

# Benchmarking of Island Visitor's Centres



Ideas for making Korpoström the  
No 1 Island Visitor's Centre in Finland

**HOW TO READ AN ISLAND**  
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# 1. Introduction

This work has carried me all around the world, to bigger and smaller islands in almost all continents and all oceans. My starting point is the Korpoström Archipelago Centre, situated on the island of Korpo in the middle of the Archipelago Sea. The facilities of this centre, completed in 2004, are big and modern. In the summertime, there are lots of activities in the centre and the adjoining harbour. But the winters are very quiet.

This is actually the reason for my travels. The complex in Korpoström is too big and too expensive to shut down during the winter season, which can be done with smaller museums and buildings in the archipelago area. This is why the owners appointed a working group for planning all-year activities at the centre. As a member of this working group, as well as a student of the course "How to read an island", I decided to combine these two interests in this essay. In striving for vital activity at the Korpoström Archipelago Centre - all through the year - I wanted to have a 360° look around on different Island Visitor's Centres of the world. What do they offer, and what lessons are there to be learned?

## 1.1. Definition of an Island Visitor's Centre

What is an Island Visitor's Centre? My hopes and my expectations were to find a place, somewhere in the world, where you could get to know island and/or archipelago matters in a general way. If not in the range of "all islands of the world", at least I expected to find a centre focusing on all islands in a distinct area or in a country. After spending numerous hours on the Internet, searching for something that would fulfil my own expectations, the result is: there isn't any. Nowhere in the world, there is a physical visiting centre or a museum focusing solely on islands or archipelagos.

However, there are, of course, museums and Visitor's Centres on islands. These centres focus on the one island where they are situated, or have a totally different orientation. Although there are no - in my opinion - pure Island and/or Archipelago Knowledge Centres elsewhere, there are lessons to be learned from all the different island centres and museums that can be found.

## 1.2. The task of the essay

In this essay, I will examine the possibilities and options of Korpoström, by studying other Visitor's Centres in the world. I will describe different Island Visitor's Centres focusing on different themes. I will also include some centres that are not situated on islands. The chapters on different themes can be seen as short essays in themselves - since quite many different centres are described, there will be an evaluation in the end of every chapter.

Many of the centres I describe could be placed in several of the different categories, but this is of no major importance. However, the essay is defined by a certain amount of

serendipity. I will describe the good examples I have found, picking out the raisins in the cake. The main task of this work is not to evaluate the Visitor's Centres mentioned, but to find new ideas and new avenues of reflection for picturing the future of the Korpoström Archipelago Centre.

## 2. Facts and location of the Archipelago Centre Korpoström

In picturing activities for the Archipelago Centre of Korpoström, it is an advantage to have good knowledge of the geographical surroundings as well as the background of the centre.

### 2.1. The island of Korpo

Korpo is an island located right between the Finnish mainland and the main island of Åland. In 2009, Korpo, a former municipality of Finland, was consolidated with Houtskär, Iniö, Nagu and Pargas to form the new city of Pargas. Korpo consists of 2000 islands and skerries, and the main island is called Kyrklandet. Only one tenth of the surface area is land, the rest is water. Apart from the main island, there are 11 islands inhabited all year around. The most remote islands in the Archipelago Sea, Jurmo and Utö, are also part of Korpo.

The employment pattern of Korpo has always been a bit different to the adjoining big islands. In Nagu and Houtskär the highest percentage of people at work has represented the primary sector. Inhabitants in Korpo have often been civil servants or officers of different authorities or the military.

In the summer months the population rises from around 800 to 5000. From Turku, there is a two hour drive to Korpo, including two road ferries; Pargas-Nagu and Nagu-Korpo. On the north side of the island there is a ferry terminal operating ferries to Houtskär, Norrskata and the Åland islands. The popular Archipelago Trail ([saaristonrengastie.fi](http://saaristonrengastie.fi)) runs through Korpo.

### 2.2. The village of Korpoström

The village of Korpoström, on the south side of Kyrklandet, is one of the truly historical landings in the Archipelago Sea. Korpoström is mentioned in the oldest sea cards. In earlier times the area was an important hub for shipping - this was the place where locals as well as sailors used to provide themselves with goods of all kind. A monument of the naval battle of Korpoström in 1743 tells about the battle where the Russians defeated the Swedish fleet. Also today, Korpoström is an archipelagic stronghold. The place is a junction, where the road ends and the sea begins. To the south, the beautiful archipelago landscape, including the National Park of the Archipelago, opens up. The village includes buildings inhabited all year round, as well as summer cottages.

### **2.3. Korpoström Archipelago Centre**

In 1998, the planning of an Archipelago Centre in Korpoström started. Involved in the process were the Åbo Akademi University Endowment, the municipality of Korpo, Metsähallitus (a state-owned enterprise in the natural resources sector) and persons with expertise in the line of museums. Michael Granite and Bengt Lundsten won the architectural competition, completed in 2001. The centre was built during the years 2003 and 2004. A real estate company was founded for building and maintenance of the property and an association, Sjöhusföreningen, was founded to hold the strings for exhibitions and other cultural activities (Karlsson 2004).

The opening home page of the centre states: “Korpoström Archipelago Centre is a centre for science and art alike, united by the archipelago and its nature.” In addition to business and private events venues, a guest harbour and a restaurant is operated from the centre by a private entrepreneur. Korpoström meets visitors throughout the year, but mostly in the summer. The buildings include exhibition rooms, conference facilities and an auditorium, the hotel and a restaurant. In addition, the marine biologists of Åbo Akademi University and Metsähallitus operate at Korpoström. The centre constitutes an important basis for field mapping, collecting of biological material and field trips for smaller groups of students. Concerning research, the central location in the Archipelago Sea - in the middle of the Biosphere Reserve and bordering the Archipelago National Park - facilitates regular testing, diving operations and field experiments in a number of key habitats.

However, the first years of the Korpoström Archipelago Centre were marked by conflicts. Disagreements between Sjöhusföreningen and the owners resulted in the forced resigning of the project manager, and the association was set aside. During the ten years history of the centre, the activities in the centre have been very conventional - different venues and exhibitions - with a focus on summer tourism.

In the beginning of 2015, it was announced that Åbolands Skärgårdsstiftelse (Åboland Archipelago Foundation) was to become the new main owner of the Archipelago Centre Korpoström. Åbo Akademi University Endowment donated all its shares, worth four million euros, in the real estate company Sunnan Ab to the foundation Åbolands Skärgårdsstiftelse. The foundation now owns 78 percent of the shares, the city of Pargas and Metsähallitus sharing the rest. The donation also includes a house of prayer adjacent to the property (Lolax 2015). Åbolands Skärgårdsstiftelse has appointed a working group responsible for the planning of exhibitions and other cultural activities in the centre for the next coming years.

### **2.4. Looking at the centre with de Bonos “Six Thinking Hats”**

Trying to get an objective view of the centre, I will use the method Six Thinking Hats by de Bono (2009). The method describes a tool for group discussion and individual thinking involving six coloured hats. The premise of the method is that the human brain

thinks in a number of distinct ways, which can be deliberately challenged. The six distinct “thinking” hats are identified and assigned a colour:

- Information White - What are the facts?
- Emotions Red - Intuitive gut reactions or statements of emotional feeling
- Discernment Black - Identifying reasons to be cautious and conservative
- Optimistic response Yellow - Identifying benefits, seeking harmony
- Creativity Green - statements of provocation and investigation
- Managing Blue - What is the goal? Summary.

#### ***2.4.1. The white hat – Facts and Figures of the Korpoström Archipelago Centre***

- Coordinates: 60°6'44"N and 21°36'3"E
- The main building of 1269,5 m<sup>2</sup> harbour an exhibition hall, conference facilities, an auditorium, a restaurant, meeting rooms, offices and a dry lab.
- The hotel wing consists of 16 double rooms, with a yearly capacity of 11680 overnight stays.
- The other buildings of the centre are
  - a service building and a shop (built together)
  - a technical building, including a wet laboratory and workshops
  - a small harbour office (not heated)
  - a house-of-prayer
- The Korpoström guest harbour offers c. 70 boat spaces

#### ***2.4.2. The red hat – Emotions, Feelings and Gut Reactions***

- From an archipelago point of view, the location is splendid, in the middle of the Archipelago Sea, located in a biosphere area, next to a national park
- The facilities of the centre are impressive
- Some people still think it is an oversized boasted building in a sensitive archipelago environment
- The historical setting is fascinating
- The centre feels far away – the distance in time from the city centre of Pargas is the same as to Helsinki

#### ***2.4.3. The black hat – Cautiousness and Scepticism***

- The centre is located at the end of the road - it is not a place you happen to drive by. It is situated 9 km from the centre of Korpo and 11 km from the Archipelago Trail
- Among the general public, Korpoström is still marked by the conflicts that characterized the first years of the centre
- There is hardly any free land around the centre, which limits the outdoor activities that could be developed
- The most effective marketing can be done when a facility is new - it is more challenging to promote an already known site

- Among some locals, the centre has a reputation of not being a place for down-to-earth activities
- There is no beach, not even in the neighbourhood
- The hotel cannot accommodate more than a maximum of 32 persons, and there is no budget alternative close by.

#### ***2.4.4. The yellow hat – Benefits and Positive Speculations***

- Even before the centre was built, Korpoström was an established port for sailors and this is still the case
- The grocery shop Strandboden is open during high season, and grocery delivery to Korpoström guest harbour is arranged during low season.
- There are already several established activities, such as concerts during Korpo Sea Jazz
- At the centre, the sea is at your doorstep. This gives many opportunities for arranged boat trips to the archipelago, rowing, underwater explorations through diving/snorkling/camera, canoeing
- The facilities can be used for conferences and meetings for up to 150 persons without problems

#### ***2.4.5. The green hat – Creative Thinking***

- If there is an “empty” island nearby, an adventure island for children and childish grownups could be established
- The swimming “problem” could be solved by an outdoor pool or a raft/a floating sauna that can be transported
- The house-of-prayer could be used for something unexpected – a wedding suite, or the interior of a submarine?

#### ***2.4.6. The blue hat – Control of Thinking, Summary***

- The Archipelago Centre of Korpoström is a fantastic place with all possibilities, which has suffered from a difficult start including conflicts and economical recession, and a somewhat too conventional business, that, in combination with bad economic times, has failed to attract enough visitors.
- With the right ingredients, inspired chefs and a detailed recipe, the Archipelago Centre of Korpoström can surely develop into a centre that earns its name.

### **3. Visiting centres of different themes and regions**

As said in the beginning, there are museums on island and island museums. To show the range of different visiting centres and/or museum on islands; here is an example what kind of visiting centres you can find on the French islands:

- Île de Batz : a garden visitor center. (A project in the lighthouse of the island will be completed by 2017).
- Ouessant: Lighthouse museum, “Ecomusée du Niou” displaying history and culture of the island, a lighthouse with exhibitions.
- Sein: visitor centre on recent history of the island (after the II World War).
- Groix: Local island museum.
- Belle île: Sarah Bernhardt museum, lighthouse exhibition, a nature visitor centre.
- Houat: local museum on seaweeds and sea resources.
- Hoedic: summary exhibition on island history and local usages.
- Île d’Arz: museum on captains and sailors.
- Îles aux moines: Cromlec’h and standing stones exhibition (ie Celtic museum).
- Île d’Yeu: Fishermen and rescuers museum.
- Île d’Aix: Napoleon & history museum, African museum (Bredin 2015)

This list gives a good overview on visiting centres on islands in general. A vast majority focuses on the **history of the island**, sometimes with a clear viewpoint on a special matter – as in the French example the museums on captains, fishermen and Napoleon. The second most common centre on islands is some kind of **nature visiting centre**, ranging from garden visitor centres on land to those focusing on marine subjects. Then we have **art and exhibitions**, on islands quite often displayed in a setting that stimulates the imagination. The fourth group of centres have a clear **cultural and/or sociological focus** - often in strong connection with the historical past, but not always (especially true of those centres that are maintained by local development groups). These visiting centres are often combined with **tourism information**. At last, there are the **museums that only happen to be situated on an island**, as the African museum on Île d’Aix and the Sarah Bernhardt museum on Belle île.

Looking at islands overall, I will add three more groups of interest; **centres for research, biosphere areas** and **(virtual) groups for island knowledge**.

### 3.1. Visitor’s Centres with a historical focus – island life through time

Museums focusing on island life now and then are the most common island visiting centres that can be found. This comes as no surprise, since different kinds of local folklore museums can be found in virtually all cities, towns, villages and inhabited islands around the world.

#### *Korpo*

Narrowing the search for “archipelago museums”, one of the absolutely first hits on Google is interesting, because it is situated in – Korpo. The SKÄRMuseum (Archipelago museum) in Verkan guest harbour, opened in 2012, emphasizes everyday life in the archipelago. The exhibition includes tools and devices related to fishing, for example an extinct fishing method known as seine fishing. In a short video the last “notkung” (leader



of the seine fishing league) in Korpo explains how seine fishing is done. On display are also objects related to smuggling, such as master smuggler Hjalmar Mäkelä's sled that was used for smuggling liquor during the Prohibition era.

There are several museums along the Finnish coast that are named Archipelago Museums: The Archipelago Museum in Rönnsås (Loviisa), The Archipelago Museum in Lappo (Åland), Pentala Archipelago Museum in Espoo and Kustavi Archipelago Museum - just to name a few. Interesting are also the visiting centres that consists of a whole village or are active parts of the village life, such as Granösund fishing village in Replot or the island Ohtakari outside Kokkola - a fishing village that as a whole can be described as a museum area.

### *Isle of Skye*

An interesting international example is the Clan Donald Skye's Visitor Centre located on the Scottish island Isle of Skye. This is a huge estate, including seven interconnecting galleries in the Museum of the Isles "Taigh Tasgaidh Chlann Domhnaill", 16 hectares of fascinating gardens and 8000 hectares of land, where people can go hunting with a team from the personnel. The interesting twist is to discover the history of the Highlands and Islands through the story of one family; the powerful Clan Donald. The galleries, each with their own theme, take you through 1500 years of the history and culture of the area once known as the Kingdom of the Isles. This sea kingdom had its own unique culture and language, Gaelic. The MacDonalds - or Clan Donald - were the Lords of the Isles and sit at the heart of the history of Gaeldom ([www.clandonald.com/heritage/](http://www.clandonald.com/heritage/)).

### ***Lessons to be learned?***

Looking at different kinds of Finnish folklore and archipelago museums on islands - what do they have in common? In short, these museums have three aspirations: to picture island life through time, to give an overview of fishing methods and tools, and to present different (wooden) boats and engines used in the archipelago. In addition, the vast majority is situated in houses and landscapes characteristic of the time period they are describing.

If Korpoström wants to leap out, the folklore track is not the way to go. If striving for something unique, the answer doesn't lie in picturing how life in the archipelago has been lived until the 1950ies. Museums like this gain a lot from their natural settings, which gives a feeling of genuineness to the visit. The buildings of Korpoström are neither old nor genuine, neither are the closest surroundings.

However, Korpoström and the The SKÄRMuseum could take advantage of the fact that they are situated quite close to each other. For example;



Could a small part of the exhibition in the archipelago museum be moved to Korpoström, with more information on the museum, its opening hours and the possibilities to get there if you arrived to Korpoström by boat? This is of course

true of all tourist attractions in the neighbourhood.

Do note – history of the archipelago can be presented in many different ways. Although there is no urgent need for another museum picturing seine fishing, there are many other approaches to be discussed. Considering the unique features of the Archipelago Sea (Prost 2015), which features could be displayed?



Going way back in time, the ice age that gave birth of the *highest island density* in the world and/or the birth of the *sea of brackish water* could be one angle. Then again, the ice age is maybe not the most unknown part of our history. Can a more interesting twist be found?



The history of *ship wrecks* could be a rewarding way to present life in the archipelago during 500 years, and international shipping a good way to place Korpoström in an international context. This angle is not very common, even though it is a subject that both children and grown ups find very fascinating. Here, the setting of the Archipelago centre is also an advantage; boats in the harbour are literally at the doorstep of the centre. The boats could just be admired, or used to transport tourists to wrecks in the vicinity of the centre. Different seaways of the past could also be included – here the island of Fagerholm could play an interesting part, situated at one of the most important fairways of the region. By displaying ships of different nationalities, the centre could attract international tourists.



Looking back 100 – 150 years, the *high frequency of twin deliveries* could be an unexpected theme. Also, the school system in Finland got off to a start during in the latter half of nineteenth century, e.g. *the school on Utö* got started in 1884. None of these two could solely make up a whole exhibition, but thinking in terms of “Children of the archipelago” could make the task easier.



Thinking of modern times, it could be interesting to picture the way cars have invaded the archipelago, in building bridges, roads and the development of *the extensive network of ferry services*.

As in the example of the Clan Donald Centre;



Could life in the archipelago be pictured through one single family through time? Or could it be done by looking at life one single island in the Archipelago Sea?

At the Clan Donald Centre, the Museum Manager presents a free talk on an item chosen from the collection, every Wednesday during the open season from March until October.



Could this be copied in Korpoström: free, open talks on archipelago history, marine subjects or art, held regularly during high season? Not as often as once a week, but at least once a month. Important would be that the talks are always held at the same point in time, for example the first Monday every month.

### 3.2. Visitor's Centres with a focus on nature – terrestrial and marine biology

The second most common type of visiting centres on islands focuses on environmental issues. In Finland, the nature centres of Metsähallitus (*Naturum* in Swedish) are well known. Although only the Blåmusslan Naturum is situated on an island, I will give a short overview of the coastal nature centres, since some of them have an orientation that can be interesting for the development of Korpoström.

Out of totally 28 Finnish nature centres, there are five centres along the Finnish coastline. They are all associated to the surrounding nature, but with different focuses. Counting from the north, these centres are:

- **Liminganlahti Visitor Centre**; focuses on wetlands, encourages inexperienced bird enthusiasts to explore the enchanting world of birds.
- **Kalajoki Visitor Centre**; informs about the best outdoor destinations in the Bothnian Bay area, the underwater world of the Bothnian Bay and tells tales of some of the famous folk who used to live in the area.
- **Kvarken Nature Centre Terranova**; the globe's developmental history, the various ice ages and the land uplift phenomenon.
- **Archipelago Nature Centre Blue Mussel** (Blåmusslan) presents the natural land and seascape of the archipelago, above and below the sea's surface.
- **Ekenäs Nature Centre** provides information on the changing nature of the Baltic Sea and western Uusimaa archipelago. Includes an exhibition for children with underwater sounds and a dry aquarium with invasive species

The nature centres of Metsähallitus are roughly divided into two groups: One with a clear focus on guidance, mainly for children from schools and kindergartens, the other group concentrates on day visitors, often in clear connection with tourism.

Unfortunately, the nature centre of Blåmusslan (at the closest range to Korpoström) doesn't smoothly fit in to any of the two groups. For now, the future of Blåmusslan is uncertain. The most successful centres are those situated in tourist resorts or close to bigger cities, such as the centres in Ylläs, Kuusamo, Oulanka or the new centre Haltia close to Helsinki (Rehn 2016). Haltia is considered to be "The Finnish Nature Centre" that brings the crown jewels of the Finnish wilderness together under a single roof and is the gateway to all of Finland's national parks.

#### *Kalajoki*

During winter holidays in February 2016, I visited the Kalajoki Visitor Centre together with four children at the ages 2, 4, 9 and 13. I decided to do a highly unscientific study on what kind of activities the children were drawn to. These were the top five activities:

- 1) A submarine, that you were able to steer yourself to find treasures on the bottom
- 2) A simple, marine playground
- 3) A magnetic map, where you were to put magnets with names of capital cities, islands and parts of the Baltic Sea on the right spots
- 4) A computer game, where you should combine the bird song sounding with the right bird

- 5) A computer camouflaged like a painting on the wall, showing pictures that were changing

An important customer segment is families with children – as seen with this “experiment”, also quite cheap activities can be triggering.

On the French island of Houat, the Ecosarium reveals in engrossing detail the crucial role played by minuscule plankton in the oceans in keeping life going on our planet. In the Lighthouse on the Danish island Anholt, there is an observation spot "Sælspotten" with strong binoculars, where you can follow seals up close. On the Swedish island Gullholmen you can find Gullholmen Nature and Bird Museum, assembling mainly the species found on Härmanös nature reserve and its surroundings. And so on... this could probably be a never-ending list.

Many islands highlight the distinct features of the nature on the island in a way or another, ranging from brochures or webpages to a physical place you can visit. This is also a way of protecting the environment, by making visitors aware of the sensitive species and areas of the island.

### ***Lessons to be learned?***

Looking at the nature centres of Metsähallitus, there are in fact several visiting centres focusing on the marine, brackish water and freshwater environments in Finland. Two of them are within a relatively close range from Korpoström (in Kasnäs and in Ekenäs). However, at least some centres on more remote sites have problems with declining number of visitors, as is true of the nature centre of Blåmusslan, where the permanent exhibition has never been renewed. The idea of Metsähallitus of renting out Blåmusslan to entrepreneurs has not yet yielded results (Sandberg 2016).



However, since Metsähallitus is one of the owners of the house, could there be a more extensive presentation of the activities in the National Park in the centre?

Visiting centres with a focus on nature often gain from the scenery; for example via nature trails showing different species in their natural surroundings. In Korpoström, there are limited possibilities to make pathways because of the landowning situation. On the other hand, the sea is at our doorstep:



Both arranged trips as well as possibilities to rent/borrow rowing boats could be further discussed. A nature trail by rowing?

Korpoström possesses a unique opportunity in having experts on marine biology housed in the building. From spring to autumn, researchers and students from the Åbo Akademi University, as well as foreign partners of the academy, use the archipelago centre as a base for field studies, experiments and desk jobs.



It would be of outermost importance to find external financing to include the popular science of marine biology in the fixed activities of the centre. (Further discussions on this topic can be found in 2.7.)

### 3.3. Visitor's Centres with a focus on art

#### *Värmdö*

On Värmdö in the Stockholm Archipelago, the combination of art and the archipelago is pushed to the limit. *Artipelag* is an international venue for art, good food, events and activities, just 20 minutes from the city centre of Stockholm. The name *Artipelag* is a combination of Art, Activities and Archipelago. The centre, created by Björn Jakobson, founder of the well-known company "BabyBjörn", opened in June 2012. The facilities are huge: 10,400 sqm on 3 levels, including a large art hall and an enormous concert, event and studio locale.

#### *Naoshima, Channel Islands & Fogo Island*

Art Islands are nothing new. As a matter of fact, they're becoming increasingly popular travel destinations. The promise of encountering new works in a foreign land is not always enough to lure visitors in today's art-saturated world of international fairs, museum exhibitions, gallery shows and choked social media feeds. But to spend true downtime with art is a luxury some are willing to spend large sums of money to experience (Graham 2015). Naoshima in the Seto Inland Sea of southern Japan is one example of an art island (Williams 2011), the Channel Islands (UK) and Fogo Island in Newfoundland two others.

#### ***Lessons to be learned?***

The Korpoström Archipelago Centre can offer facilities for exhibitions, as well as space for both art tuition, courses, seminars and accommodation. Art exhibitions on islands are often displayed in a setting that stimulates the imagination – in lighthouses, old boathouses or in buildings with spectacular views and good light conditions. The views from the centre are impressive and the hall on the second floor is spacious - although its suitability for art exhibitions is out of my expertise.

However, building up an art centre, as the example *Artipelag*, would demand a substantial amount of money. Concerning solitary art exhibitions, the centre itself is probably not enough to attract any crowds of visitors – the location is too remote. But, seeing Korpoström as one important cog in a cogwheel changes the whole picture.



Korpo Art Island – why not?

In a way, it already is. The village Österretais already harbours Gallery Nestor, open in the summertime, and the Barefoot Path Contemporary Art Exhibition, located in the woods behind Hotel Nestor. AARK - Archipelago Art Residency in Korpo - is a non profit

artist-run, local association, that welcomes international art professionals from all disciplines for whom nature and the surrounding seaside could be an interesting theme to work on. Many active artists inhabit the island of Korpo and the surrounding archipelago, and many of these artists have already done cooperation and networking through for example the project AIA - Artists in the Archipelago and the exhibition Contemporary Art Archipelago.



Concerning art, the key lies in networking, A focus on art would definitely have to be done in cooperation with art professionals and art associations in Korpo – and/or in the whole Turku area.

### **3.4. Visitor's Centres with a cultural or social focus, involving local volunteers**

#### *Bere Island*

Bere Island lies in West Cork, in the South West of Ireland. The island has a population of just over 200 and is situated 2kms offshore from the town of Castletownbere. It has a thriving community providing a wide range of events and activities for both islanders and visitors alike. The island is rich in archaeological sites dating from the Bronze Age through to medieval times. The focal point for the social activities and the enhancement of Bere Island's heritage is the Bere Island Heritage & Information Centre.

The Heritage Centre became a reality in 2009, with funding from the county council and the ISLA Project (an INTERREG project which examined governance issues on small islands throughout Europe). The centre is an important reference, meeting and information point for both islanders and visitors. It is home to The Bere Island Experience Exhibition detailing the unique history and lifestyle of Bere Island, as well as temporary themed exhibitions throughout the year. The Heritage Centre offers genealogy books & web sites, maps, a graveyard database and a library, as well as retreats, meeting rooms, workshops and courses on traditional skills and so on.

An annual membership, by the cost of 20€/year, is available for islanders for the Heritage Centre. The membership includes free access to all exhibitions, free Internet access and 10% discount in the cafe. Heritage Week events are organised annually by the centre.

#### *Kastellorizo*

Kastellorizo is a Greek island located in the southeastern Mediterranean; 2 kilometres off the south coast of Turkey and 125 km east of Rhodes. The island has a blood-stained history – out of 15 000 inhabitants at the end of the nineteenth century, there are 450 inhabitants on the island today. It is estimated that up to 30 000 emigrants live in Australia, where they are known as "Kazzies". The association Friends of Kastellorizo (formerly *Australian* Friends) was established to help create a positive future for the island. It supports programs of an educational, cultural, environmental and economic nature for the benefit of the local population of Kastellorizo and its diaspora. The

projects are delivered with the assistance of Drasi Kastellorizou (Action Kastellorizo) which is a non-profit organisation formed by active residents to improve the living conditions of the island, chiefly through their recycling programmes.

Drasi Kastellorizo maintains an information centre on the island. Partly it is used for the organizations own meetings and activities; partly it is open for visitors on the island. The centre provides books and booklets on the island, as well as information on the local heritage and the various projects. After a 100-year long break, olive oil is again produced on Kastellorizo. Among other local products this oil is sold in the information centre, as a way to fund the ambitions of the organization.

### *Fågelbrolandet, Nämndö & Runmarö*

On the website skargardsmuseet.org, the Archipelago Museum in Stavsås village on Fågelbrolandet as well as the affiliates - one in Sand on Nämndö and one in Uppeby on Runmarö - are presented. The islands are all located in the municipality of Värmdö east of Stockholm. The association "Föreningen Skärgårdsmuseet", that runs the museums, have an interesting system with voluntary hosts.

The hosts of the museums are the association's public face and thus their most important representative. "A hosts main characteristics is to be a good listener and to meet visitors in a professional manner. A museum host of the archipelago museum should be passionate about the archipelago, and have knowledge in substances such as history, geology and boating."

The work is structured in a way that one salaried museum host works from Monday to Friday during July and August. During the weekends of July and August, plus off-season days when the museum is open, two association members handle services voluntarily. There are also voluntary guides bound up with the museum – this work is also voluntary, although the guides get training by the museum. When there is a visiting group that hasn't booked a guide, a museum host takes care of them and make them feel welcome.

### ***Lessons to be learned?***

How can Korpoström invite the local community to be a vibrant part of the activities of the centre? A step forward has already been taken, by dividing the work of the centre partly into "guided activities" mainly driven by the owners, partly "free activities". The guided activities are planned as far as possible as thematic entities for one to two years, whereas the free activities are especially important to involve islanders and visitors. These activities can take the form of concerts, festivals, theme days, seminars, workshops, film presentations, theatre/performances and courses. Organizers of the free activities are associations, individuals and other actors with or without a connection to the cultural field.

For example, during 2016, the Handicraft Association of Korpo will organize weaving and craft activity in the small exhibition hall. There will be a craft exhibition, and the association will organize classes and open workshops including sail sewing, weaving and felting.

This is also a step forward in including volunteers into the activities of the centre. This is, however, a topic to be discussed further down in the process, when the centre have more to offer. The same goes for membership – what can the centre offer for a private person, alternatively an association or a company? What will it have to offer in the future?



For more activities in the centre by local associations and organisations, the opportunity to use the facilities should be better promoted. Maybe there is a need for guidelines for associations, so that different associations are being met in the same way.

Many (most?) centres strive to collect information of the island: photographs, genealogical data, books and so on. The Archipelago Sea is blessed with a plenitude of books on the area, many of them of high quality. Through Blanka, the library collaboration between libraries in the municipality of Kimito and Pargas city, you can find a majority of the books. However, these books are spread out on nine different libraries.



It feels obvious that an Archipelago Centre would have a collection of Archipelago Literature. To lower the costs, this could be an on-going project. A smaller amount of books could be purchased every year, but books could also be obtained by donations. The donators would get their names on a visible spot in the library.

As a small comfort, most visiting centres are struggling with low visiting numbers in the winter. This is a greeting from Bere island: “We need more visitors to the heritage centre especially in the winter time. The summer visitor numbers are growing every year. This year we started running fitness classes there to get people in. We are also trying to start a gym”.



The big hall on the second floor of the centre would be suitable for different fitness events; it is important to keep an open mind for different possibilities.

### **3.5. Visitor’s Centres with a focus on tourism**

This is, in short, an overwhelming subject. Naturally, all centres have a focus on tourism to some extent; anything else would be highly suspicious. But lets have a look at some examples on four different islands.



## *Koster Islands*

Usually, the tourism information of the municipalities is located in the city centre, not on the island(s). This is the case in Pargas, as well as in Strömstad on the Swedish west coast. In the late 1990s, 3/4 of all phone calls to the tourism office of Strömstad concerned the Koster Islands. Back then, Koster participated in a Leader 2 project covering all islands in the county Västra Götaland. One sub-project was the establishing of a local tourist office on Koster – everything under one roof; information on activities, guiding, renting rooms and bikes, providing an overview of the service on the island etc. However, when the municipality understood that the EU would not finance the entire tourism office, the whole project was put down (Arén 2015).

Hans Arén, one of the driving forces in the local society of Koster, regrets that there still isn't a pure visiting centre on the island. At the time being, both Hotel Koster and Koster Gardens provides good tourist information for visitors - but commercially driven actors always have a different focus than a centre that works for the best of the whole island society.

## *Anholt*

Arén also gives two good examples of islands with good tourism activities. On the small Danish island Anholt, residents have founded a small company, Anholt Tourist Office, supported by the municipality. Firstly, the company rent summer cottages of the island, giving the business a certain income. Secondly, it provides information on various service facilities, handing out maps of the island, assists with contacts to various businesses etc. The office, open year round, is in connection with the ferry office. It has two part-time employees, one also employed part-time by the ferry company.

## *Ven*

Ven, an island in Oresund, is visited by a large number of tourists. In addition to the tourist office, all companies have issued a small, but beautiful and informative booklet about all of the island's entrepreneurs. A basic condition for this is a highly developed, voluntary cooperation between the island's entrepreneurs. All the entrepreneurs of the island seem to have been trained to become "ambassadors" for the island as a whole. Together it creates an atmosphere of cooperation, cosiness and joviality, which ultimately benefit all of the island's entrepreneurs (Arén 2015).

## *Lake Larsmo*

Mention the words summer, sea and islands to a tourist – what do many, at least the younger generation, think about? Swimming. Which is not that easily done at Korpoström. In Larsmo in the Ostrobothnian archipelago you can find Strandis, a restaurant and cafe, shop and fish smokery, offering both camping & cabins. At the moment they are working on giving the regional maritime history life through stories and details in interior decorating, menus, additional services and products.

However, Strandis is also a good place for organising parties, much thanks to the saunaboat M/S Gloskär. On board the boat you can relax, enjoy the scenery, eat good food, take a bath in the sauna and swim at the same time. In the wintertime the sauna boat rests anchored in the harbour, and is open for winter swimming.

### ***Lessons to be learned?***

Good cooperation between entrepreneurs seems to be a key factor for successful tourism on an island. In an archipelago such as the Archipelago Sea, cooperation between entrepreneurs on adjoining islands can be equally important.



Can entrepreneurs in Korpo, and/or in the archipelago as a whole, be attracted to involve Korpoström in their activities? For example by putting an office or place at the jetty at their disposal (or to a reduced price). This concerning especially tourism entrepreneurs arranging trips in the archipelago, turning Korpoström into a junction between land and sea.

Sailing in the archipelago doesn't necessarily involve a visit to Pargas and the main tourist information – the distance is several hours, depending on boat. According to personnel on Korpoström, visitors often ask for information on service and places of interest.



Young people from Korpo could be engaged as tourist guides, and a corner of the centre could accommodate thorough tourism information in text and pictures.



Concerning swimming, could the saunaboat in Larsmo give some ideas for similar activities at Korpoström? Both for adults searching for new experiences, and for (older) children looking for a place to swim. The boat/raft could be anchored and used by the pier, when it is not booked for a group and transported to a place with better swimming possibilities.

### **3.6. Museums and other visiting sites placed on islands**

Many museums on islands don't necessarily have a focus on the island itself. Two examples are the African museum on Île d'Aix and the Sarah Bernhardt museum on Belle île. If a museum or a visiting centre of any sort is interesting enough, the location is of secondary importance.

### ***Lessons to be learned?***

During the first 10 years of the centre, there has been a striving to develop the centre of Korpoström into a centre focusing on the archipelago, art and the environment. If there is a true will to turn Korpoström into an archipelago centre attracting visitors all year round, there is one important - highly financial - question to be answered: *How many years can be given away for this process?*

Since the opening in 2005, the centre has had difficulties getting off the ground. The centre has been operating in a time period when the Finnish economy has been fluctuating heavily. Companies, universities and other educational institutions have had less money to spend on recreation and distant seminars and conferences, which directly have influenced facilities such as the Korpoström Archipelago Centre. Especially in the wintertime, the occupancy of the hotel rooms has been very low. The figures speak for themselves; in 2015, the occupancy was below 10% (Jansson 2016).

At the time being, the facilities are still quite new and in good condition. However, there will come a day (unfortunately sooner than later), when there will be a need for upgrading and refurbishing the buildings. These costs exceed the yearly expenses for heating and electricity many times over.

The efforts to put Korpoström Archipelago Centre on the map should be target-oriented and intense for the years to come. But for how many years? Although my own hopes are that this day will never come, it could be wise to put a mental deadline for the endeavours. When is the time to admit that the archipelago centre won't succeed on the path it was chosen to go down on? When is the time to change direction – and in what direction? Under the auspices of what authority? In 20 years, is the centre in Korpoström a casino, a NASA monitoring centre, a rehabilitation home for sex- or drug addiction, a brewery or an underwater surveillance centre of the Finnish (Russian?) army – time will tell.

### **3.7. Visitor's Centres with a focus on science and research**

The difference between this subheading and the subheading 3.2 (concerning visiting centres focusing on nature) lies in the clear connection to a research institute, giving a hallmark on the activities of the centre. Also, under this subheading, I have been forced to skip the demand for an island location. Concerning Korpoström, I still think this is a significant issue - the presence of both the marine biologists of Åbo Akademi University and the researchers of Metsähallitus is too an important factor to be overseen.

The interest for the state of seas of the world has been growing rapidly over the last years. In the Baltic Sea, mass occurrence of blue green algae has raised the awareness the general public. Globally, people are increasingly beginning to open their eyes for the enormous islands of plastic in the oceans.

#### *Gothenburg*

Since 2006, the University of California, Los Angeles, has developed a programme on how to teach the public about current discoveries in ocean sciences, called *Communicating Ocean Sciences to Informal Audiences* (COSIA). The concept is offered as university courses at 25 different universities in the United States. Now it is also taken to Sweden. The University of Gothenburg, in cooperation with Universeum, Maritime Museum's aquarium, Havets Hus and the Naturum on Koster, want to find new ways to

reach out to the public. The EU project “Sea for Society”, including nine countries, has found that people's lack of knowledge about the sea is an obstacle to the sustainable use of the sea. Therefore, students in marine sciences - aspiring scientists and teachers - will learn how to pass on marine research and knowledge to the public in informal settings such as science centres or public aquariums (Eliasson 2015).

### *Newport*

In Oregon State University (OSU), COSIA is taught regularly. However, this university has had a Visitor Centre for a long time: the Hatfield Marine Science Centre has acquainted visitors with marine species, marine research and the coastal environment since 1965. The marine centre is a campus of laboratories and classrooms where scientists and students from the university, along with numerous state and federal resource agencies, conduct research on topics ranging from whale migration to global climate change. The Visitor Centre helps bring their work to the public through exhibits, lectures, seminars and other activities.

The visiting centre arranges marine education for school classes, homeschool (including sleepover with the sharks!) and career days for older pupils. One of the most interesting parts of the visiting centre is the “Hands-On Marine Science Programs for Adults & Children Learning Together”. All sessions are 2 hours long and the programs are designed for children age 4 and up and adults. For example, the Summer 2016 programs includes “Mollusk Madness”, where families will explore the anatomy of mollusks through observations of live animals and by completing a squid dissection, and “ROV Design Challenge”, where children can see how underwater robots are used in scientific research and then build their own.

### *Lysekil*

The previously mentioned Havets Hus is located in Lysekil, north of Gothenburg. 40 aquariums are continuously fed with fresh, cold sea water from a depth of 32 metres. Havets hus offers guided tours, activities as well as conference facilities.

Havets hus is not a part of a university. However, there is cooperation with several: the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences is located next door, The Sven Lovén Centre for Marine Sciences at the University of Gothenburg is situated on the other side of the fjord and the field station of Uppsala University is located in the municipality. There are regular meetings where common activities are planned. However, no research is conducted at Havets Hus, although personnel sometimes supervise students. According to CEO Maria Jämting, 95% of operations are financed by admission fees - Havets Hus has 70-80 000 visitors a year. The rest comes from renting office space and selling products. They have also been supported by WWF for their conservation work. 40-50% of the total revenues are generated in July, which means also Havets Hus depends on good weather in the summer time. In Sweden, it is quite common in publicly owned sites, that you get public support for the facilities, but no operating grants (Jämting 2016).

## Lessons to be learned?

Without doubt, the marine centre of, for example, OSU in California is in a totally different league than the marine science at Åbo Akademi and the centre of Korpoström. However, good examples can always be transformed to suit own purposes at a suitable scale.

A Discovery Room (or Science Room, Experimental Corner) offers families, and especially children, an interactive gateway to science and a hands-on, behind-the-scenes look at different experiments. If financing is secured, a Science Lab on marine biology is planned for Korpoström in the summer of 2016.



Hopefully, the Science Lab could be a permanent feature at the centre, combined with science days on different themes. Financially, these activities should be connected directly to the archipelago centre, and not primarily to Environmental and Marine Biology at Åbo Akademi or Metsähallitus. Of course, there should be a very close connection between these actors. But let the scientists do science – it is the responsibility of the centre to offer activities to the visitors.

The Institute of Archipelago Studies (SIÅA) is also active at the Åbo Akademi University. Nowadays, the primary role of the institute is to issue the periodical *Skärgård*, a periodical that during almost 40 years has covered most subjects on archipelago matters in Finland.



Could this material somehow be used to visualise island life at the centre, maybe in a joint project between SIÅA and Korpoström?

The islands of the Archipelago Sea constitute the biggest archipelago in the world. Of course, there are different ways to define which archipelago is the largest; is it by total island population, number of inhabited islands or by island density? By counting the total amount of island, it is no lie to say that Finland including Åland has the world's biggest archipelago. The estimates in literature lie between 40,000-50,000 islands. In comparison, the number of islands in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago is amply 36,500, the Stockholm archipelago consists of slightly less than 29,000 and Indonesia has about 17,500 islands (Prost 2015).

Many people are highly fascinated by islands. Some nearly obsessed with them. Islands are amongst the world's most penetrated tourism destinations (McElroy 2006) – the clear boarders of islands are often a draw for tourists seeking escape and relaxation (Gössling and Wall 2007). Therefore, I want to stress one fact:



Concerning geology, biology, sociology, history, communications, politics, regional studies and so forth - *there is no science centre, visiting centre or museum on this globe focusing solely on islands and archipelagos*. If a visiting centre on and in the biggest archipelago in the world isn't a niche, I don't know what would be.

### 3.8. Visitor's Centres in biosphere areas

The Archipelago Sea Biosphere Reserve, established in 1994, is one of very few biosphere reserves in an archipelago surrounding in the world. The other three are situated in Blekinge in Sweden, Bijagos in West Africa and Cat Ba in Vietnam (Scheinin 2015).

During the autumn of 2015, Julia Scheinin and Katja Bonnevier of the Biosphere Reserve sent out an inquiry to all members of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves, asking for information on visiting centres in biosphere areas. The response was not overwhelming, but there were two answers from the Canary Islands.

#### *El Hierro*

The Biosphere Reserve of El Hierro seems to have the only biosphere reserve visiting centre on an island. In 2000, the island of El Hierro was made into a Biosphere reserve by UNESCO and, to celebrate, set up a Visitors' Centre in Isora. Built in the former Casino, the "Centro de interpretación de la reserva" offers an interactive exhibition that gives complete information about the island. The exhibition gives an insight into the identity of the island and its natural values, the reasons for which it was granted this accolade by UNESCO. The whole area can be visited - bikes and local buses (guaguas) are suggested (Espinosa 2016).

#### *Lanzarote*

However, Visiting Centres of biosphere reserves seems to be planned in several different countries. On the Canary Island of Lanzarote, Aquilino Miguélez López (2016) of the biosphere reserve informs that they WILL have a Visitor Centre. The architectural plans are made and they have the money, but the administrative question is yet to be solved.

#### *Vancouver Island*

The Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve on the Canadian west coast is also planning a visitor centre. A place of sharing and learning, where residents, visitors and researchers feel equally comfortable, and where scientists and storytellers can share their valuable knowledge and teachings. They picture a community "living room" that brings together people, place and learning. The Board of the reserve is committed to the Biosphere Centre as one of its three core priorities.

#### *Östra Vätterbranterna*

A Nordic example is Östra Vätterbranterna, an area that stretches from Tenhult in the south up to Omberg in Östergötland in the north. The dramatic terrain in the area is the basis for its high biological, cultural, historical and aesthetic values. In the summer of 2012, UNESCO appointed Östra Vätterbranterna a Biosphere Reserve. Also in 2012, a report on a Leader project concerning the construction of a Biosphere Centre in the area was published.

As said in the report, the vision for the biosphere centre is to be a physical meeting place for entrepreneurs, researchers, organizations, authorities, locals and visitors. Together, these people will meet the different needs of the biosphere organization and the biosphere area in itself. The different functions would include offices, meeting rooms and a conference hall for at least 50. There should also be possibilities to stay over night. The main task for the biosphere centre would be to guide visitors to discover the whole biosphere area, its attractions and its entrepreneurs. The centre shall answer questions, attract interest and give guidance. The report is quite extensive; including plans for a market hall for local products and plans for an exiting outdoor exhibition with e.g. a canopy walkway (Strotz & Hellsten 2012)

According to Claes Hellsten, one of the authors of the report, the name for the biosphere centre was changed to “Biosfärum” after the report was printed. Unfortunately, the last three years have been spent on fruitless negotiations with landowners that initially supported the project but subsequently withdrew. The intentions were never to build a big and expensive complex, but to gradually build smaller parts with great local co-financing. A new start will be made during the year to come, the Biosfärum is absolutely needed to develop the work of the biosphere area (Hellsten 2015).

### *Outer Hebrides*

The next example could fit under several subheadings; history, nature, art, sociology or tourism. Oddly enough, I choose to put it under this subheading, although it is not a part of a biosphere area. But, looking at the definitions for a biosphere reserve, it could be: *conservation of genetic resources, species, and ecosystems; scientific research and monitoring; and promoting sustainable development in communities of the surrounding region.* Let’s have a closer look at Taigh Chearsabhagh of the Outer Hebrides, Scotland.

What is done at the Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum & Arts Centre is all about the place; The Uists on the Outer Hebrides. These islands were, in times when the boat was the fastest means of transport, at the very hub of northwestern European culture. The islands unique ecologies make it a special place, rich in culture stretching back to the Neolithic and inspiring to artists of today. The focus of the centre aims to explore the boundaries of art, culture and environment.

Taigh Chearsabhagh is located on the shoreline of a marine Special Area of Conservation. The Outer Hebrides, alongside other low-lying island archipelagos, is at the forefront of climate change. The centre is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and working towards a sustainable future. Rising sea levels, increasing weather extremes and their effects on fragile habitats, are major issues alongside economic, social and resource sustainability.

There is a vibrant exhibition and outreach programme going on throughout the year. Through residencies, research, commissions, events and public programmes, Taigh Chearsabhagh creates a Centre of Excellence in Environmental Art.

Communities living on the island today work hard at protecting and preserving the cultural landscape and Gaelic language. Taigh Chearsabhagh is committed to running creative learning activities throughout the year to support the arts and heritage programmes, for example a year round cultural workshop programme for children and young people. The collections (photographs, objects, stories) of the centre comprise over 1000 artefacts that represent the heritage and culture of communities in North Uist.

Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum & Arts Centre is a partnership between Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath (a local history society) and the Uist Art Association. The two voluntary organisations formed Taigh Chearsabhagh Trust in 1993 and over several years have created the thriving museum and arts centre. According to Operations Manager Norman MacLeod (2016), the centre only charges £3.00 for the museum and £2.00 for concessions. They receive £100.000 from Creative Scotland and smaller bits of funding from the local council. The café and shop are self-funding.

### **Lessons to be learned?**

There is one very good thing with a Biosphere Centre – it doesn't really exclude anything. A focus on man and nature, gives the opportunity to work in many different directions. At the same time, this makes the concept a bit confusing. It is more difficult to quickly give an explanation to what a Biosfärum stands for, compared to e.g. a Naturum. But the concept is getting more and more known among the general public, and can be a strong trump card among authorities, financiers and researchers.

Above all else, it would be a benefit for Korpoström to be able to connect the knowledge, the activities and the network of the biosphere reserve to the centre, as well as it clearly would be a branding for the reserve to have the possibility to link its activities to a physical place. A win-win situation, especially since the marine biologist and Metsähallitus have related activities.



The office of the biosphere reserve could be situated in the centre, as well as other organisations in adjoining disciplines. The Korpoström Archipelago Centre being a Biosfärum could increase the interest of the public through the down-to-earth project of the biosphere reserve, such as the project on artisan food, activities for day nurseries and the project on different aspects of sheep farming.

### **3.9. Visitor's Centres for island knowledge**

As already mentioned, there are no visiting centres or museums focusing on islands (in plural) or archipelagos. But virtually, there is.

The French association Iles du Ponant acts on behalf of 15 French islands off the Channel and Atlantic coasts that share three precise characteristics: a permanent population;



the status of an official administrative local community, and the absence of a fixed link to the mainland, such as a bridge or submersible road. On their homepage [iles-du-ponant.com](http://iles-du-ponant.com), these 15 islands are all presented in a neat and informative way.

On the homepage of the Association of Danish Small Islands, [danske-smaaoer.dk](http://danske-smaaoer.dk), the 27 small islands of Denmark are presented very shortly, but there is a link further to all islands own homepages. The Croatian islands are presented on the homepage of Otočni Sabor, and the Irish islands on their homepage of Comhar na nOileán. Concerning Sweden, the Åland Islands and Finland, the amount of islands makes the task a bit more challenging, as well as the fact that also associations and municipalities can be members of the national association.

The Global Islands Network is a non-profit organisation that conducts and promotes cultural, ecological, economical and social development on islands worldwide. It says on the homepage of GIN - [globalislands.net](http://globalislands.net) - that it is the primary information source about islands worldwide, and I'm inclined to share their view.

ESIN (European Small Islands Federation) is the voice of 590,457 islanders on 1,392 small island communities. The amount of island information on the homepage [europeansmallislands.com](http://europeansmallislands.com) is steadily growing.

The International Small Islands Studies Association connects students, researchers and practitioners from around the world who study issues related to islands. Their website [maui.hawaii.edu/isisa](http://maui.hawaii.edu/isisa) is worth visiting, because of the comprehensive list of links to different island institutions and networks.

The SICRI network was established in 2004 to facilitate communication and collaboration between researchers and cultural practitioners working with small island communities. As said on the homepage [sicri-network.org](http://sicri-network.org), the principal aim is to research and assist the maintenance and development of the language, literature, music, dance, folkloric and media cultures of small island communities.

Insuleur (Network of the Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union) was set up in the year 2000 with the aim of improving economic and social conditions in European insular regions. Insuleur, with the homepage [insuleur.com](http://insuleur.com), is the voice of insular enterprises toward the EU institutions in Brussels.

### **Lessons to be learned?**

You are what you are on the Internet. Happily enough, the centre has a new informative homepage. The more you can offer on your homepage, the more hits you get on Google – a fact that cannot be neglected these days.

As a member of the steering group of the Archipelago Institute at Åbo Akademi University, I know that for a long time there have been plans to virtualize older volumes

of the periodical Skärgård. Since this periodical has been published for nearly 40 years, there is a considerable amount of archipelago knowledge to be gained.



Maybe this virtualization of archipelago knowledge could be done as a joint project between the centre of Korpoström and the institute of Åbo Akademi? Or could there be a portal of the islands of Pargas and Kimitoön, the two Finnish municipalities on the Archipelago Sea, on the homepage of Korpoström Archipelago Centre?

## 4. Summary and proposals

Although there are conclusions – *lessons to be learned* - at the end of every chapter, there are some ideas that, after a while, tend to stand out more than others. Of course, some people come to other conclusions than others. But after several months of rumination, there are a few approaches I find more interesting than others. Let's put on the blue hat for a summary.

### **Biosfärum**

The concept of Biosphere Areas is recognized and appreciated around the globe. I am getting more and more convinced that, concerning both the Archipelago Centre Korpoström and the Archipelago Sea Biosphere Reserve, there would be only positive synergies by turning the centre into a Biosfärum (see page 22). This could be done slowly and without big precipitous expenses. The term biosfärum – or Biosphere Centre – could also be used selectively, if it is not considered adding a value for some of the planned activities.

Turning the centre into a biosfärum would involve some permanent changes, such as moving the office of the reserve to the centre. But more important, there would be a need for some permanent features presenting the biosphere reserve for visitors. In my opinion, this could be done in close cooperation with Metsähallitus. There are many interesting exhibition ideas at the different Visitor Centre's run by Metsähallitus (see page 11) - for the time being their presence at Korpoström is barely noted by the temporary visitor.

### **The value of childishness**

Until now, the Archipelago Centre Korpoström has not been a very welcoming place for children. But if you offer activities for children, it will automatically attract a bunch of adults, too. For this summer season, there are several things planned for the younger generation; a science lab for kids (see page 21), a buffet for children in the restaurant and a science day in September. I do think this is a good thing. As seen from the example from Kalajoki (see page 11), activities for children doesn't have to be costly, sometimes a magnetic map will do. Hopefully the science lab could become a permanent feature at the centre, and why not expand the lab-idea to include also the art section: guided tours that ends in an art studio, where children can make their own work of art inspired by the exhibitions. In addition, different possibilities for swimming should be investigated.

## **Positive Synergies and Cooperations**

Standing alone, Korpoström will probably never have the muscles to be a stronghold in art – mainly because of the location. But networking can change the picture - Korpoström being an important link in forming the Art Island of Korpo (see page 13). The idea of Korpo Art Island is still utopia. Never the less, cooperation with artists and different art organisations should be enhanced.

A clear connection to the entrepreneurs of the island could promote the Archipelago Centre, but the benefits should, of course, be mutual (see page 18). It would be important that the centre could offer activities that is not necessarily arranged by the centre itself; for example cooperate with entrepreneurs arranging trips to the archipelago (using the centre as a base, including lunch in the restaurant), organisers of different courses (using the hotel and the facilities), drama guides (that get paid for their effort, while the centre stands as host) and so on. Thinking of the economy of the centre, I think this aspect would be worth spending a considerable amount of thinking time on.

## **Island knowledge**

As said in the beginning of the essay, nowhere in the world is there a physical visiting centre or a museum focusing solely on islands or archipelagos. This is a fact that I find highly surprising, since islands tend to stir our curiosity and a centre focusing on islands would surely arouse interest. Located in the middle of the biggest archipelago in the world, there could be no more suitable place than Korpoström.

Turning Korpoström into a centre of island knowledge could be done with thoughtfulness and in phase with all the other ideas being implemented at the centre. An easy start would be to build up a library of archipelago and island literature of the area (see page 16). I also suggest that the working group adds a third group of interest in the planning of the centre; besides guided and free activities (see page 15), there should be considerable effort spent on the long term activities – ie fixed features. There have been discussions on building big exhibitions that would run for up to two years - since this involves a big amount of money, there should be plans for what parts of the exhibition that could be used even after the exhibition has ended.

Even though the centre feels big, there is definitely not space for many fixed structures. Luckily, a lot of knowledge can be communicated virtually. Interactive island knowledge could be discussed as a joint project between for example the centre, the Institute of Archipelago Studies (SIÅA) and educational institutions in information technologies. There are so many fascinating features of islands that could be displayed – not only appearances in the past, but also the important role islands can play as predecessors in clean technology and as experimental sites for new ideas and innovations which are equally significant on a larger scale.

It is always invigorating to use new eyes in a development process, since you tend to get blind to flaws at home. I propose that the Archipelago Centre Korpoström offers to stand host for the next meeting of the International Small Islands Studies Association (see page 25). In exchange for getting to spend time in the biggest archipelago in the world, a part of the meeting should be spent on brainstorming for this important centre of island

knowledge to come. I also suggest a virtual meeting or a visit to the Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum & Arts Centre on the Outer Hebrides. This place seems to have much to teach us, and could become an important twin centre for the Archipelago Centre Korpoström in the future.

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***Internet sites for visitor's centres and museums mentioned in the essay***

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[www.skargardsmuseet.org](http://www.skargardsmuseet.org)

Artipelag  
[www.artipelag.se](http://www.artipelag.se)

Bere Island Heritage & Information Centre  
[www.bereisland.net/activities/heritage-centre/](http://www.bereisland.net/activities/heritage-centre/)

Clan Donald Skye's Visitor Centre  
[www.clandonald.com](http://www.clandonald.com)

Hatfield Marine Science Center, Oregon State University  
[hmsc.oregonstate.edu/visitor-center/](http://hmsc.oregonstate.edu/visitor-center/)

Havets Hus, Lysekil  
[www.havetshus.se](http://www.havetshus.se)

Naturums of Metsähallitus, Finland  
[www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi)

SKÄRImuseum (Archipelago museum), Korpo  
[www.korpo.hembygd.fi/in\\_english/](http://www.korpo.hembygd.fi/in_english/)

Strandis  
[www.strandis.fi/wordpress/](http://www.strandis.fi/wordpress/)

Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum & Arts Centre  
[www.taigh-chearsabhagh.org](http://www.taigh-chearsabhagh.org)