as the new authority for reliable knowledge generation. Second, he posited knowledge as an open work, pushing research to ignore boundaries between areas of study and to instead explore their interrelatedness and relational dynamics. Humboldt treated science as a transareal pursuit. His approach resonates with contemporary scepticism around existing or emerging intellectual, disciplinary, and territorial boundaries and specialised disciplines (Ette 2012, 2009, Kutzinski et al. 2012). His transareal principles precede the transdisciplinary and artistic turn that the Travelling Transect project embraces.

The Travelling Transect re-appropriates Humboldt’s transareal approach through practically embodied actions. Aligned theoretically with a growing interdisciplinary community of contemporary scholars, travelling transect knowledge is understood to arise ‘on the move’, through bodily immersion in the field, embracing accidental deviation from planned itineraries, identifying immersion, motion, and deviation as constitutive for knowledge production. The resultant form of mobile, relational, and open-ended knowledge creation is particularly apt for tackling wicked twenty-first-century challenges marked by interrelatedness and changeability. Practically, Humboldt’s historic transareal travels, documentation techniques, and representations of findings guide the Travelling Transect journey-form. Humboldt travelled to the Canary Islands; we first journeyed to the Canaries. Our mode of collecting and recording everything that contributes to a sense of place or itinerary; our focus on points of interest; our return to home studios to delve into the collected materials; our commitment to modes of writing and visual representation accessible to wide audiences; our adoption of expressive methods of illustration and annotation such as the cartographic diary; all pay tribute to the Humboldtian journey-form (Diedrich, Lee & Braae 2017).

Humboldt’s activism overlaid an aesthetic regard atop scientific exploration; he consciously embraced and represented socio-aesthetic experiences in his travels. The idea that aesthetic-affective landscape encounters can spark public empathy for everyday landscapes is now prevalent in landscape architecture and urbanism discourse. American scholar Elizabeth Meyer’s seminal essay ‘Sustaining beauty’ (2008) introduced an aesthetic component into the sustainability triad. Her text instigated critical discussions (Hellström-Reimer 2010, Hellemondt & Notteboom 2018, De Block & Vicenzotti 2018); it also situates understanding the Travelling Transect as a tool for design and an activist

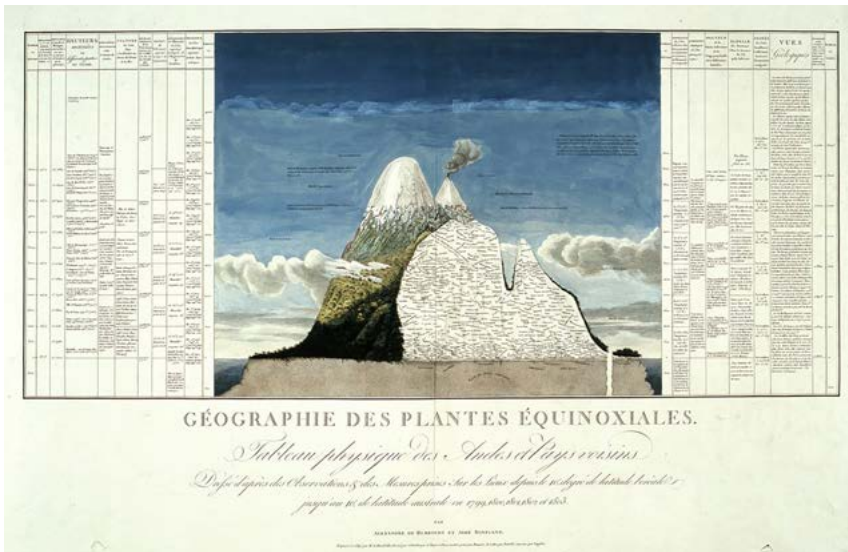


Tableau Physique 'Géographie des Plantes Equinoxiales' (Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland, 1805)
 Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

practice in its own right. To inform activism in favour of landscape fragilities, the project strives to convey the interrelatedness of aesthetic, ecological and cultural appreciation at the land/water margin.

Curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud investigates artistic practices where process becomes the art form itself, making his writings on the topic foundational to apprehending the open-work nature of the Travelling Transect project. Considering artworks as processes that play out over time, for example, cooking a meal over days (Rirkrit Tiravanija 2011) or a small boat journey tragedy (Bas Jan Ader 1975) Bourriaud offers up the critical idea of 'form in motion' or journey-form. Journey-form describes aesthetic practices where a performance or work eschews traditional modes of representation and places of production, which Bourriaud recognises as developing under conditions of exacerbated globalisation and hyper-mobility (Bourriaud 2009). Following Bourriaud, casting the Travelling Transect as journey-form means adopting a processive understanding of what constitutes a trip and its timeline. As journey-form, the Travelling Transect artistic practice encompasses pre-travel preparations; visits to distant locations; returns to home-base studios, writing-desks and public exhibition spaces where journey-makers sort through experiences, documents, findings, representations; and subsequent reflections and re-journeying through prior endeavours. So doing, it also encompasses the proposed as-yet enacted leg of the journey — to revisit, rethink and retheorise a trip initiated many years ago and iterated and reiterated multiple times. As an expansion of a journey-form that began in 2009 in the first visit to the Canary Islands, the leg here proposes forms as part of an ongoing artistic research practice responding to constantly changing 21st

century material and socio-political landscapes. Creative and cultural researcher Ross Gibson coined the term ‘changescapes’ to describe aesthetic forms that dramatise change. Gibson’s activist storytelling retells encounters and experiences of a single place or visit, reflecting on them again and again at different moments, changing his own thinking across space and over time. This changescapes concept and approach to reflective work invites a performative mode of observation and analysis of situations that may be new or unusual, or even just everyday. In Gibson’s words, changescapes “help us know mutability by immersing us in it [...] by making change their theme [...] they are usually of fragile and ephemeral stuff that reacts to altering [real-world] conditions [...] Transformations happen at their boundaries, at the limits between the inside and the outside of their systems, and then the symptoms of change become manifest in them, palpably available for our contemplation” (Gibson 2015).

TRAVELLING TRANSECT: CO-RESPONDENCES ACROSS THE GLOBAL NORTH AND SOUTH

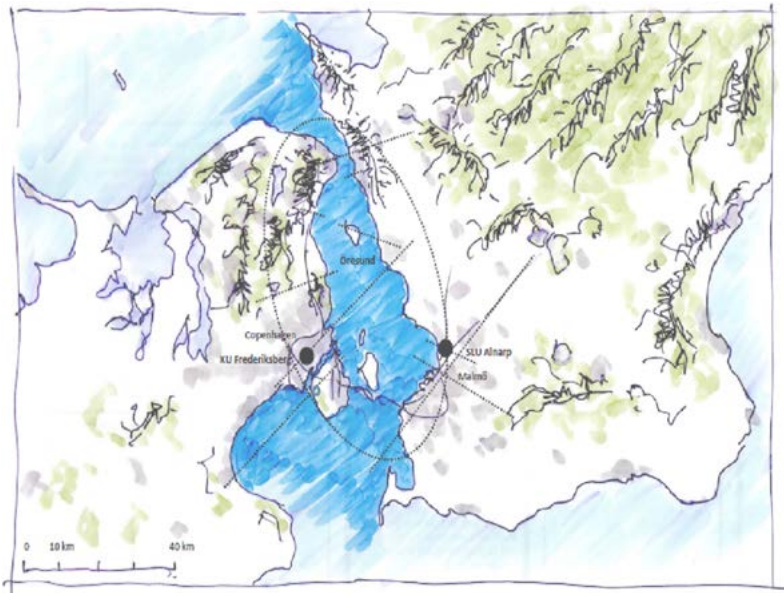
The Travelling Transect approach gave rise to a series of educational formats at the academic institutions we have been affiliated with: Design studios, summer schools, and master theses adopted the methodology. They are informed by and also enrich our ongoing research work across the hemispheres on what we came to call co-responding territories, i.e. the rocky coasts of Eastern Australia and the Canary Islands, or the bay areas of Naarm/Port Philip Bay and the Öresund. In the latter, we have hosted two design studios, in 2015 and in 2018 respectively.



Co-responding places around the water bodies as originally mapped in early exploration: Öresund and Naarm/Port Philip Bay. Left: *Speciel Kaart over Farvandet mellem Kullen og Falsterboe* (1830), nautical Chart of Öresund Strait: Denmark and Sweden. Source: Royal Danish Library. Right: Australia, South Coast, Port Phillip [cartographic material]/ surveyed by Lieutenants T.M. Symonds and H.R. Henry of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, 1836 with additions by Commander J.C. Wickham and Captain Stokes in H.M.S. Beagle, 1842; J. & C. Walker, sculpt. Source: National Library Australia.

ÖRESUNDSECT - DESIGNING AND RESEARCHING TRANSECT ITINERARIES

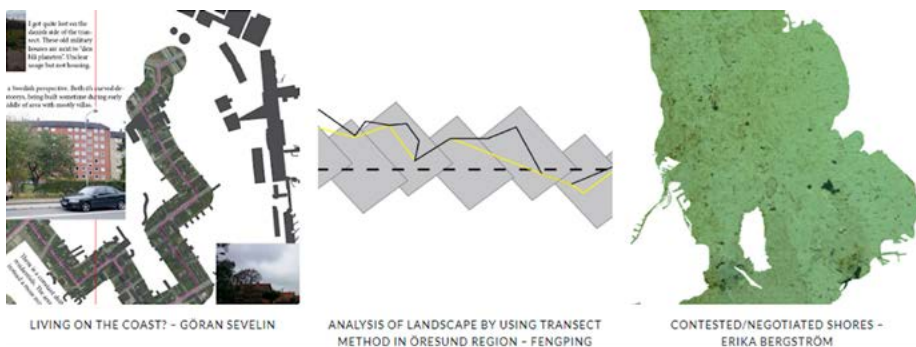
At SLU, the Öresundsect summer school invited master students and PhD students to engage with the Öresund region on both sides of the water body, 'crossing' the water in search of particular themes (landscape of the arts, of gardens, of living on the coast, of bathing, of terrestrial and water infrastructure) to capture landscape characteristics beyond the touristic, to speculate about an itinerary, a Water Trail, a circumnavigation of the Öresund along which locals and visitors could discover the region's particular landscapes and become aware of its beauties, histories, conflicts and changes. We asked the students how the itinerary would be laid out? Which sites would it comprise, why, and how could their specific values be communicated? We postulated that a raised public appreciation of the Öresund's specificities would lay the foundation for socially sustainable development. In this respect, the Travelling Transect has become a generator of itineraries, of collected fieldwork data, of insights into water-land relationships leading to speculative projects (by the master students) and to academic articles (by the PhD students) that were able to inform authorities, researchers, students, professionals, and interest groups. We understand that such awareness for a water body in the centre of an urbanising region is not only useful in support of sustainability thinking in the Öresund region but in any similar situation, even if on the other side of the globe. It became clear to us that the work done in the Öresund region holds a potential for informing a more respectful development of water-land ecologies, infrastructure, urban districts, and coastal facilities in co-responding landscapes.



Öresundsect summer school to map the territory and expose the dynamics and counterpoints of the Swedish/ Danish water land margins around the Öresund, 2015. Sketch Lisa Diedrich.

BAYSECT - A DESIGN STUDIO AS EXPERIMENTAL FORM OF TRAVELLING

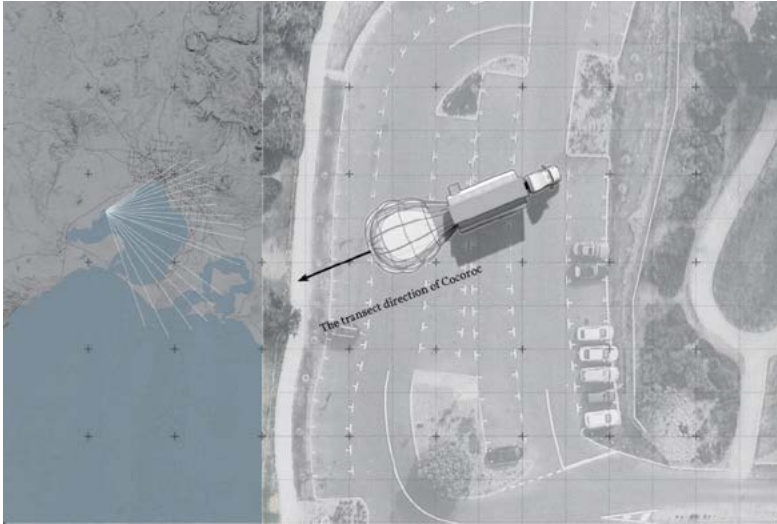
A second transect-based design studio was devised in 2018 following our recognition of the potential similarities in geographical structure of two places — Sound and Bay, both land-encircled water bodies. Naarm/Port Philip Bay in the Melbourne metropolitan region offered various analogies, points of contact and associations in water-land ecologies as in the Öresund project. The Melbourne School of Design landscape architecture students studied the interaction of waters and lands through investigating a practical infrastructure project, the heritage piers and jetties, often left idle from former uses or weathered to a state of decay and impending collapse. Collaborating with Parks Victoria the managing agents, a proposal to rework, recycle, or reform these much loved yet potentially redundant structures sought imagining new futures to spur new local economies, leisure uses, and maritime observation points. In this case the transects were drawn from pier to pier crossing over the water to expose the geological, ecological, and urban distinctiveness of the dissimilar surrounding landscapes — one side, rocky cliffs and sandy beaches and the other, low-lying wetlands and muddy shores. Working in groups to undertake detailed fieldwork across two sites allowed for the collation of a database of geographic, social, cultural, Indigenous, environmental, economic, political, and historic knowledge alongside the pragmatics of pier construction, weathering, and use. Eschewing replacement, novel adaptive projects were devised to include new economies based upon local marine life, an expanded interaction with the Bay's waters, wetland tourism and so on. Importantly the projects increasingly blurred the boundaries between land and water, both physically and cognitively, thus reinforcing the symbiotic nature of repositioned infrastructures in place, for people and nature.



Öresundsect studio 2015: students' final works. <https://oresundsect.wordpress.com>

EXPANDING THE ÖRESUNDSECT AND THE BAYSECT STUDIOS

Concern for the destructive impacts on boundary landscapes world-wide drives our ambition to expand design studio principles through applied collaborative research activities and to communicate landscape values and qualities critical to retaining and prospering land/water interstices in the face of fundamental change. Concentrating on

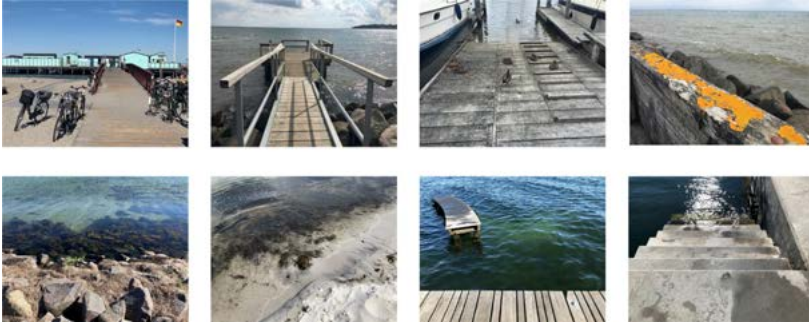


Mobile piers, jetties and the intertidal zone as co-responding sites around the Bay: Wings Islands
And Odyssey of Survival by Guanchao Liu. Student final works 2018.

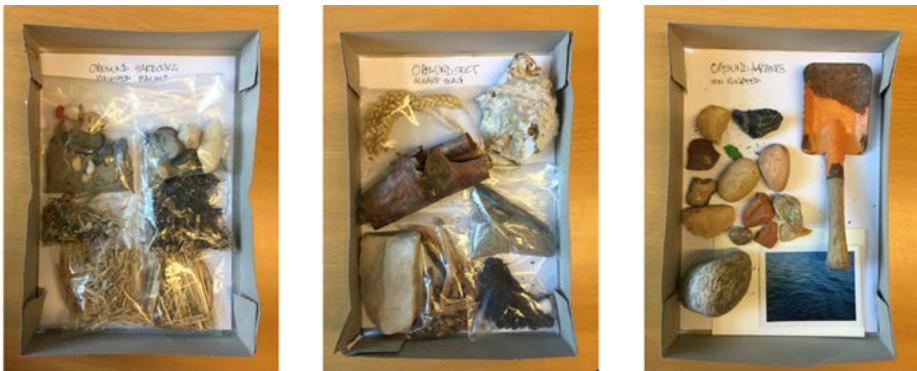
two co-responding landscapes — the Öresund and Naarm/Port Philip Bay — demonstrates the transareal nature of our method, to embark on co-travelling via a deviating itinerary practice, and to organise mapping and collections into cartographic diaries of co-relating transect travels to form a transareal Baysect work like the Rocksect. While the Rocksect corresponds to inhabited rocky ocean shorelines with rocky inland water bodies, the Baysect interprets water bodies surrounded by urbanising regions. Our aim is to elaborate on the connections, dynamics, and shared understandings of liminal landscapes and to amplify the types of encounters and landscape works that propose ways of adapting to change through design.



Forthcoming transareal work across co-responding sound/bay landscapes of the Öresund (Denmark-Sweden) and the Port Philip Bay/Naarm (Australia).



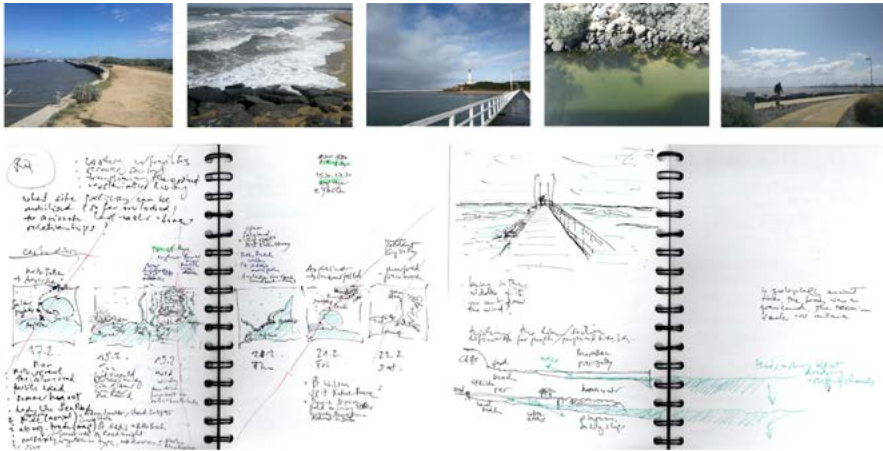
Through establishing a Travelling Transect artist book and website specific to a series of sites around water/land places, narratives and themes can be published through a combination of materials to communicate the values and specificities of sites and their inhabitants already witnessing extreme change in all its guises. We intend to develop expressive communication formats capable of conveying how locally observed change dynamics can inform universal perspectives with broadly applicable concepts of site knowledge, when similar dynamics are evidenced across places of diverse geographical and cultural conditions. Tableaux physiques, as the ones presented in this text, will be used to communicate the dynamics and atmospheres, the tangible and intangible qualities and political, social, ecological, and economic issues leading to an informed landscape practice – for wise design and management for fragile places.



Öresundsect (Gini Lee, 2015): Returning to the repository.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The photograph on page 70 is by Gini Lee/Lisa Diedrich.