

Horse Sanctuary

Relating to the regenerative process of a hay meadow

Study trip

Iceland and England March and August, 2019.

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The study trip was in two parts, to the west coast of Iceland and to England, which was part of the master course Studio Positions at AHO, discussing the theme: Coexistence - An animal Sanctuary. Visiting several destinations, the aim was to gain a greater understanding of the relations between architecture, human and animal, and culture.

The aim of the study trip was to critically discuss and question the coexistence between horses, landscapes, and humans. How can architecture be used to establish a new relationship between the environment, including humans and animals? Through investigating the environment of the horse, concerning its urban context and rural landscape.

The Intension

To visit landscape and buildings that sustainably adapt to nature, or adapt to the local ecology. And be able to study different relations between animals and humans, and find new knowledge in the friction of programs. Learning more about sociocultural facilities and landscapes, and to discuss the coexistence of wildlife, human, architecture and horses.



The use of hayfields has been going on for hundreds of years in Norway and has also influenced our cultural heritage. In history, the horse has been an important grazing animal in the operation of the field. This cultural heritage is strong in Norway as well as in Iceland.

A decrease in agriculture lands in Norway

It is only around 3 % of agricultural land left in Norway today. A small area of this is available for food production, and a scarce percentage of this is fertile soil (Bioforsk, 2018, 02:51). Due to climate change, erosion of productive soil has increased as a consequence of more extreme weather.

100 years ago, the Oslo region was the 7th biggest provider of agricultural lands in Norway. Today only 10 % of these lands are used for agriculture. With industrialized farming, areas with productive soil are left in decay.

The hay meadows help maintain a crucial gene bank of meadow and pasture plants that are important for the development of new plant species that can be adapted to a changing climate.¹

These landscapes are collective memories of the past and contain plant and soil resources for future investments. This makes it important to preserve fertile land in Norway, and question the interaction between landscape, structure, human and animal.

Looking at the grazing fields on Iceland's west coast, the vast fields are situated in a harsh climate and gives an insight into the use of the protective shelters, the placement of vernacular architecture and its geometry.

¹ [http://www.miljokommune.no/Documents/Naturmangfold/DN_handlingsplan_2009-6_nett%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.miljokommune.no/Documents/Naturmangfold/DN_handlingsplan_2009-6_nett%20(2).pdf)



Horses and natural regenerative process

Giving horses a sanctuary could result in new relationships with the environment and the recovery of hay meadows, which could protect fertile soil, produce fiber and with it community prosperity.

The natural regenerative process of hay meadows can be used to strengthen agricultural lands in meeting climate change. This method is based on using a periodical movement of grazing animals,

where the vegetation regularly is allowed to grow back into full recovery. Horses can be a part of this relationship. As a herd, they can live outside all year-round and are ideal to be moved periodically during the season.



Horses in the field

The use of horses in Norway has a history associated with industrial horse farms, the use of horses as machines and as racing horses. The use of herd animals have consequences for the vegetation and our ability to use the field for food production and protection of soils from erosion.

The hay meadow can easily withstand grazing in spring and late summer. By light pasture, a selection is maintained, where no plants outweigh each other. The horse contributes to this balance. Architecture can provide an organization of space, and make necessary territory when overlapping programs.

Architecture as a mediator in the landscape

Learning from the visited sites, the aim is to further discuss how to improve site-specific qualities and how to strengthen the connection to place, its identity and atmosphere. Aiming for wellbeing and ecological benefits for both humans and animals. Could architecture act as a mediator in the landscape? Could a new typology suggest an open structure where humans and horses meet, in co-existence with wildlife, architecture and the existing environment? A structure that opens for movement, and passage for fauna and horses?

1. Geometry and topography
2. The movement of a herd of horses
3. The gravitation of a rock making shelter from the wind



The structure in the picture below is placed in the landscape with an expression of shelter and function. The geometry and repetition of the structural elements make the design more resilient in a changing environment. What can we learn from the vernacular?

The roof engages with the surroundings and makes conditions based on the need of an animal. It is elevated to make movement underneath, to protect from winds and make a shelter depending on the season. The fluctuation in the design suggest change over time, making it part of the fabric, and in dialog with the place.

The study trip contributed to knowledge for discussing new spatial territories in seasonal balance. And to questions the amount of friction between programs. Which parameters should be present when implementing architecture in the landscape?

Can coexistence can be a part of our future understanding of community and land-use in the recovery of fertile soil and hay meadows. Can architecture can be a part of this relationship?

4. Old stables / barn merged with the topography to make shelter





From left to right 5,6,7.
Drawing Matter, archive
and farmyard at Shatwell,
Somerset

8. Stourhead Landscape
Garden and House

Visiting these destinations gives an understanding of changes over time and insight in broader ecologies. The impressions of new and old in England makes obvious the ability to plan for the future. This study trip has been an insight into the ecologies of place. Made through a journey from the rural landscapes of Iceland to the cultivation of nature and architecture in England, giving an overview of spatial interventions for coexistence, for both humans and animals.