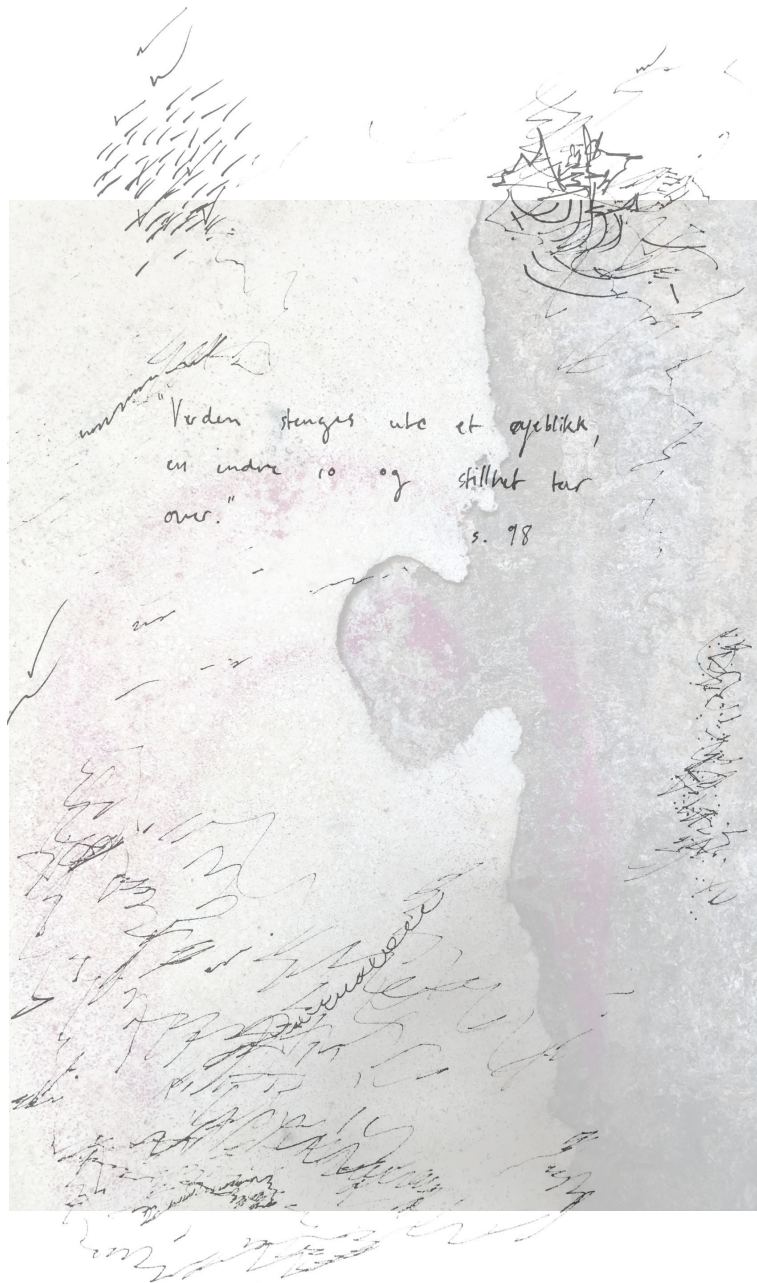


## The Slow Experiment

Developing a neglected industrial site through the concepts of slowness



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Weathered building, picture from site

## Foreword

Through a mix of theoretical reflection and creative experimentation, The Slow Experiment wishes to address the growing acceleration of our modern society. Our question has been, how do we as architects relate to this acceleration, how can we through the concepts of slowness have a more dynamic and inclusive approach to architecture?

We investigate how concepts of slowness can foster a better understanding of site-reading and material reuse, as well as how it can contribute to strong community values and long-term perspectives. In that sense, the word “slow” is not to be understood in the literal sense of walking slowly, but to inspire a different velocity of engagement and accept that change takes time.

## Situation

The project is situated in a neglected industrial site by the waterfront in Sandviken. A neighborhood between seascape and forest mountain, nord west from the city center in Bergen. Developed and shaped through different forces of time.

Up until 2020 our site functioned as an industrial salt import site, processing salt for further distribution. The building’s closeness to salt and water has led it to deteriorate; the concrete cracking and falling off in chunks, the steel armouring rusting, and wood rotting. Since the abandonment the deterioration has only sped up.

Not only is our site intriguing because of its industrial nature; but the ongoing discussions of its future raise important questions about how we choose to develop waterfront sites in Bergen.

## Program

We propose a new public space for the neighborhood of Sandviken based on the notion of co-creation between a variety of actors. Three main actions that take place over time become a catalyzer for The Slow Experiment. These three main actions are:

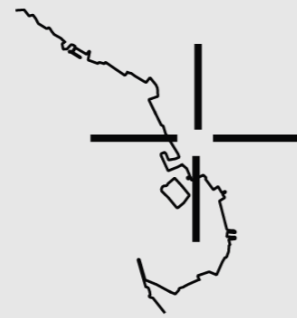
1. Subtract concrete and wood from the existing buildings and the concrete-covered beach.
2. Re-place subtracted concrete masses in landscape to create a new topography.
3. Build roof/storage from subtracted materials, to store excess materials and create a social heart.

The first two actions set the foundation for future moments to occur, whilst the third acts as an invitation to the neighborhood and various independent actors to contribute to the Slow Experiment.

These actions result in; *The Territory of Hope*, a new green space for the neighborhood situated in the old structure of the Salt import, co-created by plants, humans and the slow pace of time; *The Landscape*, a new topography on the previously flat site, made up by subtracted concrete masses and rubble, following the future water level rise predictions. Facilitating for plants to grow, children to climb and play, and animals to hide and find shelter; *The Social Repository*, built first as a roof to protect and store reclaimed building materials from site, the structure evolves over time into a center for development, testing, knowledge sharing, education and co-creation.



Early concept modell



Creating a destination for the neighborhood of Sandviken



Using existing building masses as an actor in re-shaping the landscape and creating new structures



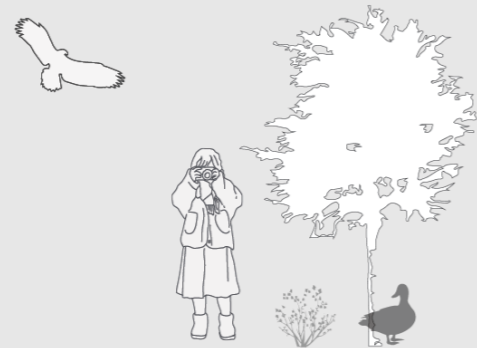
Allowing for biological refuge



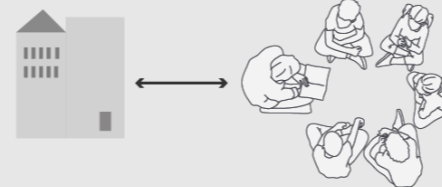
Creating structures that offer a range of temporality

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SOCIETAL



Consideration for humans, nature, and other species



Development through co-creation between institution and citizen



Setting the stage for an inclusive and accessible public space

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## Context / Societal Relevance

The way we think of architecture and urban plans has no doubt changed during the last century; From the modernist ideologies of big city plans, to a more contemporary focus on the human scale. Even though the view on city planning has shifted, architecture and city planning is increasingly being dominated by a growing market driven economy, and as a consequence the city no longer represents its inhabitants values, but the values of the private sector, which use expressions like smart-cities and livability to market themselves.<sup>1,2</sup>

This market driven economy however, can only be maintained through constant escalation, and as German sociologist Hartmut Rosa states "A modern society, as I define it, is one that can stabilize itself only dynamically, in other words one that requires constant economic growth, technological acceleration, and cultural innovation in order to maintain its institutional status quo."<sup>3</sup> To say that the building industry is driven (only) by a wish or greed to expand is to misunderstand its structural reality. In the view of Rosa, it is driven rather by the fear of losing what it has already attained.

The race for resources, plots, and assignments pushes the building industry forward, resulting in developers buying up land, accelerating building process, and increasing social differences. As a consequence we see a "top-down" development, with the aim of planning everything from the start to calculate and lower costs, making it cheaper and more "efficient", at the same time maximizing profits. This "top-down" strategy of development however produces a static architecture that does not allow for afterthoughts or new needs from the inhabitants to reach the drawing board.

Under the 1959 CIAM-congress architect Oskar Hansen expressed that it was the formal aesthetic that had led to the architects removing themselves from reality and reducing us to a standard human.<sup>4</sup> Today one could argue that it is the market driven building industry reducing us to a standard human. As Leslie Kern states "Social inequalities are built into our cities and architecture, because the built environment reflects the society that constructs them"<sup>5</sup>.

1 Lindhardt Weiss, Kristoffer; *Kritisk By* p.16; The Danish Architectural Press, Arkitektens Forlag; 2019  
2 This paragraph is an edited version from the project "At komme Andetseds by Anne-Sofie Løk and Nikoline Leth Jepsen  
3 Rosa, Hartmut; *The uncontrollability of the world*, p. 9; Polity Press; 2020  
4 Roald, Hans-Jacob; *Byplanen - en historie om utviklingen av Bergen*; p. 233; Scandinavian Academic Press; 2015  
5 Kern, Leslie; *Feminist city*; Verso; 2019

The lack of flexibility and user involvement resulting from a top-down strategy, produces and perpetuates social inequalities, both in the housing market and in public urban spaces.

This is made evident by developers marketing themselves as "sustainable" and "inclusive" because they offer recreational roof-top terraces and waterfront promenades, while at the same time selling apartments for 23,7 million NOK with signs such as "no trespassing" and "only for residents".

In line with UNs sustainability goal 11.7 "Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities."<sup>1</sup> Our project seeks a new kind of practice, and challenges the institutional and top-down way of doing things. Instead, we suggest a bottom-up strategy that unfolds processes to create and think together, and gives room to do so in community. Within this, slowness, temporality and co-creation become significant factors to the development of our project.

Inspired by the multidisciplinary research and curatorial platform Slow Research Lab *Slowness* can be understood as a different velocity of engagement, as well as an expanded field of human awareness and activity inspired by the integrity of our planet's living systems.<sup>2</sup>

*Temporality* is to be understood through the Danish word "tidslig". In this sense it is more than just having to do with time, it is also about having consideration, affection, and care for time. Architecturally in our project this can be understood as flexibility, and can be seen as temporal structures/projects/ideas that can become permanent, but also fade away.

*Co-creation* is to be understood as the opportunity for the citizen to contribute to the development of the site. In the context of our project the word citizen includes all the inhabitants (actors) of our site; human, plant, animal, concrete, tide, time, and so on.

1 UNs Sustainable Development goals, <https://sdgs.un.org>  
2 Slow Research Lab, [slowlab.net](http://slowlab.net)

## ***Library / References***

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