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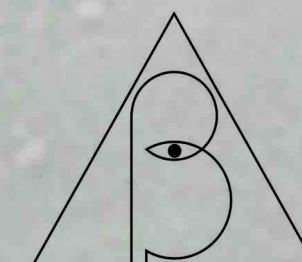
GROWING BEAUTY

**YOUTH'S AESTHETICS
OF SUSTAINABILITY**

IN URBAN
FOOD PRODUCTION



FRI
HAMNS
TORGET





WELCOME TO GROWING BEAUTY

Blivande idéer AB and Dodo ry collaborated for two years (2024-2025) within the framework of an Erasmus+ Small-scale Partnerships, engaging both young people and broader urban communities. Together with youths, we co-developed six prototypes at the intersection of art, biodiversity, and urban food production.

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WHO ARE WE?

Blivande Idéer AB

Blivande is a not-for-profit urban collective of creative professionals, architects, and placemakers based in a hub located in Frihamnen, Stockholm's historic harbor. We are a platform that empowers civic actors, artists, and changemakers to develop projects within a supportive network. Our mission is to foster "plus-sum" relationships across sectors, contributing to fundamental, rather than decorative, change in society's ongoing transformation.

Blivande's largest urban project is the container village Frihamnstorget, a "third place - neither public or private" where small businesses, artists and craftsmen park their own remodeled shipping containers to be part of a collective.

During the period Nov 2021 - Jan 2024, Frihamnstorget was a pilot study on modular creative zones. The project took on a dimension of system innovation when building permit requirements led to a novel application of the practice of interpreting the Swedish Planning and Building Act regarding temporary architecture. We received a building permit that allows us to build the container square organically, following a set of guidelines instead of a traditional fixed plan.

Frihamnstorget hosts a community green house and an urban garden production that has been growing each year.



WHO ARE WE?

DODORY

Dodo is a Finnish environmental organisation that was founded in 1995. The past 15 years of Dodo have revolved around urban gardening and food, urban planning and climate change mitigation. Dodo is working with community engagement and complex climate issues, from local initiatives like cooking with waste food to international solutions like forest monitoring in West Africa.

In 2012, Turntable an urban gardening centre was built in Pasila, Helsinki, the site has since worked as a learning centre, event space, restaurant and community garden. Turntable is a laboratory for testing out urban gardening prototypes.

It aims toward a closed loop system and self-sufficiency in its operations. Turntable is always open and offers an uncommercial third space in the centre of Helsinki.

We try to build a safer space that is more than a set of principles and actually brings people from different walks of life together. The accepting atmosphere builds a community that comes together for a free meal, to learn new civic skills, to tend the community garden and to arrange events. Dodo motivates people to act – we believe that environmental problems can only be solved if solving them becomes interesting, attractive and meaningful.



INTRODUCTION GROWING BEAUTY

How do we create cities that are not only sustainable, but also meaningful, beautiful, and alive?

Today's urban landscapes face urgent challenges: climate change, loss of biodiversity, and the increasing disconnection between people and nature. At the same time, cities hold immense potential as spaces of creativity, innovation, and community.

This project takes inspiration from Hemmati's Aesthetics of Sustainability (2016), which argues that sustainability is not just about function, but also about culture and aesthetics, about how we experience and value our environment. Building on this idea, we set out to involve young people in reimagining the urban landscape as both an ecological system and a cultural canvas.

Through a series of workshops and co-creative processes, youth groups designed and built prototypes that merge art, biodiversity and urban food production. These structures are more than tools, they are also sculptures, cultural expressions, and symbols of resilience. Each prototype tells a story of transformation: from idea into form, from individual creativity into cultural impact.

By empowering young people to shape their environment with their own hands and imagination, this project fosters not only ecological innovation but also a sense of belonging, responsibility, and hope. It demonstrates that sustainability can be practical and poetic at the same time. A willingness to create beauty in, with and for nature.



CHOSING THE PROTOTYPE

Youths were encouraged to upload their prototype ideas on Cobudget. Throughout the idea submission period, Blivande and Dodo provided support to participants who had questions about the platform or the process. When needed, youth participants also received technical assistance with using the digital platform. We actively encouraged cross-collaboration and the cross-pollination of ideas between projects, knowing that in the end, only three projects would be funded. The timeline below illustrates the participants journey from submission to building phase.

NOV/DEC 2024

APPLICATION ON COBUDGET

Participants are invited to fill in a form, the filled in project is publicly available for others participants to see.

FEB/MAR 2025

FUNDING AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

The chosen prototypes were developed further with budgets, placement and project plans. Youth had the opportunity to organise workshops with professionals to learn skills relevant to their prototypes.

SEP 2025

FINAL EVENTS

Dodo and Blivande organized public events featuring an exhibition on the build prototypes, thematic workshops that engaged the public, and artistic performances fostering community and solidarity.

OCT/NOV 2025

KEEP GROWING BEAUTY

Our local communities, youth participants and the general public were invited to a series of workshops with the intention of planning how this project can persist in time and keep contributing to the green beauty of our cities.

APR 2025

BUILDING THE PROTOTYPES

During the remaining time of the projects, participants met to build the prototype in each location. When required external contractors supported the prototypes installations.

JAN 2025

APPLICATION EVALUATION

National project managers evaluate the applications and get in touch with participants. In this process we tried connecting similar projects with each other. Here, we also checked the participants' availability during the building season.

COBUDGET-DIGITAL IDEATION

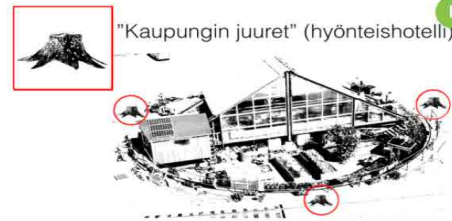
Youth ideas for prototypes in the projekt were shared and uploaded using the civic tech platform Cobudget. Cobudget is a civic tech platform designed to make group decision-making around shared finances transparent, participatory, and collaborative. Originally developed within the Enspiral network, it enables communities, organizations, and teams to collectively decide how to allocate funds toward projects or initiatives that matter most to them.

The platform operates through a simple process: members propose ideas, discuss them openly, and then distribute available funds by "voting" with their budgets. This bottom-up approach not only democratizes financial decisions but also fosters trust, shared ownership, and engagement among participants



Purjekatos

Out of old sails, we want to construct shadows that help animals and people to counter the heat in our cement environment.



Kaupungin juuret (hyönteishotelli)

Kierrätetty romumetalli valetaan hyönteishotelliksi, joka muistuttaa puunkantoa. Teos yhdistää luontoa ja kaupunkia, edistään kestävämpää ympäristöä.



Aistipenkkikyltti

Aistipenkkikyltti on kaikkien elävän kohtaamispiste joka kutsuu ihmiset paikalle hengailemaan yhdessä.



Waterplay/Vattenlek

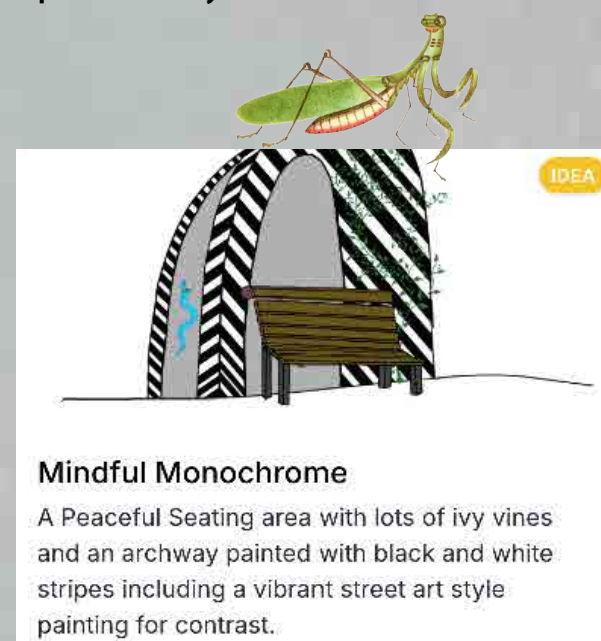
Waterplay with old copper kitchen equipment

By visualizing the funding process and making every contribution visible, Cobudget transforms budgeting from a closed administrative task into an inclusive community exercise that supports collective intelligence and equitable resource distribution.

Using civic tech platforms offers youth a powerful alternative to mainstream social technologies by shifting focus from passive consumption and self-promotion to active participation and community impact. Instead of being driven by algorithms and popularity metrics, civic tech empowers young people to collaborate, make collective decisions, and shape real-world change. It helps them develop critical digital literacy, civic responsibility, and a sense of agency in shaping their environments.

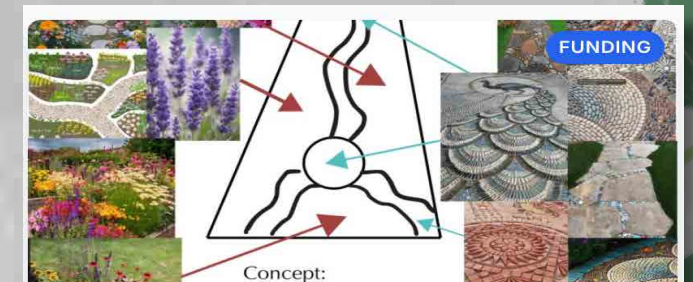
Within the scope of this project, Cobudget's main function was to serve as a public application platform where ideas are not simply submitted in isolation, but shared openly among applicants. This approach enables peer review, cross-pollination, and collective learning. In contrast to most application processes that are often one-sided and evaluated by a small, closed group, Cobudget fosters transparency and dialogue, allowing participants to discover overlapping interests and complementary ideas.

We believe that many valuable connections and insights are lost in traditional formats, and that tools like these can help unlock this untapped potential through transparency and collaboration. Dodo and Blivande each had their own subpages on the platform to cater to the different languages spoken locally.



Mindful Monochrome

A Peaceful Seating area with lots of ivy vines and an archway painted with black and white stripes including a vibrant street art style painting for contrast.



Växternas mosaik

This garden will be a plants garden with wooden path, a stone mosaic at the center and a love seat at the end.



Eatable Living Dress

Leafy Couture - Hydroponic Dress is an functional sculpture producing herbs and lettuce as it is made out of hydroponic systems.



Be a Woman

Be a Woman - Cage surrounded by flowers, strawberries (around the cage) and foliages (on bars) - Glasses and "Arms": second hands

PROTOTYPES

5.1 SE 1: En värld i vår - A world in spring

*A table of wood and resin bright,
with stamps from places lost to sight.
Each one hums with stories untold,
the heart of a place where magic unfolds.*



This project artistically explores the idea of permanence within a space that continually transforms with the passing seasons. The participants designed and constructed an outdoor table, built to withstand both weather and urban heat. It consists of a solid piece of wood with a central cavity filled with blue-tinted resin symbolising the sea. Embedded within the resin is a vintage stamp collection once belonging to one participant's grandparent, adding an intergenerational dimension to the artistic core of the work.

The table was placed in a small clearing between bushes at our container village, an area that has long been neglected. The spot lies beside a busy street where passing buses and cars often scatter litter into the surrounding greenery, turning it into a forgotten pocket full of plastic debris. By positioning the central table in this space and providing additional seating, the neglected patch has been transformed into a gathering place.

Walking paths were laid to protect the local biodiversity while guiding visitors into this "hidden" spot. People are encouraged to have lunch there, and their regular presence has led to continuous upkeep, keeping the area clean from roadside waste. Once a disregarded space filled with plastic, it has been reborn as a living corner of nature, a small sanctuary within a landscape of concrete. Its striking seasonal transformations only heighten the beauty of the newly created place.

This concept can easily be reimagined elsewhere in our cities. A table, a path, and most importantly a caretaker are all that's needed to sustain such hidden oases. Local communities and residents play a vital role in the co-maintenance of these spaces, while municipalities must support and enable this kind of self-organisation if we are to cultivate more beautiful and caring cities.



5.2 SE 2: Vattenlek - Water play

*Old copper pots in sunlight gleam,
A gentle, tinkling water stream.
For bees and birds, a welcomed sight,
A drink of life in morning light.*

This project was created in response to the urgent need for clean water sources for birds and insects in our part of the neighborhood. When looking at satellite images, it becomes clear that the area is dominated by large stretches of asphalt, creating an urban heat island where temperatures rise significantly. In this light industrial zone, the water available to wildlife was often found in small puddles or drainage spots, many of which were contaminated with dirt and metals. Noticing this, we wanted to create a safer and more supportive alternative for these essential species.

The idea became a water play installation built from old copper kitchen equipment, including teapots and pans. These reclaimed objects bring both character and functionality to the project, allowing water to trickle, gather, and flow in small pools designed specifically for drinking. Copper, with its natural antimicrobial properties, adds an additional layer of protection, helping keep the water cleaner for longer and providing a healthier option for birds and insects seeking relief.

The installation was designed with accessibility and ecological impact in mind. Set at varying heights and angles, the copper vessels offer safe landing spots for bees, butterflies, and small birds, while shallow pools ensure they can drink without risk. The sound and sparkle of moving water also help attract wildlife passing through the otherwise harsh and overheated surroundings, transforming the site into a small oasis within an industrial landscape.

To add an interactive component to the structure, we installed a manual pump that can be activated by children and people passing by. This feature not only invites curiosity and hands-on engagement but also helps keep the water fresh through regular movement. It transforms the installation from a passive object into a living, community-supported resource that brings both joy and ecological benefit.



5.3 SE 3: Växternas mosaik - The mosaic of the plants

*A wooden path through flowers bright,
A stone bloom shining in plain sight.
A love seat waits where petals sway,
And pollinators light the way.*

The second project granted was the creation of a vibrant flower garden designed to welcome both people and pollinators. The physical structure of the garden was completed during the project, but planting will happen in 2026, to follow nature's seasons. All plants will be local varieties, chosen especially for their ability to attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects, ensuring strong ecological value and a thriving natural habitat.

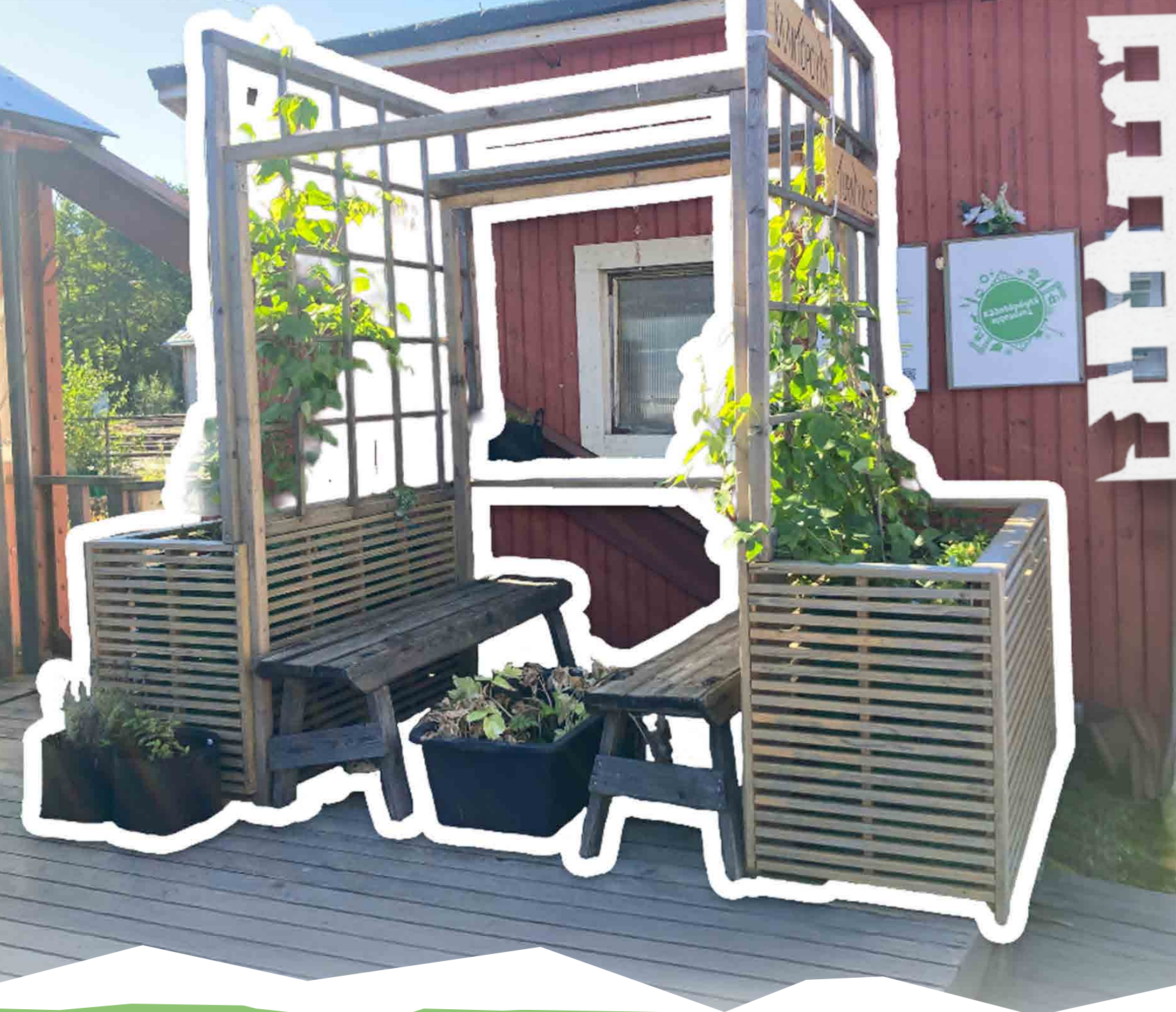
A wooden path was laid to guide visitors gently through the space, allowing them to explore the garden without disturbing the soil or interfering with plant growth. This careful design makes it possible for people to engage with the garden up close while ensuring that the plants can develop freely and undisturbed.

The wooden pathways lead toward the centerpiece of the project: a stone mosaic crafted in the shape of a flower.

The mosaic is round and one meter in diameter and is not only a centerpiece marking meticulous effort, it took six weeks and many hands to complete, but also serves as a potential mini-stage within the cultural context of the container village where it is located. It anchors the garden both visually and conceptually, linking the ground-level experience with a larger, skyward perspective.

At the end of the wooden path, a love seat was installed as a final touch, offering a welcoming spot for rest and contemplation. It becomes a place where visitors can sit among the blooms once they are planted, watch pollinators at work, and experience the garden as intended: a shared and living expression of creativity, care, and biodiversity.





5.4 FI 1: Aistipenkkikyltti - A sensory bench

*Bench for senses and signs Seating, taking a break
Plants, greenery. Herbs, for tea
Sensory experiences. Signs for navigation
Enjoying, chilling*



The sensory bench is located on the northern terrace of Turntable, beside a red shed and directly at the entrance to the greenhouse. Designed as a gathering point for all living beings, it offers a welcoming place where people, insects, and plants can share space. The seating area acts as a gentle meeting ground, inviting visitors to pause, connect, and discover sensations that speak to them. The colorful structure is surrounded by edible and fragrant herbs and vines planted in boxes along the edges, across the top, and around the frame.

These climbing plants grow up the pergola walls and stretch across the structure, forming a living roof and soft green walls. This creates a shaded, intimate space decorated with glass crystals, wind chimes, and other sensory elements that encourage exploration. The herbs can be picked to brew fresh tea, engaging taste and smell as part of the experience. As visitors approach, a sign reading "Kääntöpöytä / Turntable" welcomes them and invites them to sit down and immerse themselves in the sensory environment.

The combination of plants, movement, shade, and small decorative details creates a social and sensory sanctuary within the urban garden. Whether someone is resting, talking, or simply observing, the bench encourages mindful presence and a deeper connection to the surroundings. The sensory bench can serve as a model for creating multisensory meeting places in various settings.

It can be adapted for busy urban gardens, public squares, and any location where people naturally gather. The dimensions can be adjusted to suit existing structures, or scaled using the human body as reference. Access to a water source is beneficial, especially to support the plants during dry summer periods. With thoughtful design, similar installations can bring calm, curiosity, and sensory richness to many different environments.

5.5. FI 2: Kaupungin juuret - Roots of the city

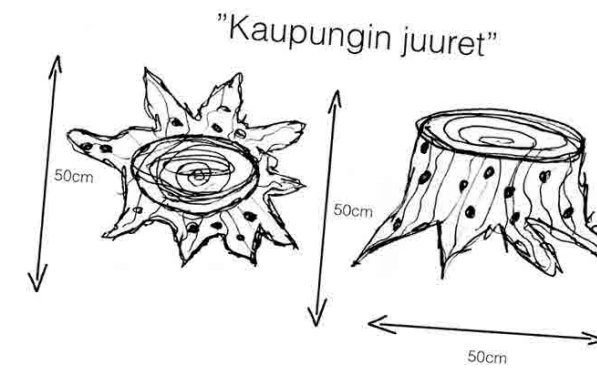
Roots of the city, tree stump cast in scrap metal, From disused pipes, Reeds from seaside, Places for pollinators, To lay eggs, Eggs to hatch, Newborn pollinators

When thinking about the urban environment, this project group reflected on how to connect nature more closely to the city. In the wood industry, what often remains in the forest after logging is a stump that becomes a nesting place for insects and decomposers. Inspired by this cycle, the group decided to model a stump and create an immortalized monument dedicated to insects using scrap metal.

The structure proposed was an insect hotel cast from recycled metal, each piece approximately half a square meter in size. The "stump" resembled a real tree stump, complete with holes for insects and a surface that mimicked tree bark. Organic materials from the surrounding nature, such as pinecones, reeds, and small branches, could be embedded in the cavities. Nature and the city met in this project, where design thinking and sustainable development came together artistically in a form of metaphorical sculpturing. At the heart of the concept was the belief that the city should not be just a concrete landscape, but a place where nature could coexist with humans.

These works stood as tributes to the natural cycle, preserving memories of the life of trees and reinterpreting them as structures for insects to inhabit. The stump, once the foundation of a living tree, was reimagined as an art piece dedicated to both people and the non-human species that played vital roles in the ecosystem. Roots of the City was proposed by a student group of contemporary art and metalworking, and the project combined both aesthetic vision and technical skill. Two pieces of the artwork were installed at the edge of the Turntable terrace.

The metal was sourced from a scrapyard and cast at a foundry in Turku, based on clay models and gypsum molds created for the project. These clay originals could be used again to produce new casting molds, allowing the sculptures to be replicated elsewhere. The practice of working with scrap metal in sculptural design could also be expanded into other projects, creating similar yet unique works that provided space and refuge for non-humans in urban environments.



5.6 FI 3: Purjekatos ja päärynäpuut - Sail pavilion and pear trees

*Terrace roof and fruit trees, In the shade,
Reusing planters, Fruiting trees
Reusing sails, Gathering under roof
Trees edging the terrace*

The Sail Pavilion and the pear trees are located on the Turntables terrace and in the planter boxes along its edges. This area serves as the main gathering space during events, doubling as the stage for larger music performances. It is a place where people come together, whether to collaborate on elements of the Turntable or simply to share a meal, celebrate, or enjoy.

This prototype was co-designed with a group of young participants, building on an idea that emerged during the Urban Dinner event where we presented Growing Beauty. It developed further through the summer, as we collected donated sails and explored how to reuse the existing features of the terrace, such as the planter boxes and pillars. From the beginning, we knew we wanted to transform the planter boxes, and soon discovered that Paratiisin hedelmät (Fruits of Paradise) offers workshops on planting fruit trees. They recommended pear trees for this particular location.

The trees are still young, but if they withstand the coming winters, they will eventually create both a fruit-bearing feature and a natural layer of shade along the terrace edge. The sail roof is installed as needed for events, while the pear trees are protected for winter with tarp and wire netting to improve their chances of survival. This prototype can be recreated in places where some weather protection is needed to support social gathering.

Coastal cities in particular offer great opportunities for repurposing used sails from local sailing communities. Fruit trees make a valuable addition to any urban meeting space, with the specific varieties depending on climate conditions. While trees can be grown in containers, planting them directly in the ground is even better. As part of the canopy layer in forest farming, they also create opportunities to grow shade-loving plants and climbing vines beneath and around them.



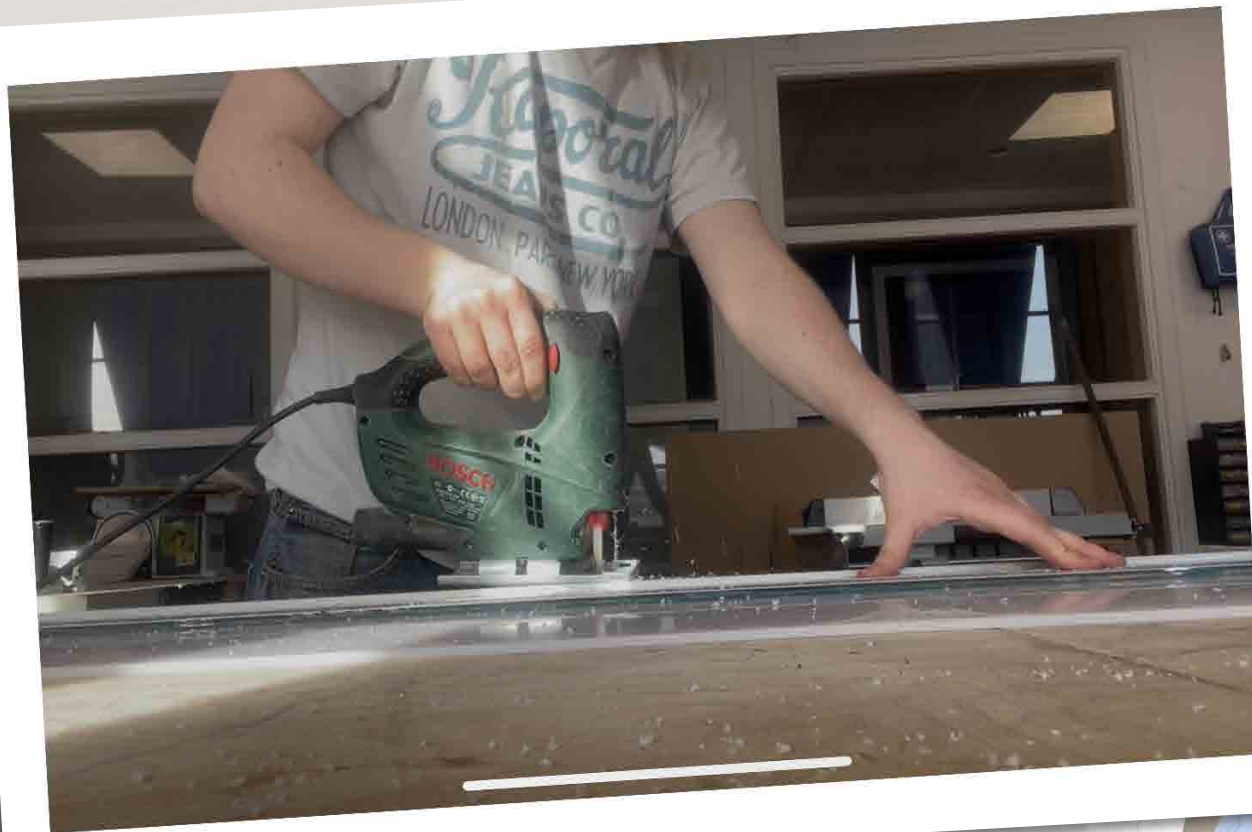
WORKSHOPS

6.1 SWEDEN

Central to the programme were a series of practical workshops designed to equip participants with artistic and urban gardening skills essential for developing their individual prototypes. These workshops served as a foundation for experimentation, enabling each project group to deepen their understanding of materials, techniques, and environmental considerations.

In Sweden, three tailored workshops were organised, one decided by each project group. The first workshop focused on the safe and environmentally responsible use of epoxy, including proper handling, application, and disposal. The second workshop offered a crash course in mosaic-making, introducing participants to various materials, including recycled elements such as broken porcelain, to encourage creativity and circular design principles.

The third workshop, led by community gardener Lotta Näslund, provided participants with valuable insights into urban planting techniques. Through a combination of theoretical guidance and a guided tour of the local spaces, participants learned about the needs and preferences of different plant species and how to effectively position them within an urban environment. This hands-on introduction to ecological design complemented the artistic workshops, ensuring that all prototypes were informed by both aesthetic and environmental considerations.



WORKSHOPS

6.2 FINLAND

For the Finnish project group, the learning process began with a design-focused workshop led by Päivi Raivio from the design agency RaivioBurman. The session guided participants through the journey from initial idea to prototype, exploring key considerations that shape successful urban interventions. Päivi introduced the group to the “10 rules of good design,” offering a structured framework to evaluate and refine their concepts. Participants also developed additional sketches and received constructive feedback on their emerging plans, strengthening both the clarity and feasibility of their prototypes.

In the building phase, two open workshops were organised to deepen participants’ practical knowledge. In the first workshop, Juha Solantie from Paratiisin Hedelmät (Fruits of Paradise) led a hands-on session on urban fruit cultivation, during which the group planted three pear trees. Participants learned about varieties suited to the Finnish climate, techniques for growing trees in containers, and strategies for protecting them over winter. Following the workshop, a concise pear tree care guide was produced, compiling all the knowledge shared along with supplementary information into an accessible resource for ongoing maintenance.

The third workshop centred on sustainable mushroom cultivation and was facilitated by Chris Holtslag from Helsieni. During this session, the group renewed one of Turntable’s existing mushroom boxes, initiated a new smaller box, and assembled their own indoor mushroom-growing kits. Chris provided an introduction to different types of edible mushrooms suitable for home cultivation, covering substrate options, care requirements, and common challenges. This workshop offered participants a hands-on understanding of circular food production and provided skills that could directly support their prototype development.



FINAL EVENTS



7.1 Sweden

The NEB Stockholm Mini-Fest/Growing Beauty project presentation successfully brought together professionals, creators, and citizens for a full day of exchange and exploration inspired by the New European Bauhaus and this project. The public program was financed through the Growing Beauty project, enabling wide community participation, while the professional program was offered as a complementary initiative co-financed by Blivande. In total, around 300 participants attended the various parts of the fest throughout the day.

The professional exchange opened the event with presentations from the Joint Research Center, NEB Compass case studies from across Europe, and a panel discussion on navigating complexity in transformative urban work. Guests also joined a guided mingle and site tour at Frihamnstorget, further strengthening connections among practitioners working with sustainability, participation, and cultural innovation.

The public program invited residents to engage hands-on with the theme Growing Beauty through three creative and interdisciplinary workshops. Participants learned to grow their own mycelium art pieces, experimented with designing sand-bed habitats for wild bees, and took part in an interactive Playback Theatre session exploring stories and defining moments from local neighborhoods. These activities highlighted how beauty, ecology, and community storytelling can intersect in urban environments. The festival concluded with an uplifting cultural program culminating in Entwined, a contemporary circus performance exploring connection, communication, and the delicate balance of human relationships.

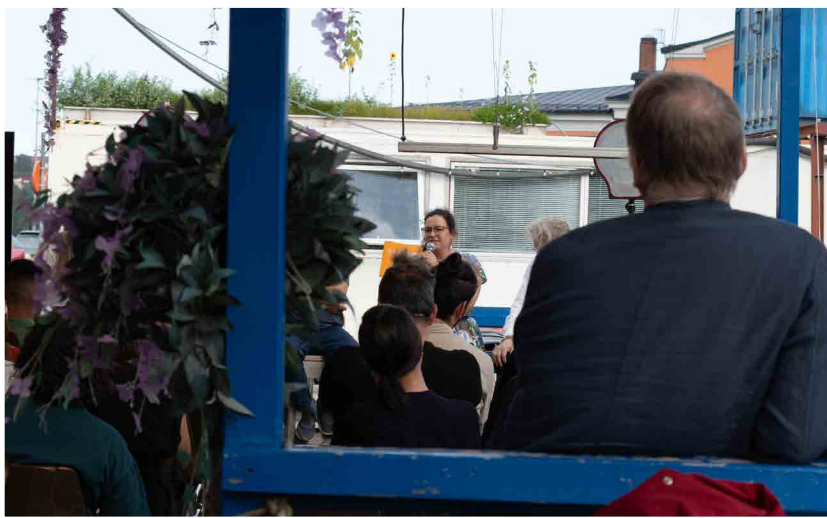
7.2 Finland

Dodo's final event of the Growing Beauty project, HarFest, brought together a vibrant mix of creativity, ecological thinking, hands-on learning, and live music at Turntable. The celebration showcased the project's harvest and highlighted the contributions of young people from Stockholm and Helsinki who developed this project's prototypes. These prototypes were presented in an exhibition where 200 visitors could meet some of the young creators.

The program offered a wide range of workshops exploring sustainable practices and hands-on ecological skills. It opened with the launch of the "Small Urban Farming and Permaculture Guide", followed by the Urban Nuts workshop, where participants learned to identify, harvest, and process tree nuts found in Finnish cities. The Super Edibles of the Future session encouraged attendees to imagine urban food systems in the year 2125, shaping speculative fruits and vegetables while discussing climate adaptation and future food cultures.

The afternoon continued with Future in Mind, a workshop addressing environmental emotions and personal well-being in times of ecological crisis. Participants also created ecological soap from used cooking oil in the EcoSoap workshop, learning about circular practices, while the Flower Wreath session invited visitors to craft seasonal bouquets and wreaths from Turntable's garden plants, offering a calm and creative way to engage with nature. In the evening, HarFest transitioned into a cultural gathering with performances by Sallan Tauti, Outi ja Olevaiset, and Hannaerika, accompanied by DJ Sakari between and after the live sets. Visitors enjoyed homemade treats from Dodo's garden and kitchen and freshly harvested honey from Turntable's bees.





KEEP GROWING BEAUTY

Growing Beauty marked not an ending, but the beginning of a longer journey we are committed to carrying forward within our organisations and beyond. What started as a youth focused collaboration has grown into a shared conviction that citizens of all ages should be empowered to shape their urban environments. The final phase of the project therefore focused on implementation and on prototyping how this work can continue within both partner organisations.

At Turntable, Dodo continued this trajectory by anchoring the project in seasonal, collective care practices that reflect the long term responsibility of collective urban green projects. Two autumn work parties were organised to prepare the site for winter, including protecting the pear trees, moving herbs into the greenhouse, and securing growing structures for the cold season. These shared work moments strengthened community ownership and ensured that the results of the project would live on beyond a single season.

Blivande, in turn, initiated the workshop series “Keep Growing Beauty” as a direct continuation of the project’s core values. Structured as a process where each workshop informed the next, the series began with an internal workgroup session focused on future dreaming followed by a community workshop at the container village Frihamnstorget that gathered ideas and concerns from a broader range of stakeholders. The process culminated in a public artistic workshop that set shared intentions for future work in the urban landscape.

As a powerful extension of this journey, Blivande is proud to announce that a larger scale related DUT project, Climate Quilts, has been funded. This visionary initiative will transform neglected urban areas across Europe into interconnected green quilts that enhance ecological health, foster community engagement, and strengthen urban resilience. Across four countries, the project will establish biodiverse mini gardens on underutilised urban plots in collaboration with municipalities, universities, and community organisations. Through eco aesthetics, regenerative agriculture, and collective design, each quilt will become both a living ecosystem and a shared cultural expression.

**What began as a project now
continues as a practice,
we keep growing beauty!**