

A Conceptual Approach for a Landscape Design : A Case Study of Design Proposal for "Töölönlahti Parks"

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The purpose of this thesis is to study and research my own methodology and way of thinking for a creative landscape design through a review of our process-oriented design work for the International Competition for the Töölönlahti Parks in Helsinki. I was invited as a representative landscape architect of Far East Asia in 1997. (The result of the competition was that we got an honorable "Purchased Prize".)

1. The Three Key Concepts

It is always essential to listen to the genius-loci : the spirit of the place, in order to discover the criteria of beauty in a given site. Sometimes the myth of the area gives us a precious hint for designing. The site is always full of assets if we make efforts to find them. Every place has its own spirit, from which our creation is delivered.

"The Romans read places like faces, as outward revelations of living inner spirit." Charles W. Moore started his preface of his thesis. (Note 1) Each tribe has found its own way to find the essence of place from generation to generation. The Chinese people have been keen for the spirit of place. Winifred Gallagher says in his book, "The Power of Place", "In its hard-edged way, the research of environmentally minded scientists often confirms our own softer perceptions and intuitions, both individual and cultural, concerning the relationship between people and places. --- Practitioners of the eponymous Chinese form of geomancy would attribute this feeling to the place's *feng shui*, or "wind and water." --- *feng shui* more or less corresponds to what we call ambience, or a place's distinctive atmosphere." (Note 2)

It has been said that we Japanese have imprinted in our DNA, the ability to read the land and create a space in response to its ambience. Listening to the voice of the land, we try to find a concept that will enhance its spiritual resonance. Over the millennia, we have developed an acute sensitivity to the surrounding environment.

Through the experience of dealing with various kinds of land, I have found that epoch-making creative places require three key concepts : those are, TOPOPHILIA (love of place), NEOPHILIA (love of the new) and COSMOPHILIA (love of the Universe).

1-1. TOPOPHILIA:

In Greek, Topo means place, and Philia means love. Yi-Fu Tuan, a Chinese geologist, created this concept adaptable to describing a place.

I found in 1992 in the preface of the book "Topophilia" by Yi-Fu Tuan (Japanese edition translated by Yuugo Ono) that he and I coincidentally experienced the same scenery in the same circumstances in Death Valley. We were both graduate students at UC Berkeley, and had both slept just in sleeping bags without tents in that primordial landscape. Upon waking the next morning, we both found the quintessence of beauty in this desert when the Sun comes up. What unforgettably beautiful scenery. There was no sound, no wind, no vegetation, yet I found that this is the prototypical scene to me. Doctor Tuan said in his book that this experience was as if he were brought to the other world but at the same time he felt a kind of *déjà vu* and the utmost comfort.

I experienced Death Valley 25 years after him. We have different cultural backgrounds, yet we appreciate the same scenery in the same way. This must be the feeling of "Topophilia" : that is, there are some sceneries which impress people who have different cultural backgrounds.

Doctor Tuan says "The word 'topophilia' is a neologism, useful in that it can be defined broadly to include all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment. These differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression. The response to environment may be primarily aesthetic : it may then vary from the fleeting pleasure one gets from a view to the equally fleeting but far more intense sense of beauty that is suddenly revealed. The response may be tactile, a delight in the feel of air, water, earth. More permanent and less

easy to express are feelings that one has toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood." (Note 3)

Thus he describes the vision of how the human-beings have both coped with environment and while also acknowledging a more profound aesthetic criteria. Through the process of explaining his humanistic research in different cultures in different period of time, we gradually appreciate the sense of Topophilia, the love of place.

As to Death Valley, Charles W. Moore described in his aforementioned book, "Its scenes, instead, gradually arrange themselves into a unity in the mind--- a process of montage, in the sense illustrated by Eisenstein's films and discussed by him in *Film Sense*. Eisenstein wrote, 'The image of a scene, a sequence, of a whole creation, exists not as something fixed and ready-made. It has to arise, to unfold before the senses of the spectator.'" (Note 4)

As a designer whose job it is to create a place, it is essential to be aware of the profound meaning in the relationship between people and the places we create.

1-2. NEOPHILIA:

In Greek, Neo means new, Philia means love. Lyall Watson wrote in his book "Neophilia" that the human being is a neophilic existence.

The history of mankind proves his view. Because of this characteristic, we are now in the midst of a global ecological imbalance. Even the human species is in danger. But, we hope that human beings will overcome this critical situation by balancing this love of the new, with certain timeless forces, both humanistic and ecologic, in order to preserve an evolving equilibrium.

In designing space, it is important to engage and satisfy this human need. There should be always something new in design. In order to find what is new in each period of time, it is essential to read "the times", "the people" and "the place." Imagination and creativity are required to realize this.

So Neophilia is the second most important keyword in creating a place. By continually seeking something new, people have achieved today's civilization. The human being, who is looking for something new, something mysterious and something strange, is the utmost creature of Neophilia.

Neophilia is the essence of the character of the human being.

1-3. COSMOPHILIA:

In Greek, Cosmo means universe, and Philia means love. Cosmophilia is a neologism by myself, derived from Topophilia and Neophilia. Human beings have worshiped the Universe from ancient times. A message to the universe is always the main theme for creators.

The ruins of SANNAIMARUYAMA recently excavated tell us that more than five thousand years ago in this remote area near Aomori, there were culturally highly developed communities: this Jomon culture is extremely high level. Among many evidences of highly dimensional culture, there is an evidence of Cosmophilia: It is the tower located in the center of a community. The tower structure composed of eight wood pillars was located toward the axis of the summer solstice. (This theory of direction is not authorized yet.) It means even at that time the astronomical knowledge must have existed already in the northern part of Japan.

Either the western cultures or the eastern cultures have proved the strong desire of mankind toward the universe since a human being emerged on this planet. It is well known that the pyramid in Egypt was constructed according to the universal axis such as sunrise, sunset at a certain time of a day, which was used as a calendar for cultivation. The temple of the Sun and the temple of the Moon in Teotihuacan in Mexico prove that the center of the city itself was constructed according to the universal order. Every culture has the evidence to prove the aspiration for the cosmos.

In designing a place, the ultimate key concept of space structure is Cosmophilia. To love the cosmos is the fundamental tendency given for the mankind. A land artist, as well as a landscape architect seeks for expressing a concept toward the other world, that is the aspiration of the universe. Another aspect of Cosmophilia resulted in the invention of an airplane and even a space shuttle in the 20th century.

Thus, these three key concepts, TOPOPHILIA, NEOPHILIA, and COSMOPHILIA are fundamentally interwoven in designing any kind of land.

In the following case study I am to describe how this multi-layered concepts are interwoven and transformed into a space. Even though the site was so far away from my own country, I tried to listen carefully to the spirit of the land and developed our design.

2. Case Study : A Park as a chrysalis : the Töölönlahti Parks

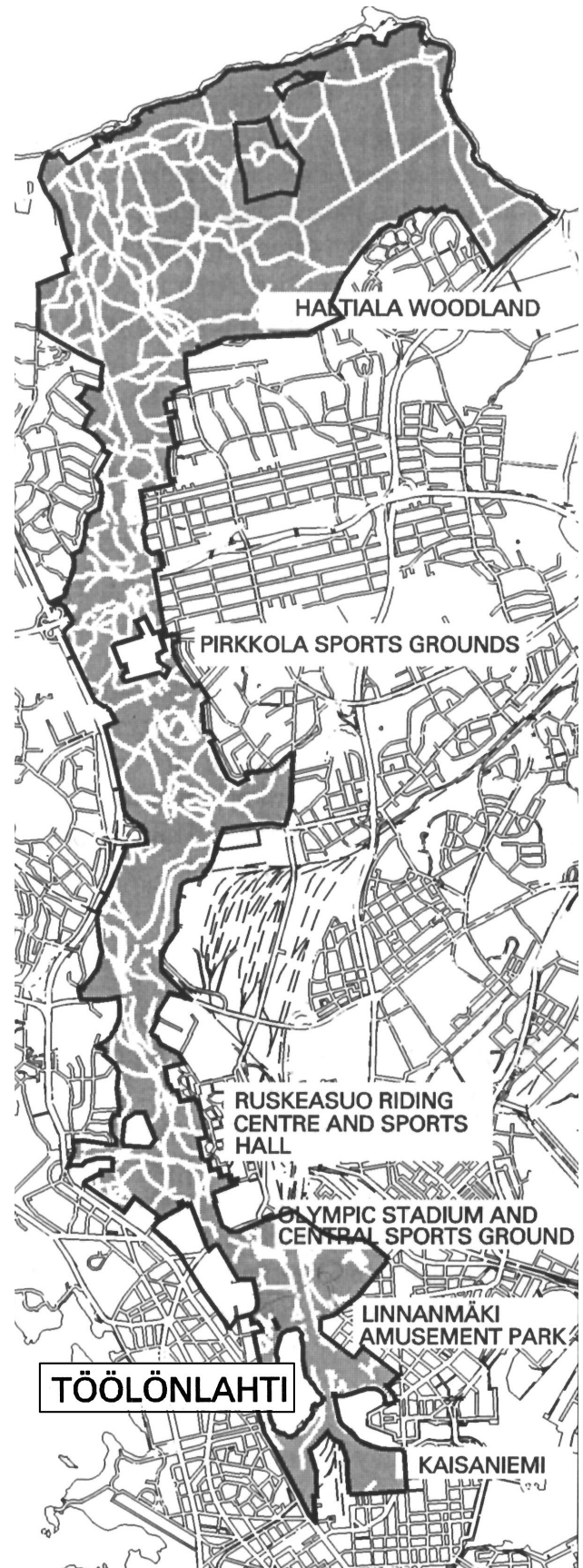
2-1. The Basic Design Concept

The park as a chrysalis is the complete vision we propose for the Töölönlahti landscape design.

A chrysalis, normally considered as a transition from the larva to the imago (mature adult) stage, holds a fascination as an autonomous organism. During incubation inside its soft, but protective, outer skin and as its various, but incomplete, organs are being fused, the chrysalis forms a self-organized and complete image. This chrysalis in formation lives symbiotically, and sometimes even collides, with itself as it transforms from a larva to a mature adult.



The Site Location



Central Park Area

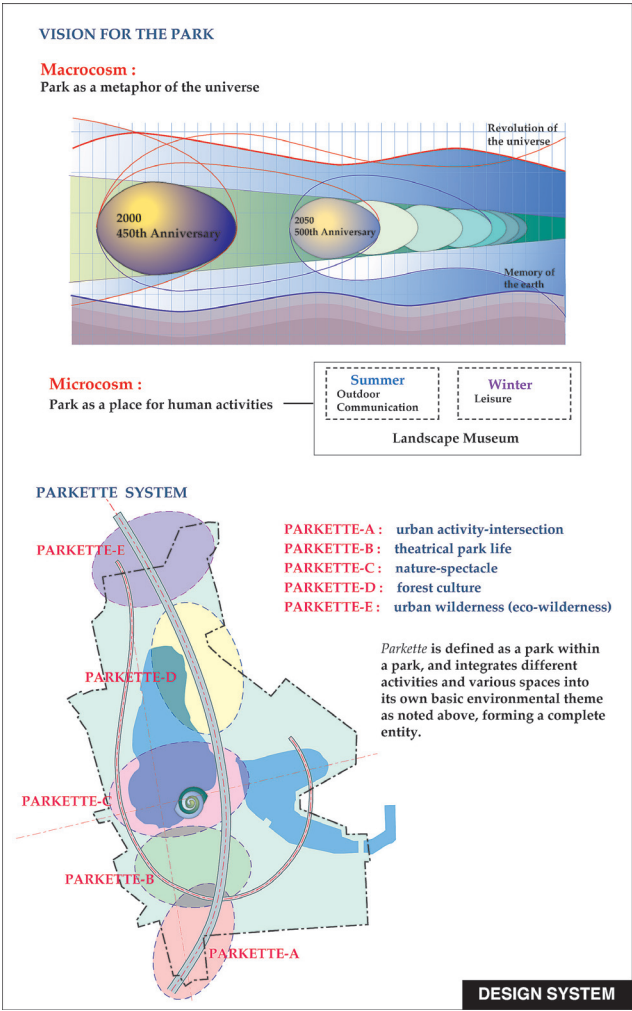
The vision of the chrysalis provides a foundation for our designs in landscape architecture, urbanism studies, architecture and engineering. Through experimentation with visual and conceptual imagery, we have combined microcosm with macrocosm, ultimately connecting Finland's Ten (Heaven), Chi (Earth) and Jin (People). Our design for this park is a chrysalis landscape design. Like the chrysalis, eventually this park will evolve into a spectacular imago or mature stage appropriate and useful for the 21st century.

2-2. The Planning Concept

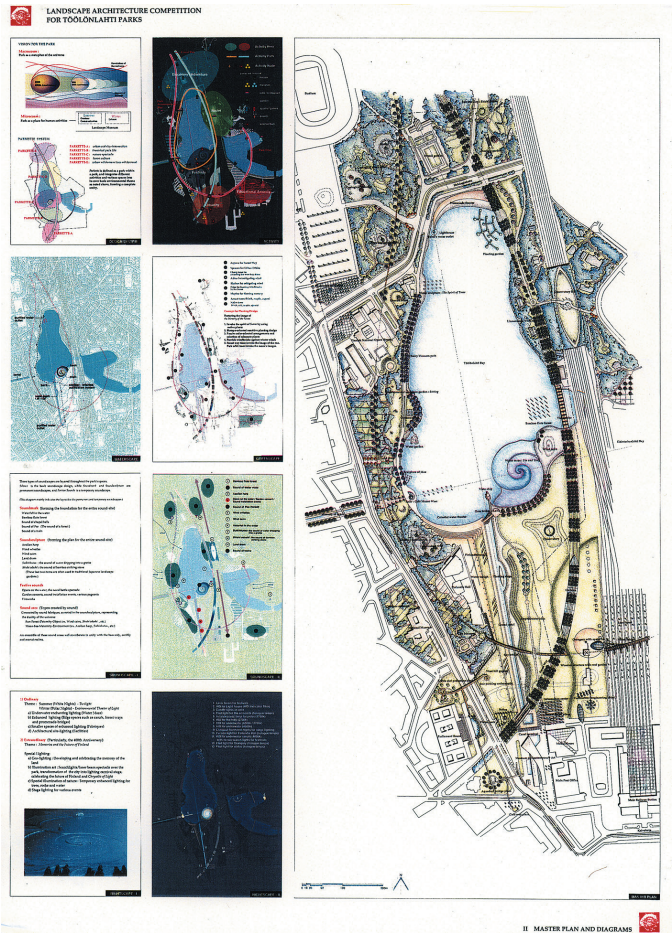
2-2-1. We want to create a contemplative and meditative landscape through a greater awareness of the genius loci and memory of land, sea and forest. Recalling these, we will reflect metaphorically the heavens and the duality of the universe that have been manifested in the land as the white night.

2-2-2. Like the soul of life living inside the chrysalis, the echoes of the quickening signs of the landscape, evident in the natural sounds of wind, the rhythm and physical time of the earth, and the movement of light, create realistic scenes that people can experience with their five senses.

2-2-3. We have no intention to solve the problems of the existing urban fabric with the chrysalis alone. This chrysalis as the communication modulator and cultural incubator for a new urban life that will lead to a progressive and futuristic urban space for Helsinki. With this landscape design , we will create a communicative environment as the cultural and intellectual center of Northern Europe.



Diagrams expressing the vision for designing the park



Diagrams expressing:Time Axis, Parkette System,Water System, Lightscape, Green Landscape System and 1/2000 scale plan for the main water area (66 ha)

2-3. The Design System

2-3-1. We have allowed for the following variety of coexisting, self-organized factors to exist within the chrysalis:

- a. Difference in scale or size
- b. Configuration of memories or the unknown
- c. Complete and incomplete environmental language
- d. The continuity and discontinuity of space that, when viewed as a whole, form compositions of irregular disciplines hardly recognizing either the past (what has been seen before) or the future (what has yet to be seen).

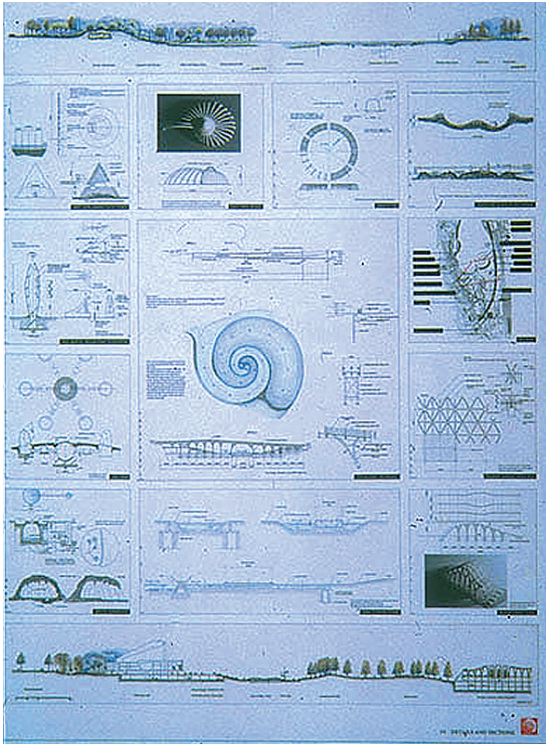
This mixture of factors and compositions generates regulated, organized spaces for existing cities and a comparative complement, resulting in the blossoming of new, collaborative scenes.

2-3-2. By means of the concept of parks in the park, (termed parkette), a serial chain link of actual environmental spaces (figures) emerges in the vast area (ground). This parkette is a semantic environmental unit. In itself, it is a microcosm or a self-standing story in space. The parkette addresses complex environments such as complex architecture (i.e., a block of skyscrapers) or it can be applied as a self-standing, practical unit in an urban space. Similar to the experimental trials in the creation of urban parks that was the basis for modern urbanism, our proposed system will take modern urban design into the future.

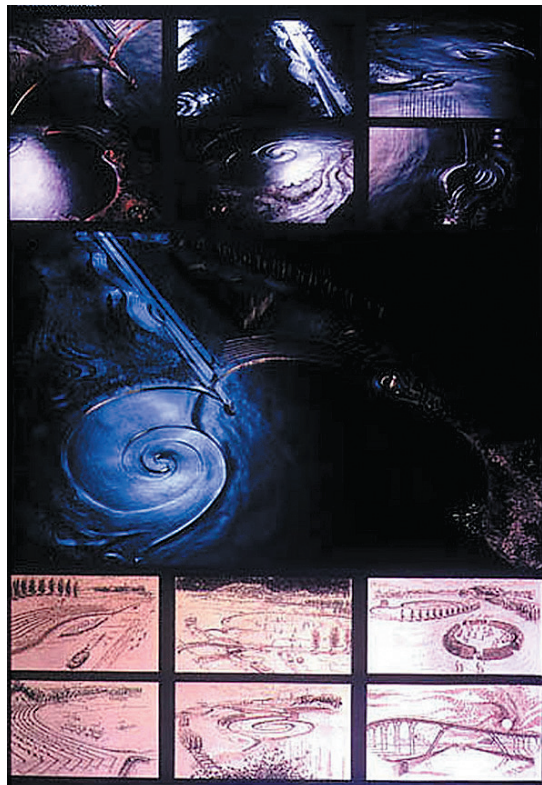
2-3-3. Our design stretches around a rhizome-like space of movement and provides an active circulatory system for the park. This space actually will be integrated as a promenade and bridge, a forest-lined avenue and board deck, and a canal and railroad. These spaces are not only used for circulation, but also attempt to make a fertile, mobile environment with their own diverse systems.



GREENSCAPE



Details of Facilities to create Soundscape, Waterscape and Lightscape



Water Purification System creates the dominant scenery. The upper part is the photos of a clay model. The lower part is the perspective drawings for various scenes of the whole stage setting.

2-3-4. According to the ancient Chinese theory of yin-yang , the interacting two principles (or the positive and negative) share a single structure. This structure generates and evolves into a spiral shape. At the same time, its center will become void. This metaphysical system of yin-yang is valid in this site. The positive and negative principles or the dual cosmic forces that manifest themselves in every phenomenon in the universe such as the dualism of light and dark or day and night, are in harmony with the natural landscapes of Finland. Finland, representing the duality of the universe, and the center void harmonize with the possibilities of every phase of the total landscape design.

This system based on the yin-yang theory is applied here comprehensively in the planning elements of the landscape and its layout of fabriques.

2-3-5. Our original landscape design based on universal duality is our basic policy for the interaction between technology and art, craftsmanship and digitalization, and science and culture. These dual structures physically unfold in areas such as the construction of soundscapes, dramatic lighting effects for the nightscape, water purification using primitive technology, bridges and other construction projects using woodcraft or methods of naval architecture, and artificial nature. In essence, progressive expression is supported by traditional technology; on the other hand, traditional expression is supported by progressive technology. In our design for a new urban landscape, these dualities coexist harmoniously as a form of futuristic expression.

2-4. Approaches and Programs for Solutions to Constraints and Difficult Issues

2-4-1. The Operation of Urban Tissues: A cohesive environment is created by providing multi-levelled circulation systems throughout the entire site.

The Forest Way provides the main axis from the urban area to the central park area. The Park Orbit provides inner circulation.

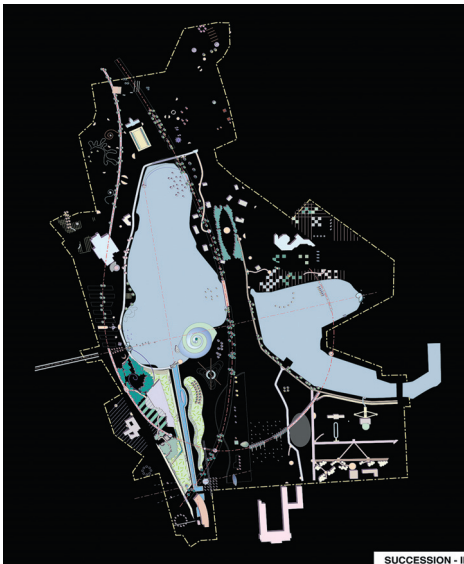
At the platform of the central station, the Park Orbit promenade becomes a bridge (+9 meter level) connecting the eastern and western districts that have been separated for a century. It also evokes the Memory of the Land.

At Linnunaulu Villa area over the railroad area, a wooden lattice with a shell structure and a roof garden (Observatory Hill), is a metaphor for the past memory of the bedrock. The scenes of trains are dramatized by providing various types of vistas.

2-4-2. The use of multi-level grades will improve access to all activities. Service access is segregated from other activities located in the underground level.



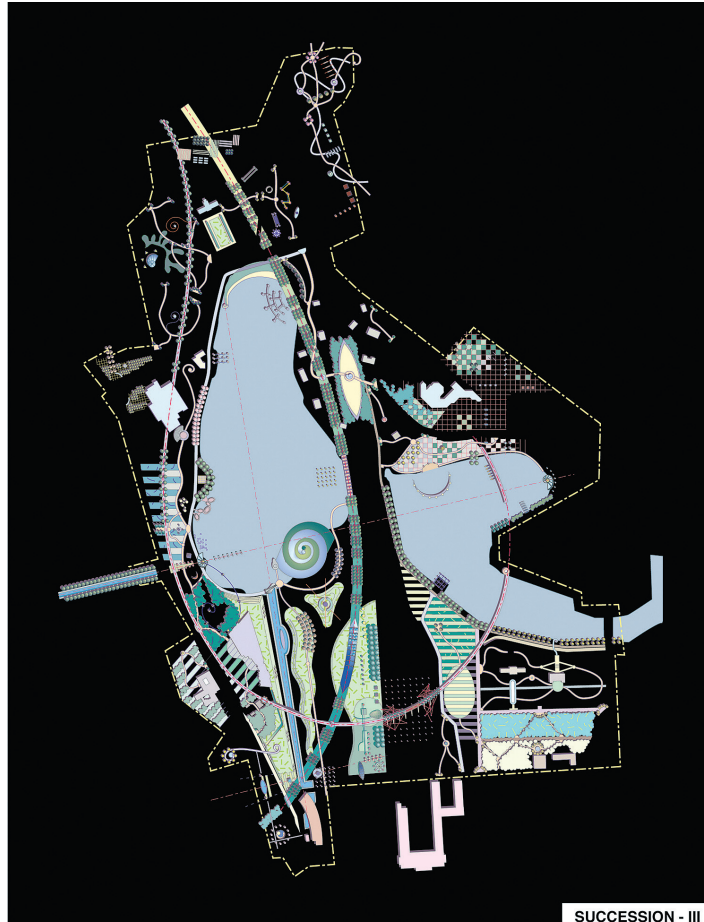
Succession I



Succession II



Succession IV



Succession III

Diagram succession 1 to 4 show the phases of the project. From the first phase to the 3rd one alter the setting according to the time axis. The forth one expresses the drastic change of the site: only the main water feature remains after 2000 years when the rest of the equipments is diminished.

2-4-5. There are one hundred scenes in the entire park. Each scene is a dramatic stage where visitors are actors and actresses. Outdoor activities are enhanced when visitors sense the sceneries, allowing them to interact with the universe.

Thus the entire park was thoroughly designed. This park is the only one place in the world, nowhere else this will exist, we believed. According to the time axis, a phase by a phase could be realized. This ended as a proposal with a Purchased Prize. (This means our idea was purchased.) Yet the city of Helsinki has not realized the first Prize plan even by now.

3. Conclusion

Each site requires its own solution. As you see through this process of design, the more the layers of meanings are piled while designing a place, the higher the dimension of the place will become. In the realized space we plan we are sure that those who

experience these spaces will correspond to the ambience and feel the quintessence of "Space", Topophilia, Neophilia and Cosmophilia. Those are the key concepts we interweave in any places we create. The high quality landscape architecture is required to be more profound solution for each site.

Charles W. Moore describes, "Underlying all these metaphors and mythic constructions is the simple fact that each site has its own special qualities of stone and earth and water, of leaf and blossom, of architectural context, of sun and shade, and of sounds and scents and breezes. Seek these out, and you will discover promises of formal order or of artful naturalism --the beginnings of your garden." (Note 5)

In concluding this thesis I rather describe metaphorically, "The landscape design is to connect the Heaven and the Earth": the ultimate key concept is "COSMOPHILIA".

Note 1: Charles W. Moore, William J. Mitchell, William Turnbull, Jr., "The Poetics of Gardens", The MIT Press, 1988, p.1

Note 2: Winifred Gallagher, "The Power of Place", Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1994, pp.19-20

Note 3: Yi-Fu Tuan, "Topophilia", Columbia University Press, 1990, p.93

Note 4: Charles W. Moore, "The Poetics of Gardens" p.81

Note 5: - ditto - p.1

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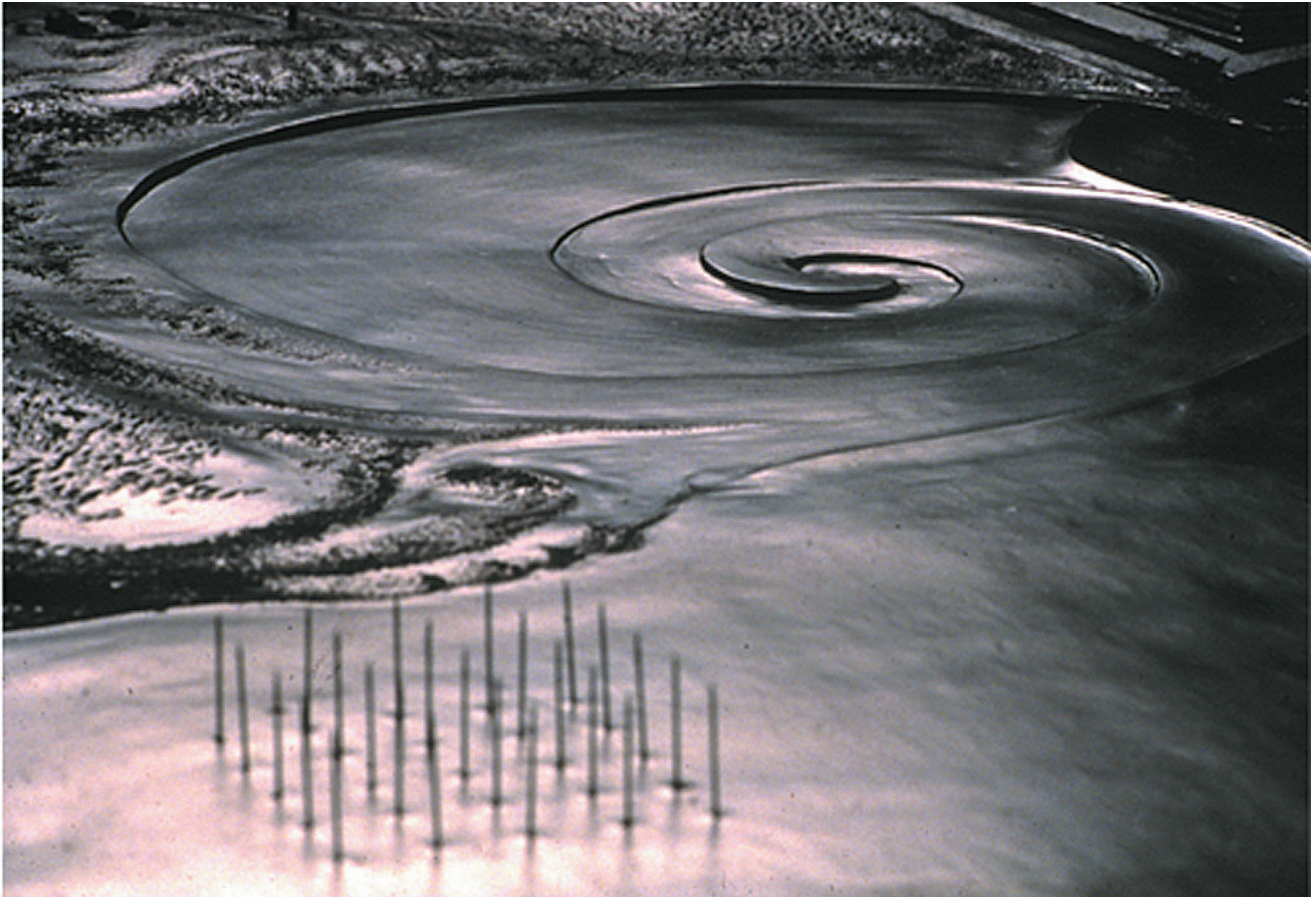
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Landscape Architecture Competition for Töölönlahti Parks

Collaboration :

Yutaka Hikosaka (Creative Producer/Architect), Hirohisa Sato (Sculptor), Hiroshi Yanagihara (NID Instructor, Landscape Designer), Yoshiyasu Ito (Landscape Architect, ULD), Tatsuo Ito (NID Instructor, Lighting Designer) , Takuzo Shimizu (Civil Engineer), Yoshiko Ninomiya (Manager/Soundscape Creator, ULD), Hikari Toyota (Designer, ULD), Leonard Bakker (Music Writer), Ms. Judith Hard, Mr. Hayashi.

Location : Helsinki, Finland

Site area : 162 ha