

The background of the cover is a photograph of the Helsinki Cathedral at night, illuminated with white lights. The cathedral's white facade, columns, and domes are clearly visible against a dark blue sky. In the foreground, a large, dense crowd of people is gathered, many holding up their phones to take pictures, creating a bokeh effect of light spots. The overall scene conveys a sense of public engagement and community.

# Helsinki News

## **Principle of openness in government**

A safeguard of democracy

## **Open public-sector data**

Better transparency,  
new opportunities for journalists

## **Smart Kalasatama**

Solutions for sustainable  
urban living

**1/2016**

# 250 years of accountability in government

*A fundamental principle in Finnish public administration is full release of documents to ensure transparency.*

“All sectors of government in Finland, local and national, are obliged to make their decision documents freely available to everybody, and authorities are also responsible for actively releasing information on decisions. Non-disclosure only applies to documents listed in the law on openness in government activities, including those related to personal information and state secrets,” explains Helsinki University Professor **Hannu Nieminen** (Media and Communication Policy), Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

According to Dr Nieminen, “The principle of openness in government in Finland – and other Nordic countries – is more pervasive than in other countries of Europe, where authorities use their own judgement in questions concerning the release of information, and the principle goes beyond the scope of the US Freedom of Information Act.”

“The right to receive public sector documents applies to everybody regardless of their nationality including foreign media representatives,” Dr Nieminen says but adds, “Naturally foreign media representatives would need to know Finnish and what to look for.”

The principle of openness in Finland has its roots in Sweden’s Freedom of the Press Act 1766, which is considered the world’s first law securing the freedom of information. (Finland was part of Sweden to 1809.) The principle was retained in Finnish legislation through the



LINDA TAMMISTO / UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

*Dean and Professor Hannu Nieminen*

Russian period (1809–1917) and Finnish independence (1917–).

According to Dr Nieminen, government accountability and free access to public information are a powerful safeguard of democracy. The Internet era makes public records and data increasingly available online, which opens new opportunities. “By combining diverse information, the media can better control the authorities, for example, by disclosing corruption.”

Nevertheless, he sees developments that can compromise the principle of openness. “Today a matter can proceed only in email messages and no document exists so the disclosure rule doesn’t apply. The current trend of privatising public sector operations moves these operations beyond the reach of the disclosure rule. External threats cause the government to expand secrecy in the name of security.”

COVER: NIGHT OF THE ARTS AT HELSINKI CATHEDRAL. LAURI ROTKO / CITY OF HELSINKI

## Open data underscores transparency in city administration

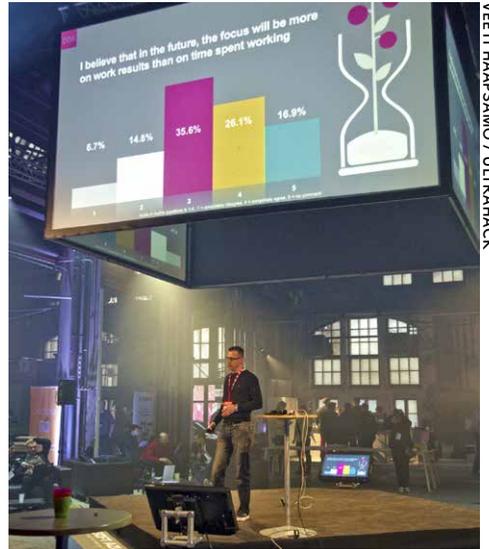
A prime case of transparency in government is open data – public-sector data freely available to everyone to use at their will. Today open data occupies a core place in Helsinki’s Open City policy.

Available open data in Helsinki ranges from city decision-making to spending to permits to procurement. It serves the media, researchers, citizens in the form of new services, civil servants in producing better services, and enterprises by opening new business opportunities.

Helsinki initiated an open data policy in 2009 and followed it with an open data service, Helsinki Region Infoshare (HRI) [www.hri.fi](http://www.hri.fi), which was joined by neighbouring cities. Today Helsinki is the leading Finnish city in releasing public data, and Finland is in fifth place globally, according to Open Knowledge.

A prime case of transparency in the Helsinki city government is presented by *Open Ahjo*. This is the city’s electronic decision-making system, which contains all information related to every decision from initiative to closing. Uniquely, Open Ahjo provides the information through an open application programming interface (API).

The Open Ahjo API makes it easy to review city decisions; what took a laborious task going through archives manually is now accomplished quickly either through the API or with user-friendly interfaces created by expert developers. Users are helped by apps such as Ahjo Explorer, which allows them to browse Helsinki city decisions in a comprehensive manner.



Ultrahack 2015

## Apps developed through co-creation

Helsinki actively promotes the utilisation of open data. The city maintains a co-creation platform titled *Helsinki Loves Developers* and co-organises *hackathon* programming marathons and open data app competitions.

Helsinki and Open Knowledge Finland hosted a Smart City/Civic Tech track at the international Ultrahack 2015 hackathon. First prize went to *Butterfly Effect*, an app that can be used collectively by citizens to produce initiatives for city planning. [ultrahack.org](http://ultrahack.org)

One of the success stories of digital services developed from open data in Helsinki is the mobile app *BlindSquare*, which helps the blind and visually impaired to navigate through the city by literally telling them where to go. [blindsquare.com](http://blindsquare.com)

# Data journalism in service of democracy

“Data journalism enables the production of new types of content with the help of data science, complementing traditional journalism,” says **Teemo Tebest**, a data journalist at the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle. He gives two examples of the work conducted by the Yle data journalism team.

In 2013, the Yle team investigated the real values of company apartments as opposed to their taxable values. They compared the differences between the actual values of the apartments, or the actual rents paid for them by companies, and the values established by the tax authorities to calculate how much tax the tenants should pay for their company apartments. If taxable values are lower than the real values or rents, this results in tax-free income to tenants and loss of tax revenue to the government.

Using a programme that collected data from thousands of online rental apartment ads, the Yle team found a significant discrepancy between taxable values and real values: on average, taxable values were 70 per cent of real values, and in some cases they were only one-third of the real values.

An award-winning data-driven report produced by the Yle team allowed readers to explore the outcome of the Finnish national elections 2015 among different electorate groups. By combining data, they produced a system to select Finland’s top 100 municipalities by different categories, such as income, education, employment and health, and to check the outcome of the elections if only



*Helsinki’s datasets on parking tickets allow a data journalist to report on the areas and times of day with high frequencies of tickets.*

those municipalities had voted.

“The election report visualises Finland’s ideological divisions,” Tebest comments.

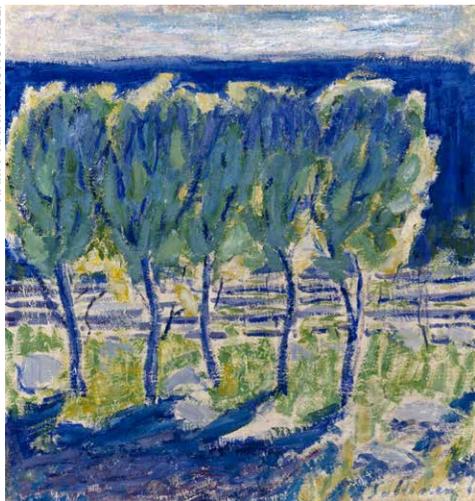
## Opportunities for journalists from Helsinki open data

Open Ahjo and other open data in Helsinki allow data journalists to explore and combine information to produce new information. For example, they can take city decision-making data and combine it with financial, location and statistical data. Helsinki also publishes procurement data, and data journalists can use it to report on city spending itemised by types of spending and by providers of products and services.

“Open data is the precondition for data journalism, and operations like Helsinki Region Infoshare are good examples of how openness can produce better services for citizens,” Tebest says.

# Art as part of Helsinki city life

HAM / HANNA KUKORELLI



HAM / HANNA KUKORELLI



Tyko Sallinen: *Alders in Spring (Trees Seen against the Sun)*, 1911

Ellen Thesleff: *Spring (Wilderness Girl)*, 1935

The newly renovated and expanded Helsinki Art Museum (HAM) wants to prove that art museums can be fun. The museum occupies two top floors at one end of Tennis Palace, sharing the 1930s building with 14 Finnino movie theatres. With visitors greeted at the building with the smell of popcorn and rows of candy, HAM is part of Helsinki's downtown entertainment scene and invites people to relax and socialise.

The main galleries on the upper floor are a stunning space for art with ceilings rising to 12 metres. The galleries house HAM's main exhibitions, currently *From Heino With Love* consisting of 100 works from the Heino Art Foundation, which has one of Finland's foremost collections of contemporary art.

One of the smaller galleries, free to all visitors, is dedicated to HAM's own collection, which mainly consists of Finnish art from the 19th and 20th centuries including notable works by the celebrated Finnish artists **Helene Schjerfbeck** (1862–1946) and **Ellen Thesleff** (1869–1954). Other free galleries exhibit contemporary Finnish art. HAM houses the only gallery in the country dedicated to **Tove Jansson**, one of the leading visual artists of post-war Finland.

HAM is among a cluster of art museums in Helsinki located only hundreds of metres from each other. They include the Finnish National Gallery's Ateneum Art Museum and Contemporary Art Museum Kiasma as well as the private Amos Anderson Art Museum.

[www.hamhelsinki.fi](http://www.hamhelsinki.fi)



*A temporary summer café at the still undeveloped southern tip of Kalasatama.*

# Smart Kalasatama

## One extra hour per day with new urban solutions

*Kalasatama is a Helsinki inner city district designated by the City of Helsinki as a development platform for smart urban solutions. The Smart Kalasatama programme envisions to ease the lives of residents with digital services that free one hour per day from everyday chores.*

Residents of Kalasatama can be present at their homes even when they are away. A home automation and remote control system enables them to check if the lights or any electrical appliances are on and turn them off. The system enables them to monitor in real time the electricity and water use of their homes in order to optimise consumption.

The automation system is part of the Kalasatama smart grid developed by the Helsinki energy company Helen together with ABB. The grid's solar panels produce renewable

energy, and properties can install their own panels and connect to the grid. A system for short-term power storage evens out peaks in consumption. The grid will equip every third parking space with electric car charging technology.

Co-creation is a core concept in Smart Kalasatama: residents play key roles as testers of local smart services and as initiators of sustainable, resource-efficient lifestyles. New services are developed with rapid experiments in a piloting programme.

A smart mobility experiment tests a service to make car ownership unnecessary: an app developed by the urban travel solutions provider Tuup of Finland first allows Kalasatama residents to book a car from a local electric car rental, and it is about to integrate all forms of available public transport into mobility packages that cater for citizen transport needs in Helsinki and beyond.

Another experiment tests "Nifty Neighbour," a sharing economy online service that allows citizens to trade help services. The "smart waste containers" service utilises data produced by sensors for remote monitoring of street waste containers to allow residents to make fault reports and give feedback. To reduce food waste, sensors monitor foods in the refrigerators of pilot homes, and an app reminds the residents of expiration dates and suggests how the foods could be used rather than thrown away.

Previous experiments in the Kalasatama piloting programme include "smart shipping containers", which served a self-service public library, a recyclable goods collection station and a distribution station for local foods.

Resident initiatives have produced many local improvements including playgrounds and landscaped construction sites. Citizens are encouraged to develop tailored housing concepts, and one outcome is the co-created Senior House, a property and community in which elderly people live together assisting each other with everyday routines.

The Airbnb-type Kalasatama Smart Space Share service allows residents to book private and public spaces for their own uses.

The Smart Kalasatama programme is run by Forum Virium Helsinki, a non-profit company that develops digital services. The project is sponsored by the European Regional Development Fund. [fiksukalasatama.fi/en/](https://fiksukalasatama.fi/en/)



*Kalasatama around 2030*

## Kalasatama

Kalasatama is under construction and development at the site of a former commercial harbour. The district is projected to grow from the current 2,000 to 20,000 residents and to provide 8,000 jobs by 2030. The urban structure will be dense. The core of the district will comprise eight high-rise buildings, six of them residential towers. Public transport is key to the district, which is served by the Helsinki metro system, trams and buses. The Smart Kalasatama programme embraces sustainable energy solutions, advanced waste management technology and urban living experiments.

[en.uuttahelsinki.fi/kalasatama](https://en.uuttahelsinki.fi/kalasatama)

## Kalasatama by 2030

**20,000** residents

**8,000** jobs

## Finland tops World Press Freedom Index

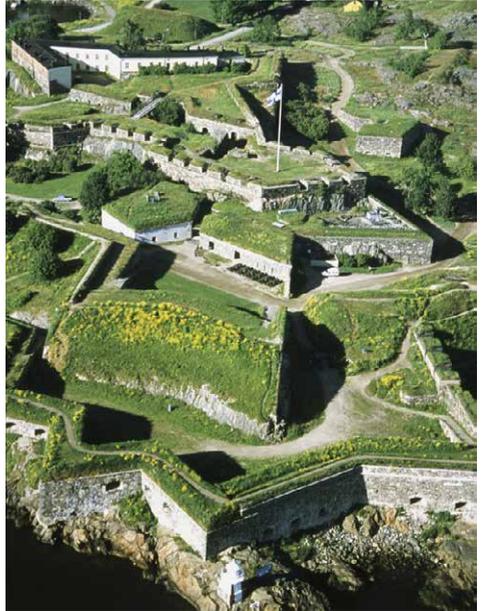
Finland ranks first in the world in the 2015 World Press Freedom Index, followed by Norway and Denmark. Finland has topped the index consistently since 2009 and ranked first from 2002 (the first year of the index) to 2006. The Press Freedom Index is an annual ranking of countries produced by Reporters Without Borders based on the organisation's assessment of the countries' press freedom.

## Islands developed as showcases of sustainable solutions

Helsinki is strongly marked by its maritime nature and an archipelago of 300 islands. Many of the islands are open to the public for outdoor recreation, while they tell the story of Helsinki's past.

Two previously closed islands next to the Suomenlinna fortress island, Vallisaari and Kuninkaansaari, will open to the public in the spring of 2016. The islands are developed through an international innovation competition into ecological nature and recreational destinations, while preserving the islands' historical structures including fortifications dating back hundreds of years.

ILMO VALTONEN / CITY OF HELSINKI



**Suomenlinna** (*Sveaborg in Swedish*) is a sea fortress where the East and West meet. Built on Helsinki islands over 40 years starting in 1748, the fortress was Sweden's largest construction project at the time. Suomenlinna played key roles in Finnish history during the Russian period. Today Suomenlinna is one of the most popular tourist destinations of Helsinki, while it is a vibrant city district. Suomenlinna is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

[www.suomenlinna.fi/en](http://www.suomenlinna.fi/en)



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[www.hel.fi](http://www.hel.fi)

**City of Helsinki  
Communications Unit**  
Executive Office  
P.O.B. 1  
Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13  
00099 City of Helsinki  
Finland  
Phone +358 9 310 1641

### Contact

*United States and Canada:*  
Johanna Lemola  
jlemola@aol.com

*United Kingdom:*  
Jarkko Järventaus  
jarkko\_jarventaus@yahoo.com