

It works both ways

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“It has always been known that a university degree alone cannot give all the professional skills required in working life. And, with rapid changes in the needs of working life, an ideology of continuous education was born, a need for people in working life to update their academic education.”

These words by former Helsinki University Chancellor and Rector Olli Lehto were a comment on the birth of a partnership between the University of Helsinki and the City of Helsinki. The interview was made for one of the products spawned by this partnership, a report published by the city, more precisely by Helsinki City Urban Facts, and based on a master’s thesis at the university (Aniluoto 2004, 30).

The founding in 1987 of a commission for “developing and coordinating cooperation between the city and the university and for contributing to the development of tertiary education and research in Helsinki” (Helsinki City Board 11 May 1987, §2263 [transl.]) was a decisive step towards a partnership that today has been materialised in many ways.

This partnership has resulted in increased mutual understanding and respect between the two parties. The greater metropolitan region of Helsinki is today seen as a whole, for the development of which it is

wise to mobilise all the resources available regardless of organisational or municipal boundaries. Network cooperation has increased both in terms of actors and areas and evolved into something of a network consortium, where the importance of cooperation is becoming more and more obvious.

Obviously, such cooperation and consensus are needed today in response to the global scramble for success between urban regions. It is becoming common knowledge that education, research and development are the keys to success of old industrial regions in the western world.

Practice

The city has been active in strengthening the knowledge and skills and innovation potential of the region in several concrete ways, including establishing the think-tank Culminatium Ltd. (see Eero Holstila’s article on page ??) in 1995 and taking up research collaboration with the Helsinki University of Technology over such issues as ageing residents, the quality of construction, environment-friendly technologies and Helsinki’s international competitiveness in the framework of the Innovative City programme, which was launched in 2001 to increase the dialogue and R&D cooperation between the city and Helsinki University of Technology. During the period 2001–2005, fund-

ing for the programme was split between the city and the University of Technology.

A major materialisation of knowledge-and-skills oriented cooperation with the University of Helsinki was the establishment of six professorships in urban studies, namely those of urban ecology, economics, geography, history, social policy and sociology respectively, with a term of office up until 2004. The professorships were originally funded by the University of Helsinki, the City of Helsinki and the Ministry of Education, but in 2003, the cities of Espoo, Vantaa and Lahti and the Helsinki University of Technology joined in, too.

Helsinki City Urban Facts has been a grateful beneficiary and a proud presenter of many of their findings over the years. Helsinki Quarterly and its Finnish-Swedish language equivalent *Kvartti* has featured several articles on the scientific and educational cooperation between the city and the university.

At a concrete level, autumn 2005 saw another introductory series of lectures on the theme "aspects on the city and urban space". The lectures introduce some basic concepts of multidisciplinary urban research and approaches. Lectures have been held by the urban research professors and by experts from the various municipalities of the Helsinki Region.

More professorships

In 2004, a decision was made by the university and the city to make some of the chairs permanent and to establish a further three professorships, i.e. those in European metropolitan planning, in urban ecosystems and in urban technological systems. The cities of Espoo, Vantaa and Lahti were also involved in the financing. Thus, the cities, universities and the ministry now together fund nine professorships of urban studies ranging from the humanities over social sciences to natural science and technology.

These steps were taken within the framework of a newly established Network for Urban Studies, which

seeks to develop cooperation in urban research in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Seven organisations are involved in the network project: the University of Helsinki, Helsinki University of Technology, four cities – Espoo, Helsinki, Lahti and Vantaa – and the Ministry of Education.

A Coordination Team appointed by the Rector of the University of Helsinki is responsible for the project management. The team has, among other things, prepared the Urban Studies Programme of the university.

New: a research programme for the whole region

A joint research programme for the entire metropolitan region during the project was issued in June 2005. Its initial version was called *Muuttuva kaupunki – The Changing City*, and it represents a common view among its participants of which phenomena in Helsinki's metropolitan region should be supported. Special attention has been paid to such topics in academic and applied research that also respond to the information needs of the public administration.

The research programme provides a basis for a political debate on changes in cities and the reasons for these changes. It thus supports not only local issues but the development of Finnish urban policy more comprehensively, too, and an understanding of this policy as a part of globalisation and the general change in European metropolitan regions.

The research programme has been drawn up by the Coordination Team in charge of managing the whole professorship model and representing all the financiers. In the preparatory work on the programme, which began in spring 2004, several parties were heard including the cities involved, which actively participated in the definition of focal points for the programme. The idea is that the programme should provide an orientation in the re-

search themes presented by the cities also in a way which would bring it additional resources from, for example, programmes funded by the European Union, national finance channels or university capacity for academic dissertations.

The programme is divided into two parts, the first of which includes strategic information common to Helsinki's entire metropolitan region grouped into five focal areas, namely 1) globalisation and the national importance of metropolitan regions, 2) the economy and governance of cities and metropolitan regions, 3) the tensions of welfare, 4) urban environment and its planning, 5) the perceived city and urban culture.

Besides recognising and identifying these general themes, the objective was also to target research and education in a more concrete manner. The cities of the network each presented a neighbourhood or two where substantial development projects are underway. The idea is to use these "urban laboratories" to visualise the multi-dimensionality of the metropolitan region and make it the target of advanced research. The laboratory metaphor is to show that the interest of these neighbourhoods lies in their topicality: the housing and working environment is currently chang-

ing, and today is the time to produce relevant findings about it. These neighbourhoods are pioneers, and the experimental application of new ideas and practices is taking place in the everyday life of residents, public bodies and the business community.

International Advisory board

An International Advisory Board has been established for the regional research network to ensure a high international profile. Its tasks include evaluating the urban studies conducted in the Helsinki Region as well as the work of the urban studies professors, and creating international contacts. In late autumn 2005, the advisory board, chaired by Professor Harri Andersson of the University of Turku, was preparing to convene for the first time.

The other members of the Advisory Board are Professor Alessandro Balducci of the Department of Architecture and Planning at Milan Polytechnic, Professor Jürgen Breuste of the Institute for Geography and Geoinformatics at the University of Salzburg, Professor Patrick Le Galés of the CEVIPOF – Laboratoire de recherche Sciences-po, Paris, and Professor Doreen Massey of the Open University, London.

EUKN - European Urban Knowledge Network

Helsinki is also involved in the European Urban Knowledge Network, a European Union project to build channels between producers (including research institutes and ministries) and users of urban knowledge among major European cities. As a concrete result of the EUKN's work, an Internet database on information needs and practices in cities is being set up. The target group are, above all, urban policy makers and representatives of the urban research community.

The objective of the EUKN is to help Member States, cities and urban actors find relevant knowledge in urban issues. The network aims to strengthen urban policy and to make cities in Europe more viable through the exchange of knowledge. The knowledge provided addresses a wide range of themes from the perspective of urban policy. The EUKN offers best and proven-practices, policy documents and research documents.

The EUKN project engages 15 European countries. Each has a "focal point" responsible for the work in their respective countries and functioning as a link outwards. In Finland, Helsinki City Urban Facts has been commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior to assume the function of a National Focal Point. The EUKN is a pilot project for 2005–2006, possibly to be extended after 2007.

On the occasion of the kick-off conference of the Finland EUKN sub network on 26 August 2005 in Helsinki, various institutes, associations, local authorities and scientists already declared their willingness to participate in the Network and to provide input. The national Finnish network has been built up together with The Ministry of Interior, the 15 largest cities of Finland, research institutes and other urban policy related organisations.

At this stage, the site features the following six main themes: Housing, Infrastructure & Transport, Urban Environment, Social Inclusion and Integration, Economy and Employment, Safety and Security.

Sources:

EUKN Finnish FOCAL POINT (sub network), Helsinki City Urban Facts. Contact person Minna Salorinne.

Aniluoto, Arto: Helsingin kaupungin ja Helsingin yliopiston yhteistyön kehittyminen kumppanuudeksi. Helsinki City Urban Facts, Research Overviews 2004/5. Helsinki 2004.

Helsinki City Research Programme. www.hel2.fi/tietokeskus/kaupunkitutkimus/tutkimusohjelma.html

Cities in Transition. www.valt.helsinki.fi/blogs/kaupunkitutkimus/english/Cities%20in%20Transition