



**get involved**

International Symposium 19th and 20th October 2012  
architectural & built environment education for young people  
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**Perspective**

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Encouraging Children and Youth to Participation

In this speech I presented Arkki School of Architecture for Children and Youth, and several participatory planning cases from Arkki, where young people have participated in the planning of the real built environment in different scales; a school, an office building, a whole housing area and a virtual architecture map presenting viewpoints of reality and visions of the future.



**Arkki School of Architecture for Children and Youth**

Arkki is a unique school in Finland providing architecture education in the system of basic education of arts. It is run by a non profit organization founded in 1993. Arkki provides long term architecture education Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa cities. In this area lives 20% of the Finnish population. Arkki provides weekly courses in architecture to 4-19 year old children and youth. Around 500 children attend the courses weekly on a long term basis. 4-6 year old join the courses with their parents, adding up to 130 adults / week. Arkki provides 3600 teaching hours /year and offers children and young people a possibility of altogether 16 years of architectural studies, and a total of 1800 hours of continuous teaching.

In addition to this continuous Basic education of architecture Arkki provides summer courses to 400 children and workshops to 2000 children / year. Arkki also collaborates with museums and schools, offering workshops and collaboration with exhibitions, architecture teaching material etc.



**Aims of architectural education in Arkki**

Since the built environment provides all of us with a framework for our actions, all citizens should have an active understanding of it. Every one will at some point have to take a stand on matters related to the built environment and thus have a say in the quality of our own lives and the lives of others. Architecture education provides tools for responsible and active citizenship.

Architectural education in Arkki aims to develop a child's ability to perceive, consider, understand, conceptualize and evaluate his or her environment. Architecture education supports the development of individual cultural identity, which helps us belong to our local surroundings, to our country and to humankind. This sense of belonging is an important factor in cultivating the desire to participate and influence the shaping of our surroundings. Local identity is one step on the way to global awareness and sustainable development.

In Arkki, the children are initiated to the different aspects of the built environment, the natural environment and the relationship between the two. The basic elements of architecture; space, light and shadow, colors, shapes, materials and structures are studied as well as visual presentation techniques, design processes, and matters related to ecology, sustainability and construction.

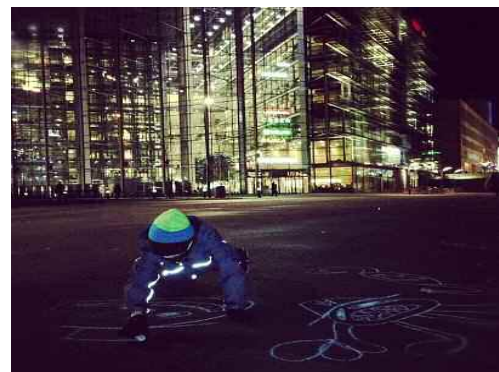
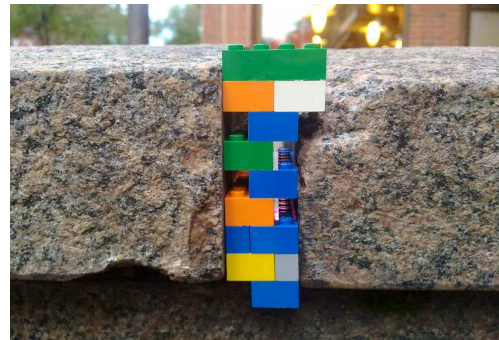


Good architecture and a pleasant environment are a basic right of all human beings. Today's children are the citizens and decision makers of the future. Architecture education helps us create a deeper understanding of our surroundings and a demand for a better environment in the future.

In Arkki we believe that architecture education gives children new possibilities, means and mediums to influence the creation of our future environment. Through different activities Arkki wishes to light a spark in young people's minds so that they want to influence and participate in the development of the built environment in the future, whatever their occupation is.

#### Participatory projects

Teaching in Arkki aims to prepare the children for active citizenship. Sometimes they get a chance to participate in a real project during the studies. During the last 19 years, Arkki has been asked to take part in numerous participatory projects involving children and youth. These projects have mainly been carried out inside Arkki's regular class frame involving the pupils studying in Arkki. We have experienced participatory planning in urban design, house design, interior design, playground design, working with competition briefs, judging competitions, etc. Here are a few examples of recent projects we have carried out with children. The longest project "Save the Children headquarters" took two years to complete, the shortest workshop "C My City – Children's virtual architecture map" can be done in two hours with a group of children.

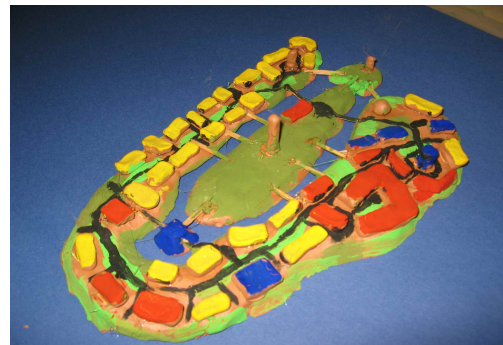


## Hernesaari Local Masterplan – Helsinki City Planning Office involving children (2006-2007)



This project was an invitation from the Helsinki City Planning Office for the pupils in Arkki to make a "competition entry" in an invited competition in the centre of Helsinki. In addition to the 3 chosen architect consultants, three groups of citizens were asked to enter their proposal to the given task. Two were groups of local residents and the third was a group of children, students from Arkki. It was not a competition in the traditional sense, since no one was selected a winner, but instead all the entries were displayed in public to evoke public discussion among citizens and to gather even more ideas for the development of the city plan of the area. In June 2007 all the six proposals (3 by architects, 3 by citizens groups) were all exhibited to the public in Helsinki. In several presentations also children explained their proposal and viewpoint, and all citizens present could ask questions and comment the different proposals. Also in the internet people could send their comments to the city planning department. This way of participation really evoked fruitful discussion among citizens.

This is the first time in Finland that any city planning office has asked children to participate in a competition or planning of a new housing area. It is a fascinating journey, though extremely challenging to support the participating children in their planning process and at the same time to contribute to the process as expert architects sharing our professional knowledge. It is extremely important to remain objective and not to influence the children in some prearranged direction.



The children's participatory city planning project was a great success. It really succeeded in finding out the viewpoint of the young. It also showed, that children are interested about the questions concerning city planning, and perfectly capable of discussing the important issues and evaluating different solutions. This working method proved to be very successful, and many new projects in collaboration with Helsinki City Planning Office and Arkki pupils have been realized since then.

The project was realized with 5 facilitating architects and altogether 100 children and young people working in groups of 10 in spring 2007. Project coordinators were Niina Hummelin and Sini Meskanen. Altogether around 500 hours were spent in the planning process gaining understanding of the complex task of city planning piece by piece. After this participatory process, Helsinki City Planning Office continued to develop the area plan according to the citizens and architects proposals and comments.

The Helsinki City Planning Office concluded, that since the citizens participation was started right in the beginning of the planning process, it created a positive atmosphere. They were content to found out the concerns of the public, and what is important to the neighborhood people. These facts were taken into account during the continuation of the planning. They also found it important that there were professional architecture pedagogues as facilitators in the children's participating groups to help voice the children's opinions.

In November 2012 the Hernesaari area plan was finished, and Arkki children who participated in the project were given a presentation of the final plan at the Helsinki City Planning Office. In 2013 the building of the area will start.



## Save the Children Foundation new Headquarters in Helsinki (2003-2005)

Architects: Architects Hannu Jaakkola , interior design: children of Arkki school together with architects

Save The Children is an organization that fights for the rights of children to make their life better all over the world. When Save The Children constructed their new headquarters in Käpylä, Helsinki, they wanted children to participate in the design process of the building, since it was to be a building for children.

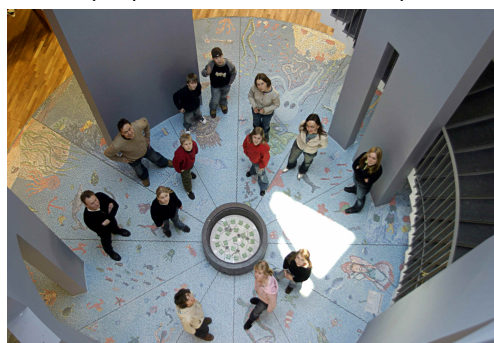
Arkki was chosen as a partner for the project, since in Arkki there was pedagogical knowledge of participatory planning processes. Two groups, altogether 24 children and youth participated in the interior design project. In the beginning they were between ages 10-14. The project lasted actively 6 months, but the whole building process lasted two years.



During the two years of the project, the students participated in a wide range of activities including following the whole design process of a building, participating in interior design, visiting the construction site and all main events through the building process. The architecture & design workshop included a variety of drawing and painting tasks, games and excursions, each intended to further the design process towards the real project.

A group of Arkki's young students had this exceptional chance to take part in this design project. Sea world and underwater life was chosen by the participants to be the leading theme in young artists design. In fall 2003 the design-group started to examine the underwater life and draw visions of sea world and its life and animals. The youth took part in three design projects; the art-mosaïque of the main hall floor, the art-mosaïques of the common sanitary space walls and the art-printings on office walls - all of them under the sea world theme.

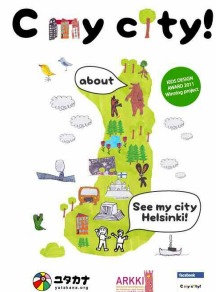
Along the way there were many memorable events connected to the emerging building. The young designers participated in laying the foundation stone together with Finnish President Tarja Halonen's husband, the roofing celebration in 2004 and the grand opening party in 2005 accompanied by the president. At the end the young designers were very impressed of the artworks they made.



The project was led by architects Anna Bevez and Sini Karelia Meskanen, and c. 100 working hours was spent for the children's participatory planning process.

### C My City –Children’s Virtual Architecture Map (2011-2012)

[www.cmycity.net](http://www.cmycity.net)



How do children and young people perceive our built environment? The virtual architectural map allows children and youngsters to tell us about it. This project was selected as an official program of World Design Capital Helsinki 2012.

C My City presents the child’s and young person’s view of buildings and other features of the built environment from their viewpoint.

C My City also showcases children’s ideas about the cityscape and buildings of the future.

C My City website contains photos, drawings, animations, videos and stories.

The project aims to encourage children and youth to explore the built environment, to investigate it and get acquainted with it, to observe and share their discoveries with others and comment other viewpoints on this website.

C My City is a project aimed at capturing youth perspectives to city surroundings and engaging young people in community development. C My City wishes to foster civic engagement among urban teens and help them voice their perspectives through the use of different means and methods such as photography, storytelling, animation, video and poetic expression.

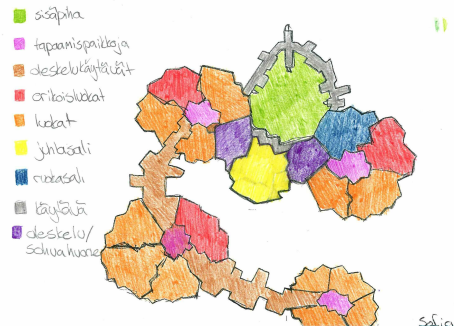
Young people will learn about the different aspects that constitute the built environment by investigating, and combining visual techniques such as photographing and video, as well as verbal expression to form an artistic expression.

Locally relevant cityscape, the specific areas of the city that reflect youths’ daily lives and lived realities can provide young people with understanding of the greater phenomena.



## Future School (2007-2008, 2012-)

This project involving children and youth was part of InnoArch and InnoSchool research project (2006-2009), a multidisciplinary research project. The goal of the research project was to develop a concept of the future school in Finland. It was coordinated by the Helsinki university of Technology (Aalto University). The goal of InnoSchool was to develop the Future School Concept: a set of research-based good practices, processes, models and designs, and recommendations for their successful combinations in the Future School. The research results are to act as a basis for the architecture competition and the design of an exemplary future school. The competition was held in 2012 and the school will be built in Espoo and called Opinmäki.

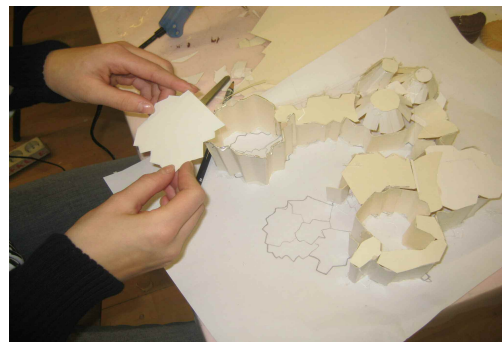


The Future School study with pupils aimed to answer following questions: In what ways can the collaborative planning and design process with children act as a tool for active citizenship and cultural learning? In what ways does children's environmental local knowledge enrich urban planning? Architect student Sini Koivisto conducted this sub-study with Arkki pupils and published the results as her Master's thesis in Architectural studies (2008).

In the sub-study "Future School" at Arkki, several planning and design workshops were organized for children to examine their visions for a better future school. Students in two age groups (7-11 and 12-18) were producing ideas in scale models, texts and drawings for the school building and the environment. The main idea of the workshops was to ask: What would children do, if they had a chance to design a school building?

The children's projects lasted six months, and were designed so, that they moved from smaller details to bigger entities. During the whole project the pupils were building up their knowledge; knowledge from previous workshops were be utilized in the next ones.

Workshop themes with pupils were: analysis of different existing schools, personal spaces, learning spaces, personal learning spaces, combination of spaces, places for interaction in school, common spaces, public spaces, imaginary new subjects and learning places for new subjects, outdoor spaces, combination of spaces, connections, school as an entity and designing a school building.



Important things for children in the future school building were: natural light, open spaces, changeable spaces, indoors connecting to outdoor spaces, individual private spaces, smaller intimate spaces, spaces for interaction and meeting others, outdoor learning spaces and covered outdoor spaces. At the end of the project the pupils of Arkki came up with different forms, "typologies" of school buildings.

The whole project is available for download as a pdf at <http://innoschool.tkk.fi/innoarch/dokumentit/tkk-future-school-web.pdf>