

THE PARKIPELAGO OF COPENHAGEN ISLANDS IN DENMARK

CREATING NEW CHALLENGES FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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Created in 2018, the [Copenhagen Islands project](#) in Denmark introduced a new type of public parks within a local context of rapid urban development along the old industrial harbor side threatening the recreational spaces, and in a global context with rising sea levels creating new challenges for urban environments.

Each island is a 20 m² handmade wooden platform with a linden tree at its centre. This is the first taste of a new type of public space coming to Copenhagen, moveable, floating, public space free for people to explore. The ambition for the platforms of the project was to combine and form a network, creating what the architects call a *Parkipelago* in the harbour. In total, the project proposed nine islands, each with different functions.

The platforms have been constructed by hand in the boat building yards in the south harbor of Copenhagen using traditional wooden boat building techniques. They were made entirely from sustainably and locally sourced materials.

The project was designed by the Australian architect Marshall Blecher and Magnus Maarbjerg from the Danish design studio Fokstrot. The project was funded by the Danish arts fund Statens Kunstfond and Havnekulturfonden, a local organisation that promotes cultural activities within the harbour. The project is also supported by non-profit associations working in Copenhagen, involved in the creation of further artificial islands in the city.

The first prototype island was launched in 2018 and became a popular feature in the harbour, moving from place to place, hosting part of a photography exhibition, a series of talks and many seaside picnics. The prototype has been followed by three more islands launched in 2020, with plans for even more in the following years.

The new artificial islands serve as platforms for different activities, swim zones, floating saunas, floating gardens, floating mussel farms and a floating sail-in café, all free to be explored by the increasing number of kayaks, sailors, GoBoaters, tourists and fishermen in the harbor.

The articles published by magazines and social media to promote the Copenhagen Islands are also valuing the extraordinary function of these artificial islands to promote and potentiate biodiversity. [As](#)



underlined by the article published by Deezen in 2020 “Copenhagen Islands will also form a new habitat for wildlife, both above and below the surface of the water. The top of the islands will be planted with endemic grasses, bushes and trees, which will provide a sanctuary in the middle of an otherwise highly developed part of the city for the local seagulls, swans, pigeons and ducks. The underside of the islands will provide an ideal environment for seaweeds and mollusks to attach themselves, in turn providing the perfect habitat for fish and other sea life to congregate”.

These small artificial islands transformed in fact previously sterile waterfront spaces into miniature ecosystems. By introducing native vegetation and pollinator-friendly plants, Danish designers and environmental planners hoped to support biodiversity in cities where natural habitats have largely disappeared. As underlined by the all-things-nordic.com website the concept of the Copenhagen Islands reflects an approach to urban planning that combines design, sustainability, and public life in creative ways. The floating islands are essentially modular platforms anchored in the harbor, designed to support soil, grasses, shrubs, and flowering plants. These plants attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies, whose populations have been declining across Europe due to urbanization and agricultural practices. Birds benefit as well. In busy ports and canals, safe nesting or resting areas are rare. Floating islands provide quiet, protected spaces away from pedestrians and traffic. At the same time, the structures improve the underwater ecosystem. The submerged parts of the islands act like artificial reefs, allowing algae, shellfish, and small fish to attach themselves and form the basis of a new aquatic habitat. Environmental designers note that even relatively small islands can have a noticeable ecological effect, especially when placed in networks across multiple waterways.” “Floating ecological islands represent a growing trend in urban environmental design: creating new nature spaces where land is scarce. Instead of reclaiming land from the water, cities can introduce floating habitats that support pollinators, birds, and marine life while also offering recreational spaces for residents. If the Danish experiments continue to prove successful, similar floating biodiversity projects could appear in waterfront cities across Europe and beyond. In a time when urban expansion often pushes nature aside, Denmark harbor islands suggest another possibility: cities that grow alongside nature—even on the water itself.”

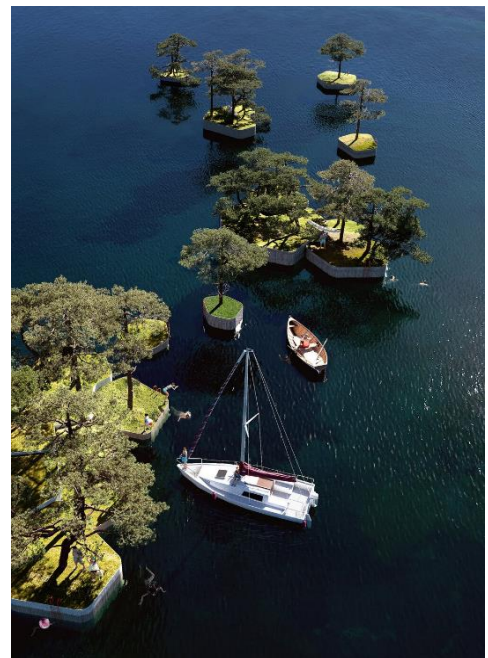
The Copenhagen Islands project has been featured in several Danish and international media outlets, architecture magazines and television programs. The project was the winner at the Tapei International Design Award 2018 in the category Best Social Urban Space. It was nominated finalist at the Beazley Designs Of The Year 2018 at the London Design Museum, and nominated at Byens Bedste AOK 2019, in the category Best Initiative.

The Copenhagen Islands project could become an example that can be replicated in other cities The European Union is valuing the Floating Islands as a nature-based solution to improve water quality in ponds, lakes and rivers and help a range of aquatic wildlife, delivering benefits for the environment, society and the economy. Nature based solutions also feature prominently in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2022 and are being targeted by a global partnership, ENACT, launched the same year at COP 27 to address climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, with a focus on protecting, conserving and restoring aquatic ecosystems.

To know more



Floating biodiversity islands are turning busy city harbors into homes for bees, birds and fish in Denmark



NEWS

DENMARK INSTALLS FLOATING WILDFLOWER ISLANDS IN HARBORS — CREATING SAFE URBAN SANCTUARIES FOR BIRDS AND BEES

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