

Helen of Troy

Helsinki is a beautiful city. It is lively, forward and welcoming. Guggenheim museums could not do justice to so much Helsinki can do for itself and for its citizens.

In my previous researches, I've studied the inherent potentials of temporary urbanism as platforms for learning resilience mechanisms, priming for their ephemerid, timely character and citizen-led initiatives.

What I propose that is done is that this space is used, taking advantage of its location – *“The site is at walking distance to the symbolic center of the city, the Market Place, which is flanked by the City Hall, Embassy of Sweden, the Presidential Palace and the newly renovated Market Hall”* – to be the new door to the city, a door not only for visitors and residents but also for the future meeting its present form.

If Helsinki chose to use this area as a ‘Permanently Temporary Cultural/Artistic/Entrepreneurial Platform’ this means that no project would ever be excluded. A municipality-managed area with conditioned rents would: first of all keep the real estate stable (as it could possibly stay, since studies show the creative class actually contributes to gentrification more than the opposite); second, give small, innovative and entrepreneurial projects (no matter what area from) a place to be, to network, to be active, to share, to trial, to experiment, to learn, to help others learn, etc.; third, and more important, give Helsinki the opportunity to experiment and live the future while it's still in its embryo form. The world is changing fast. The Information Technologies have allowed us to share an article or a picture faster than to actually read it or take it and the urban tissue is feeling left behind.

We have so many problems of abandoned and devalued urban areas throughout the world – problems of our capitalist society – that sometimes we fail to give value to what capital doesn't. But we are humans, social people – not capital.

A platform as such would not only give stage to new, experimental and temporary types of architecture but also be easy and willing to try new ones if those aren't good enough. Building all infrastructures in a controlled and planned manner perhaps isn't enough to give room to our human, sociable facet.

There are such platforms already, in many places. Personally, I studied one up close, in a Scandinavian country, where the only requisite to be a part of is you have to be entrepreneurial, hands-on and willing to learn and share. This platform started by having only one designers' group working at the site (back in 2009) and today there are more than 300 people connected, with different projects that go from gardening for public use to sound experiments, bike shops, music studios, architecture ateliers, theatre groups, yoga classes, wood furniture workshops or sports events.

What was concluded in this ethnographical study was that these characteristics could actually be considered *agents*¹ in the development of the city and in the process of producing resilience mechanisms, at the same time contributing to a new idea of urban real-utopia: an ever-changing urban tissue, where the infrastructures follow bottom-up needs and respond to actual, current social challenges – a vision of a Hybrid City.

Unfortunately, not every city has a harbour area, so welcoming to such an idea so this project doesn't fit all European capitals – luckily, Helsinki does.

Helsinki has all the right characteristics to become the first city to give central stage to experimental and innovative bottom-up initiatives, making the doors to the city a connecting point between present challenges and future solutions in a 'Hybrid Urban Lab' for all citizens willing to keep on learning through a hands-on approach.

"Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth."

Homer, 'The Iliad'

¹ Conceptualized 'agents' through an Actor-Network Theory;