

HELSINKI

ISLAND TOOLS

When humanity coincides with the feral

A collaborative system

The new project for Helsinki's Eastern Archipelago proposes the islands' participation into a wider system, working in a good balance with its existing surroundings and enhancing their relationships with the city (1). A new 'natural islands' park' takes part into a planned network of sustainable mobility, connecting the city centre, the eastern part of the Helsinki's area and reaching the islands. The development of new means of connections is focused both on water and on land, with public water buses, private boats, bikes, and kayaks. Temporary floating bridges have been positioned in two spots, to allow people to visit the islands by foot at any time of the day.

Existing piers have been increased with different density of interventions, depending on the specific approach chosen for each island. In some of the islands, subject to a less present approach, the project proposes water buses' stops 'on call', to preserve the area's wilderness and guarantee public accessibility at the same time. All the islands are reachable by kayak as well, and it is possible to rent kayaks on the islands too.

This multi-scalar network allows the eastern archipelago to be easily accessible to every possible visitor that wants to embrace the slow and sustainable approach of this portion of landscape.

To improve the positive social impact of the archipelago, the whole system guarantees accessibility for every visitor, regardless of possible mobility difficulties of the individual, thanks to wooden ramps and gentle slopes of the new piers.

An active relationship with nature

The whole system supports the visitor interests in a respectful, sustainable and therefore happy co-existence of the human and the natural, thanks to the specific architectural approach that has been chosen.

The new moorings are occasion for the main functions to take place. The architectures act like independent modular entities connected on one common ground, then becoming a system thanks to the wooden platforms and paths. Cafes, saunas, bath platforms, kayak sheds and kayak rentals act as a constellation around the docks, varying in disposal and number depending on the expectations of the collective or individual significance for each specific case.

Meaningful identity and materials

Modular wooden structures absorb traditional Scandinavian constructive methods and materials producing identifiable landmarks along the islands (2,3), making it a recognizable, but quiet, landscape on the whole archipelago, improving the vision of the natural landscape as a whole.

The architectural cladding are made in three main local and natural materials, wood, hay (4) and seaweed (5): the first one is retrieved from Finland woodlands, the second from Helsinki's countryside and the latter directly from the eastern archipelago.

Chosen materials have a key role into the transformative value and in the way architecture aims to be part of new relationships between different existing beings. The modular structures, recognizable in the whole archipelago, become specific of every intervention thanks to their arrangement and the material chosen in each occasion. The choice of material for each area is made based on the specific needs for the proliferation of the existing beings.

Every chosen material has been studied to become welcoming for biological, botanical, entomological and animal entities (6). Seaweed in panels and sacks, thatched hay, wooden beams and perforated boards come from nature to become natural support for inhabiting: therefore, human's spaces are capable of becoming home for nature as well. Architecture does not neglect the presence of the wild, and biodiversity presences, it becomes integral part of the ecosystem in which it acts.

Human-built structures act like nests (7), crawling on the island's soil, walking on it and gently touching the ground in specific spots with punctual screw foundations. Those 'human nests' become support for shelters of new beings, of animals that can co-inhabit those habitats, thanks to the materials' porosity and architectural conformation. This approach is not only capable of maintaining and preserving the existing natural systems, it

Relationship with water

also enables them to increase over time and become stronger for their survival, in a new balance with human life.

This new public space becomes the common ground in which different creatures meet and get used to the respectful presence of each other, through the passage of time: therefore, this coexistence becomes a bond capable to mature over time thanks to an environments that is designed to accommodate such a phenomenon (8).

The proposed intervention for the new architecture of the islands pays great attention to the relationship of the project with both the soil, as well as water. On the soil, the wooden paths are developed both sliding flat, and rising from the ground to allow the animals to cross the spaces undisturbed. On the water, the relationship between the human being and the element varies according to many minor variations, allowing the water to become one of the pivotal point of the design.

The docking piers as well as some elements designed for jumping and diving by swimmers are designed higher from the sea level. In other places the wooden platform descends towards the water with terraces, and in other, with a gentle slope. Both of these solutions allow to the space of junction between land and water to become a point of aggregation where people can stop and lie down, guaranteeing convenient use for access to water by hypothetical bathers or kayakers. Terraces and ramps react dynamically to the variation of the tides, ensuring a continuous use of the spaces next to the water.

In some cases the wooden platforms become wider and host picnic and resting points, while in other specific cases there are portions of the platform that can be detached from the main system and floated near the spaces for swimming. This allows swimmers to isolate themselves from the land and belong to a minor artificial island, where they can relax and enjoy the relationship with water and sky.

Transformative usage and freedom of uses

The proposed architecture is simple enough to allow possibility of change without big expenses, thanks to its structural and material modularity and expandible nature. Projects touch the ground only thanks to screw foundations in specific points, occupying the soil gently, foreseeing a non-destructive human presence.

Projects are also easily detachable and repositionable, in case of change of social or natural needs.

Humans' step back and the secondary system

This main system works together with another one, composed of other punctual architectural objects immersed into nature. This system, made of confetti delicately spreading and hiding inside natural areas, has the aim of incrementing biodiversity in a more direct way (9).

Some of those still accept the presence of humans, like fireplaces, platforms where to sit and rest, lie-down devices to observe the nature, sight towers. Those are not social meeting point, but places designed to symbolize and strengthen the gaze of one person towards nature, for the recognition of the surrounding landscape.

Other objects that can be found in reflection sites, further from pedestrian paths, are seed structures designed to scatter future vegetation through the wind. Therefore, the areas that experience both main human uses and presence of the feral, are integrated with projects that are specifically made for biodiversity incrementation. Those structures are not made for humans, rather their materials and design are strongly planned to get colonized by nature through time. They have been placed in reflecting sites, in reforestation spots, or in areas in which landscape has been subject of excessive human use. These punctual architectures are designed to completely disappear over the years, after having played the role of biodiversity matrix. This is just one of the ways in which the project, as a whole, acts as a caring plan for vulnerable sites.

Finally, the last punctual architecture is the info point, scattered in the islands, guiding the visitor and acting at the same time as a seat and watering hole for both humans and animals, making it one of the most pivotal new elements in the islands. These timely interventions allow the fragmented system to function and give information to each visitor

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Time-conscious architecture

Responding to climate change

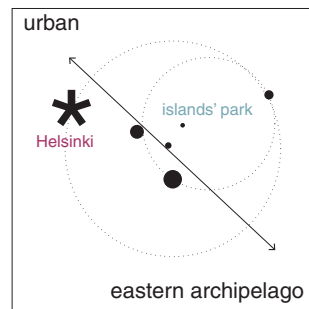
Possibility of energy production

about the routes, history and nature of each island.

The architecture of Helsinki eastern archipelago considers the passing of time both in the relationship with natural elements and climate. All the projects, thanks to the screw foundations and their modular light structures, are easily movable in case of change of needs or environmental conditions. Time has a key role in the Island tools' application, proposing a type of architecture that accommodates natural developments and changes through time, that reacts with the passing of the years, becoming more alive thanks to the welcoming of plants and animals. This transformation of mindset of human beings, not being the main character in the world's history, needs to take place starting from now, as a key point to survive to the current environmental and social crisis.

The project's architectures are planned to be used within all seasons, thanks to a non-invasive lighting system that can be powered by solar or wind energy.

The island's tools are conscious of the change of water level due to climate change, reason why the main projects took place considering the water level expected for year 2100. Looking at possible future of the islands, small architectures have been planned for the production of energy, if wanted. These temporary, lightweight structures can be increased over time to make the islands self-sufficient, accommodating rainwater collection systems, solar panels or small wind power systems.



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- 1-Relationship with the city
- 2,3-Scandinavian racks to dry fish
- 4-D.Mandrup, Wadden sea center
- 5-Vandkunsten architects, Modern seaweed house
- 6-Materials and the passing of time
- 7-S. Fujimoto, Primitive future
- 8-J. Ishigami, Freeing architecture
- 9-J. Ishigami, Another scale of architecture



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Vartiosaari

During the weekends many groups of different ages reach the island to spend a day all together surrounded by nature. A lady meets her friends at the small café, where they will plan a kayak tour around the coastline in the afternoon. People are happily chatting all around, talking about what happened to them that week. A men, tired after a week of work, reaches the saunas. He is sure that he will be able to relax, regain energy thanks to a sauna whisk, chatting a bit with some friendly stranger. He always goes there in winter, when the temporary bridge is not there and you can walk on the ice. After his sauna he swims a bit and feels alive again.

A family reaches the island with their boat, preparing for their walk inside the wilderness of Vartiosaari to teach the kids some species of trees and hoping to see some beautiful birds and squirrels. Later, that night, they will meet some friends in the north-west area, to see a show in the cultural center. Their friends will spend the whole day there, cooking lunch at the barbecue area and swimming in the cold, refreshing water. Other friends will walk there at night and reach them for a picnic dinner surrounded by the magic of the forest.

Villinki

The guy said he would have stopped short after the end of the bridge to see how to reach the saunas. His friends were already in one of those, to chat and laugh till night comes. The lady went for a hike with two colleagues, stopping at the café for a piece of cake at the end of the day. The best sight spot was at the beginning, on the sight-tower, but she also wanted to see the other side of the island, on the rocky shore with the beautifully colored moss.

Kotiluoto

That summer would have been amazing, the kid was sure. He would have spent some days in nature, with some friends, doing many activities and exploring with kayak. Mum said she would visit on Thursday. She would call for the right stop around four p.m. and be there for the parent's night of the youth camping week. With other mothers she could have fun, eat something under that sun that seems that could last forever. He would have shown her what he learned about plants and art made with dried flowers.

Malkasaari

That weekend they thought they wanted to do something different. They took their boat and reached the island for a nice barbecue. Another friend would have come later with the waterbus, with her guitar to sing along all together.

Pikku Niinisaari

Grandpa had an idea for that afternoon, after school. They would go to that island far away, where his friend told him that saw a flying squirrel a few times. With his binoculars, grandpa would have shown him. Before coming home a nice cup of tea at the café. When he grows up he will return to that island and will also do research on the species, like these guys were doing in that building, or will make trips by kayak around the reserve.



everyday life in the islands