

## A Living Laboratory

What if we could reinvent the way we experience exhibitions and the city?

The new National Science and Innovation Center is located within the heart of Kaunas on the Nemunas Island. Throughout the years the island has become a destination for large sporting events, leisure activity, recreation, city programs, and has become a vital piece in the fabric of Kaunas. The new Innovation Center will become the most significant cultural landmark on the island and possibly within the area, calling for a unique breed of building and unique tailored urban response.

As a kind of living laboratory we propose a waterfront promenade of active, economically efficient, and environmentally sensitive spaces arranged around a series of urban plazas. Instead of considering the building as an isolate object in the landscape, we've mobilized the architecture and intensified its relationships between the building and the city – expanding and fusing the three together. Typical exhibition centers are either giant boxes isolated from their context, or a series of open “black box” containers internalized around a central atrium, however conceptually the new center puts the park and the city of Kaunas at the center of visitor experience.

Building from Kaunas's strong pedestrian grid, the center extends expansive pedestrian connections and acts as a new gateway welcoming visitors to the island. The design allows urban life to flow through the building rather than just merely surrounding it by creating gateways and outdoor rooms acting as an urban actor merging science and exhibitions into the city and the city into the architecture. Everyday life is reactivated and on special occasions the building turns in to an urban stage or an outdoor gallery split between city views and park views.

Overall the center is comprised of four main parts: Three semi-independent areas (Exhibition galleries, Event Spaces, and Back of House); all three shared by common lobby, restaurant, and retail areas. Each exhibition gallery maintains completely column free spaces for flexibility in programming and build out. Event spaces are dispersed around the building between galleries and plazas, and located within close proximity to back of house access. The exterior skin is specifically designed to control lighting levels and provide comfortable leisure areas at rooftop gardens through a sensitive composition of louvers, shades, and passive to active design strategies all tuned to the optimal solar orientation.

The new center establishes Kaunas as an innovator on an urban scale, and programmatic scale, redefining the relationship between science and the city. As science and technology are increasingly evolving, and advanced research is consistently redefining our relationship with the world. This particular design envelops all of the elements of a diverse urban life as well as the unique and essential elements that are intrinsic to Kaunas, creating a distinctive design. The covered gateways and connections provide versatile settings for outdoor exhibitions and social interaction, rebranding exhibition spaces as a communal experience that expands beyond the boundaries of a single exhibition areas and creates a new type of social and economic experience.