

• A Botanic Garden of Seaweed •

Deep dive into a different dimension. One where light, oxygen, and gravity differs from ours. One where the -scape troubles the imagination.

The Oslo Fjord is omnipresent in the Osloite's mind but its benthic¹ landscape stays in the realm of the obscur imagination.

Since the 1900s, studies reporting from the underwaters on quality and diversity have shown a depleted environment, stripped of biodiversity (Kroglund, 2017). This is due to a strong industrialization of the coast and dumping of untreated sewer into the fjord. Since the 1970s, the situation has evolved slowly with the gradual implementation of wastewater treatment plants around the water basin.

However, there has been minimal effort to reestablish the broken habitat. There are currently only three main species of seaweed found in the vast body of water that is the Oslofjorden (Pederson, 2010). A bleak observation when we know there are more than 400 Norwegian grown species. The strangeness and disgust seaweed conferres makes it a poorly solisitated companion of the populated shores and has not been given the chance to reestablish.

The Botanic Garden of Seaweed is a work towards integrating seaweed in common imagination to relink people with their submerged cultural landscape and repopulate the fjord with a diverse bank of seaweed.

A botanic garden is unique as it is both a center driven by research and open to the public for education and leisure. The project is the aquatic satelite of Oslo Botanic Garden and just like the onland Botanic Garden, its aquatic branch would work hand in hand with the biological department at the University of Olso.

By promoting research on the topic and inviting visitors to move away from the derogatory slimy image most Europeans have, the Botanic Garden helps understand seaweed for its multiplicity and aesthetic qualities.

The site is situated at a boat ride by public or private means from Oslo, on the western side of the island of Håøya. The location was selected for its proximity to Oslo and for its water qualities. The site is a geological extrusion of which only less than a meter is above mean water high in two locations. It is adjacent to a protected forest on the island of Håøya and a fishing spot which suggest high organic nutrient. The shallow topography creates substantial microclimates and an important area in the euphatic zone².

The structure is a light element that provides the minimal necessities for researchers or visitors to take advantage of the garden. The boats come with the necessary facilities one needs for a short stay. The boardwalk gives acces and invites visitors to take a swim through the array of colors and textures ; to dive into the world of buoyancy where the greenery of a different world moves to the rhythm of tides and currents ; or to visit and observe by foot.

Out at sea, the garden is an outpost for education and leisure. Unique in what is offers, it adds to the dreamy summer destinations of the Oslo Fjord. In winter, the passage dwindles and leaves the seaweed to its sea.

1. Benthic Definition: relating to, or occurring at the bottom of a body of water. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

2. Euphatic Zone Definition: The topmost layer of a lake or sea in which there is sufficient light for net primary production, i.e. where the energy fixed by photosynthesis exceeds that lost by respiration. (Oxford University Dictionary of Biology)

Citation :

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http://www.helsinki.fi/envirohist/seaandcities/cities/osl/osl_envi.htm

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Tone Kroglund, John Arthur Berge*, Tor L. Bokn, Janne K. Gitmark og Jan Magnusson, Endringer i horisontalutbredelsen av tang i Indre Oslofjord. (2017).