

Arts and culture and Helsinki's international competitiveness

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This article uses a few examples to describe Helsinki as a hub of arts and culture. The numerous festivals and events staged in the city and the region feature both experimental and traditional forms of dance, literature, music, theatre and visual arts.

A separate section is dedicated to the Helsinki Festival, a pioneer in its field, which, over the years, has spread from concert halls to the whole city and today offers something for almost everyone in the Helsinki Region.

Public libraries remain the unrivalled favourite cultural amenities in the region. The hybrid library, a contemporary form of the public library, is also described here, as are professions and education in the arts and culture sector. Helsinki's provision of arts and culture is compared internationally and the tables give a general idea of the use of various cultural services.

Arts and culture promote international competitiveness

While, as many feel, no justification is needed for the existence of arts and culture, the sector has also been recognised as creating considerable numbers of jobs.

The economic and social effects of art and culture are important to cities and their inhabitants and today are acknowledged as a key area for the success of cities both nationally and internationally.

Helsinki Klubi II, a congregation of policy-makers summoned by the Lord Mayor and representing the business sector, science, media, arts and culture and public administration, has defined Helsinki's international cultural profile as one of the region's key issues today. In this respect music, which in Helsinki is based on a very comprehensive educational system, plays an important role. Plans are being finalised for an impressive Helsinki Music Centre in the heart of the city. The Centre will serve the entire Helsinki Region.

Finland and Helsinki have fared very well in various international benchmarkings of competitiveness and education. The publication European Competitiveness Index mentions one of Helsinki's assets as being its large network of cultural institutions, including local cultural centres that bring arts and culture within the reach of everyone in Outer Helsinki, too.

Helsinki – the festival city

Held annually since 1968, the Helsinki Festival is today joined by a variety of smaller festivals. The Helsinki Runo Festival, a poetry festival, and the Festival

of New and Experimental Juggling are two examples. The Tuska Open Air Metal Festival annually brings a growing and more international crowd of heavy-music lovers to town. Since 1998, Tusovkarock has introduced top Russian bands to Helsinki audiences. Within theatre, the Baltic Circle society has established pioneering co-operation between cities on the Baltic Rim, and the annual Helsinki Flamenco Festival brings a breath of the Mediterranean to a wintry Helsinki.

Many new festivals came about around the turn of the Millennium, when a new generation of festival makers entered the stage. This new generation moved freely over international networks and knew the field inside out – many were artists themselves. And since they lacked sufficient opportunities to present their work, they created venues of their own. Helsinki's role as one of the Cultural Capitals of Europe in 2000 also contributed to the naissance of new festivals by bringing together potential festival creators. In addition, the IT boom had boosted the media business, which encouraged many artists to begin new experimental projects.

Festivals influence people's idea of a city. They provide many points of identification and contribute to the creation of non-mainstream urban identities. They consolidate sub-cultures and create togetherness among amateurs of a common field. A broad and international provision of festivals contributes to a pluralistic climate of values in the city. This is essentially the mission of World Village Festivals.

Festivals bring international artists and audiences to town, which allows local audiences to see recent trends in other countries and local artists to show off their skills to audiences from other countries. One of the main purposes of the Dance Arena Festival is to promote Finnish dance internationally and secure more opportunities for Finnish dancers to perform abroad. Over 50 foreign critics and producers covered the 2003 Dance Arena event.

Helsinki Festival among other Finnish festivals

The biggest, most famous and oldest festival in Helsinki is the Helsinki Festival, the history of which goes back to its predecessor the Sibelius Weeks, which started in 1951. When the event was given its new name in 1968, the repertoire and the scope of the festival were extended. Initially, the repertoire contained almost exclusively classical music, but other styles and events were subsequently incorporated as well, such as the Night of the Arts since 1989. In 1995, the profile of the Helsinki Festival changed considerably again, when ethnic music and children's culture were included, as well as an art gallery tour, a variety of free events and an increasing provision of dance and theatre.

Arranged annually in late August and early September, the Helsinki Festival is a festival for everyone. However, middle-aged people make up a greater proportion than their numbers among the total population would suggest, while over 65 year olds are slightly under-represented. Under 30 year olds are over-represented in the free public events, whilst 40–59 year olds are over-represented among paying guests.

Most of the festival's audience comes from Helsinki or one of the other cities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In 2002, 66 per cent of visitors came from Helsinki, 13 per cent from Espoo, six per cent from Vantaa and one per cent from Kauniainen. Visitors from other parts of Finland amounted to 10 per cent and visitors from abroad to four per cent.

The public library – the most frequented cultural public service used by Finns – a hybrid library

Many users still consider a library as primarily a building and the collections it contains. Today, however, the information available on the internet and other

Table 1. Festivals and visitors in Helsinki in 2003 according to seasons

Name	Field	Visitors	
Winter (December, January, February)			
DocPoint - Helsingin Dokumenttielokuvafestivaali	documentary film	12,500	=Film
Flamenco in Helsinki - Helsingin flamencofestivaali	flamenco	1,620	
Helsinki Film Festival - Nainen vai Artisokka	film	1,600	
Musica Nova Helsinki	modern music	8,000	=Music
Side Step - Sivuaskel	modern dance	778	
Tusovkarock	Russian rock	530	
Forces of Light - Valon Voimat	art of light	3,000	
Spring (March, April, May)			
Asia in Helsinki - Aasia Helsingissä	Asian art	1,575	
Flamenco in Helsinki - Helsingin flamencofestivaali	flamenco	1,620	=Dance
Hurraa! Hurraa!	children 's theatre		
Illumenation	film	2,685	
Kirkko soikoon	music	6,237	
KynnysKINO	film	531	
World Village Festival - Maailma kylässä	multiculture	30,000–40,000	
Mariinsky Theatre at the Alexander Theatre	music, dance	3,818	
Musica Nova Helsinki	modern music	8,000	
Read me	software art	900	
Ruutia!	children 's dance	654	
Tusovkarock	Russian rock	530	
Summer (June, July, August)			
Amorph! 03 Performance Festival	performance art	1,457	
Helsinki Festival	urban festival	295,605	
Helsinki Runo Festival	poetry	2,000	
Helsinki Samba Carnival - Tanssiva Helsinki	dance	40,000	
Helsinki Tap Festival	tap dance	2,281	
Helsinki Organ - Helsingin urkukesä	organ music	8,695	
7th International Feet Beat Tap Festival	tap dance	544	
Koneisto	electronic music	34,000	
Tuska Open Air Metal Festival	heavy music	25,300	
URBurban culture		9,183	
Viapori Jazz	jazz	2,000	
Autumn (September, October, November)			
Avanto Helsinki Media Art Festival	media art	3,500	
Baltic Circle	theatre	2,796	
Gruppen Fyras Bästa: Nykytanssifestivaali	modern dance	623	
Helsinki International Film Festival - Love and Anarchy	film	40,000	
Helsinki Festival	urban festival	295,605	
Helsinki Klezmer Festival	music	1,087	
Helsinki Comics - Helsingin sarjakuvafestivaali	comics	5,500	
Jumo Jazzfest	jazz	N/A	
Russian Seasons	theatre	1,770	
Dance Arena - Tanssiarena	modern dance	1,750	
Tsuumi Festivaali 2003	folk dance	764	
Festival of New and Experimental Juggling 5-3-1	circus arts	1,400	
Valon Voimat	light art	3,000	

Note: If the festival covers two seasons, it is mentioned in both seasons.

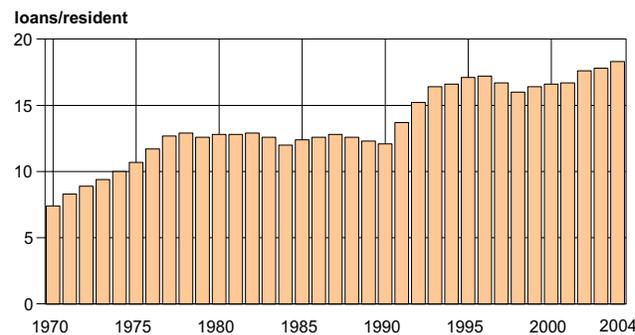
Source: Helsinki City Cultural Office

electronic networks provides an important complement to traditional library services. Hence the involvement of a “hybrid library” – a both physical and virtual library.

One consequence is that library premises have had to be restructured: increasing space is given over to users working at computer screens. Helsinki City Library has over 300 internet-connected computers in its various premises.

The City Library’s own website also offers personal web services such as the iGS – the information Gas Station. In 2003, the number of web visits recorded was 3.5 million, almost twice as many as the year before.

Figure: Helsinki City Library. Yearly loans per resident 1970–2004



Public library services transcend local boundaries

In 2003, the libraries in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area introduced a new library data system, the third shared system of its kind. At the same time, web services were introduced enabling borrowers to make reservations for items and renew their loans. The shared database of the cities’ libraries carries the name HelMet, from Helsinki Metropolitan Area Libraries. The word is also a pun: in Finnish, helmet means “pearls”.

And in fact, the HelMet has indeed proved to be a pearl. The use and reputation of the address has been

beyond all expectations. In just eight months, an independent survey institute showed it had become the sixth most known web brand in Finland and the best known in the municipal sector.

What all this means in practice is that the public in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area frequent one and the same library, which has a total of 64 affiliated libraries. It does not matter whether the item borrowed or the borrower crosses municipal borders. Users themselves choose which library to go to and after making a reservation, they receive the first copy available. The service is flexible and library collections are efficiently used.

The annual aggregate figures for the loans of the HelMet libraries is 17.5 million, i.e. 18 loans per person per annum in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which has just under a million inhabitants. This is a high figure by international standards, too. In the city of New York, for example, the number of loans is 14 million and the number of inhabitants is eight million.

Business enterprise in the cultural sector

A working group appointed by the Ministry of Education has defined the arts and culture industry as a new umbrella concept for arts and culture and public media, covering everything between traditional arts and cultural pursuits and the distribution of reproductions of artistic creation. By this definition, the arts and culture industry is, obviously, a very large and diverse sector. And it is expanding, too, due to, for example, increasing demand for information content and ever-improving distribution channels.

Thus defined, the arts and cultural sector covers the activities of a whole spectrum of artists plus, for example, magazine and book publishing as well as the wholesaling of entertainment electronics.

University level education

Table 2: Business premises, personnel and turnover in the field of culture 2003

	Premises	Personnel	Turnover (EUR 1,000)	Turnover/person (EUR 1,000)
Finland	15,811	64,321	11,979,735	186.2
Helsinki Metropolitan Area ¹	5,857	30,093	7,195,356	239.1
% of the whole country	37	47	60	.

¹Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen.

Source: Statistics Finland, Business Register

There are four specialist arts and culture universities in Finland all situated in Helsinki, namely the Sibelius Academy (music), the University of Arts and Design Helsinki, the Theatre Academy of Finland, and the Academy of Fine Arts.

Polytechnics

Arts and culture can also be studied at four polytechnics in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area where, just as in Finland as a whole, media and visual arts had the largest number of students in the broader fields of arts and culture. The largest numbers of di-

Table 3: Diplomas at the various arts and culture universities in Helsinki 2003

	Diplomas
University of Arts and Design	234
Sibelius Academy	198
Theatre Academy of Finland	83
Academy of Fine Arts	49
Total	564

Source: Kota database, Ministry of Education.

Table 4: Diplomas in arts and culture education in polytechnics in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area 2003

	Diplomas
Arts and culture total	229
Crafts and design	61
Communication and visual arts	105
Music	48
Theatre and dance	15

Source: Statistics Finland, education statistics

plomas in the field were also gained in media and visual arts followed by handicraft and industrial arts.

Culture in European cities described by statistics

The regional Urban Audit statistics collected by the European Union depict the culture of large and middle-sized cities in Europe. The database includes variables from theatres, cinemas, concerts, libraries and museums, the supply and use of their services.

How does Helsinki rate among the capitals of the European Union (EU15) in the light of these statistics? For many of the cultural services, Helsinki citizens rank near the average for the capitals in general. Library services are an exception, however: use of these services in Helsinki is clearly top of the European class.

Finns go to the public library more often than any other nation of the EU does. According to an EU survey on culture consumption, almost 70 per cent of Finns visit a public library at least once a year. Swedes and Danes, too, come close to these figures. Finns and Swedes share the title of most avid readers.

And in fact, public libraries are the most common cultural services in Finland. In 2003, Finnish public libraries recorded almost 66 million visits, seven million of which were in Helsinki. The average Finn, like the average Helsinki citizen, went to the library once a month.

Table 5. Culture in Helsinki, a short overview

National Opera	2003	2004
performances	376	368
spectators	255,678	246,608
Professional theatres	12	12
performances	3,334	3,642
spectators	714,772	682,874
Dance theatres	3	3
performances	313	276
spectators	42,592	35,729
Number of concerts		
Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra	63	68
Radio Symphony Orchestra	33	37
Number of cinema auditoria	46	46
visits per inhabitant	4.6	4.0
City Library, lending outlets	52	52
number of books on 31 December (1,000)	1,855	1,828
other material (1,000)	237	250
loans (1,000)	9,971	10,234
loans per inhabitant	17.8	18.3
visits per inhabitant	12.6	12.5
Museums	79	80
Number of visitors at		
The Finnish National Gallery		
Ateneum Art Museum	168,580	311,884
The Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma	189,019	182,015
Sinebrychoff Art Museum	66,609	29,094
National Museum of Finland	128,790	115,014
Finnish Museum of Art and Design	69,474	112,327
Seurasaari Open Air Museum	50,572	44,203
Museum of Finnish Architecture	21,200	21,690
Helsinki City Museum	100,003	59,935
Helsinki City Art Museum	115,117	88,384

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