

Greater Helsinki Vision 2050

Songlines

'Team Helsinki'

"You Cannot travel a path before you have become the path itself" -Gautama Buddah

Our proposal is to seek new paths for Greater Helsinki.

In doing so we aim to break the momentum of sprawl that characterises current urban development in the European city at the end of the 20th Century, and threatens to engulf Helsinki if left unchecked.

Can we re-imagine the city not as territories but as pathways or ways through, what the Aboriginies called Songlines, with every thing being part of a psychogeographic map, space a time spent on a path. The city could be re-imagined to cater for this physically and metaphorically. These new paths or songlines forge new identities, new territories, and new modes of living that can respond to the social, economic and technical realities of the mid 21st Century.

Any attempts to envision a city in the future must involve a certain amount of crystal-ball gazing, but our approach is to forego the paternalism of master-planning and instead seek a meta-narrative that can act as a seed for future developments. Thus our proposal should not be read as a literal space planning but one possible future amongst many.

We are proposing 6 songlines for Helsinki. Each marks a territory or zone of opportunity for an area of Helsinki to establish a unique identity, at once part of a greater whole but at the same time separate from it.

These zones are conceived as linear suburbs, urban corridors, that do not directly address the traditional pattern of urban growth along axial routes with an ever increasing number of orbital routes radiating from a city centre, core, or CBD, that characterises the European City of the 20th Century.

Continued development on these 19th Century principles into the 20th Century has lead to

suburban sprawl, and created immense pressure on city centres. They have become either zones of extreme congestion, or if the suburbs mutate into exurbs with too much autonomy, abandoned interzones.

It is time to search out new patterns for urban agglomerations with a less precarious dialectic between urban and suburban. Helsinki is well situated for this - it's coastal position has prevented it from truly embracing the concentric model, and it's network of islands are ideal opportunities for enclaves.

Helsinki becomes a laboratory for alternative urbanism.

Each songline is designed to explore different approaches to housing typology, modes of living and development opportunities. The state apparatus establishes a set of initial conditions or rules, which create opportunities for users, organisations, companies and groups to build their own environment and shape their own destiny.

These conditions are the operating system for the new city.

Some common themes emerge across all the songlines, in order to allow them to establish a unique identity separate from the context around them:

Self-contained transportation

While transport links plug these zones into the rest of Greater Helsinki, they also have a definite start and end for their own transport links, whether that is pathways, cycle tracks, roads, tram lines, or monorail. In the case of a tram or monorail, a simple shuttle system traverses back and forward along the linear suburb.

Housing density

In order to permit the projected population growth of Helsinki without significantly expanding the city limits, the overall density of housing in the city must increase. The six songlines are areas of densification, each exploring different approaches and housing types.

Folding of elements

The songlines fold a multiplicity of uses into a fixed space, on, above and below the ground. Serendipity is found in the compression of forms and functions onto a shared space.

Integration of parkland, blurring of rural and urban

Helsinki's enviable green space is preserved, and folded into the sites. The rural is folded into the urban.

Walking scale

The six songlines featured are all walkable, and traversable on foot. This, combined with self-contained transportation links, helps to break a dominance of motor cars.

Ubiquitous data

The physical city of 2050 casts a shadow, a virtual city of data exchange. The Metaverse will be as common as tap water. Geomapping and spatialising of real time data will be ubiquitous, allowing new ways to map and represent a city. Maps of physical presence - built form and transportation links are no longer sufficient to show the geographical presence of humans in Helsinki. New representations are sought, where everyone will weave their own songline through the city.

Narrative, themes

In Islam, and especially among the Sufi Orders, siyahat or 'errance' – the action or rhythm of walking – was used as a technique for dissolving the attachments of the world and allowing men to lose themselves in God. The aim of a dervish was to become a 'dead man walking': one whose body stays alive on the earth yet whose soul is already in heaven. A sufi manual, the Kashf-I-Mahjub, says that, towards the end of his journey, the dervish becomes the Way not the wayfarer, i.e. a place over which something is passing, not a traveller following his own free will.

Arkady, to whom I mentioned this, said it was quite similar to an aboriginal concept.....

'By spending his whole life walking and singing his ancestor's songline, a man eventually becomes the track, the ancestor and the song'. - Songlines by Bruce Chatwin.

Songline 1: Nummela – Rajamäki: Nomadic urbanism

With no private property permitted, the residents of Nummela – Rajamäki are connected to it by their social relations rather than the ownership of property.

An intense, vibrant community emerges. Domestic arrangements, family life, live-in lovers, create constantly shifting patterns of occupation, nomadic urbanism. Most eventually leave, to 'settle down', but many stay, moving up and down the line.

if it all becomes too much, woodland retreats offer shelter from the intensity of city life, with radio jamming preventing any mediated communication. These islands in the datastream allow the occupants of Nummela – Rajamäki to connect with nature and recharge before plugging themselves back into the city,

Songline 2: Järvenpää – Mäntsälä: Walking city

The first zone in the greater Helsinki region to be declared Petroleum Free, by 2030, Järvenpää – Mäntsälä is the first totally bio-degradeable linear suburb. Whilst personal automotive transport is permitted, most people prefer to walk.

Songline 3: Kaunianen – Pelojärvi: City as playground.

The inhabitants of Kaunianen – Pelojärvi are serious about play. Inspired by the work of the Situationists, and Christiania in Copenhagen, liberal by-laws create conditions for alternative lifestyles.

Kaunianen – Pelojärvi is also home to Finland's finest rally driving school.

Songline 4: Vantaa – Riipilä: Free Trade Zone

The Vantaa – Riipilä Free Trade Zone operates with the same flat rate of taxation as Estonia, and other former Soviet states.

This creates an attractive economic zone for businesses, especially high-tech fabrication plants. With advanced 3D printing and fused deposition modelling making traditional short-run manufacturing obsolete, the market emerges for high-spec custom one-off pieces. The prototype is the production model. Designers and artisans become short run industrialists.

Housing and business plug-in to the fabrication plants, a machine replicating its own

expansion. Vantaa – Riipilä prints it's own future. A cultural exchange seeks to create a contrapuntal interzone in Tallinn, where many of the pieces are sold.

Songline 5: Kerava - Sipoo: University of Advanced Studies

The Kerava - Sipoo University of Advanced Studies, is unique in that none of its courses have ever been run anywhere else, in fact that is a condition of its charter. With no tired curricula in estates management, social sciences or accountancy to fulfil, the UAS currently offers short courses, both online and offline, in Bioterrorism, Gallerism, Cloud computing, and Eurovision studies.

Constantly reshaping to meet its requirements, it is the most flexible university ever created, a network of modules forming classes, lecture halls, and social spaces as needed.

Lecturers, technicians and life-long learners settle the linear corridor, growing up in the shadow of a perpetually evolving academia.

Songline 6: Katajanokka - Vuosaari: Gateway

The Katajanokka- Vuosaari gateway connects downtown Helsinki, through a chain of islands to the east, to Vuosaari.

An inhabited bridge from the mainland leads to the terminus of the Helsinki-St. Petersburg Shinkansen - where bullet trains reach the Russian city in 1 and a half hours.

The housing stock of this linear suburb is an experiment in densification, recontextualising urban patterns from Barcelona, Rotterdam, and Brasilia onto Greater Helsinki.

The linear corridor is energy self-sufficient, and economically self-sufficient, a microcosm of the modern mid-century city,