

# URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL POLICIES

## RESULTS OF THE ESPOOCULT RESEARCH PROJECT

▶ Urban development plays a central part in creating a good future for the society at large. Cities are not only the foundation for people's social co-existence and organization but also a breeding ground for culture. In recent years the role of culture and cultural policies has gained momentum as a fixed part of the holistic development of cities. This largely stems from the need to bring the full potential of culture and cultural activities to use in urban development and to create future opportunities for cities.

The EspooCult research project carried out in 2018–2019 reviewed cultural activities and cultural policies in the city of Espoo, with a special focus on the role of culture in the city's development. This fact booklet compiles the key findings of the research. It is based on the more extensive research report *Urban Development and Cultural Policies – Results of the EspooCult Research Project* (English translation published in autumn 2020).



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## 1. CITY OF ESPOO

*In comparison to other Finnish cities, Espoo has on average a healthy and highly educated population. (Espoo Story.)*

*Fast population growth, an ageing population and a simultaneous increase in the number of children and foreign-language speakers lead to growing service needs and challenge service production. (Espoo Story.)*

### Facts about Espoo

#### AREA AND LOCATION:

- Area: 528 km<sup>2</sup>
- Part of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area
- Seven major areas: urban centers, vast natural reserves and archipelago
- Neighboring municipalities: Helsinki, Kauniainen, Kirkkonummi, Nurmijärvi, Vantaa, Vihti

#### DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Population 283 632 (31.12.2018), second largest city in Finland by population
- Population is growing and diversifying rapidly
- There are differences between the social and economic status and wellbeing and health of the different population groups

#### CITY ORGANIZATION:

- The city organization is divided between the decision-making organization and the administrative organization
- The development is guided by the city's strategy, the Espoo Story (2017)

POPULATION 31 December 2018: **Espoo: 283 632**  
**Finland: 5 517 919**



### Demographic data 2018, Espoo and Finland total

	Espoo %	Finland total %
Population change from previous year	1,6	0,1
Under 15 years old	19,3	16
15-64 years old	66,1	62,2
Over 64 years old	14,7	21,8
Native language Finnish	76,0	87,6
Native language Swedish	7,1	5,2
Other native language	17,0	7,1
At least secondary education degree (population 15 years or older)	77,0	73,3
Higher education degree (population 15 years or older)	47,2	31,8
Unemployed (share of labor force)	8,5	11,3
People who assess their health as average or worse	24,8	33,2
People who assess their average quality of life as good	63,8	60,1
People who assess their quality of life as better than average	61,1	58,6
People who have felt happy most of the time during the past 4 weeks	51,5	52,9

Sources: Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Population structure [web publication]; Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Educational structure of population [web publication]; Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Income distribution statistics [web publication]; Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Employment [web publication], preliminary information; Parikka et al. 2019.

## 2. CULTURE AS PART OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

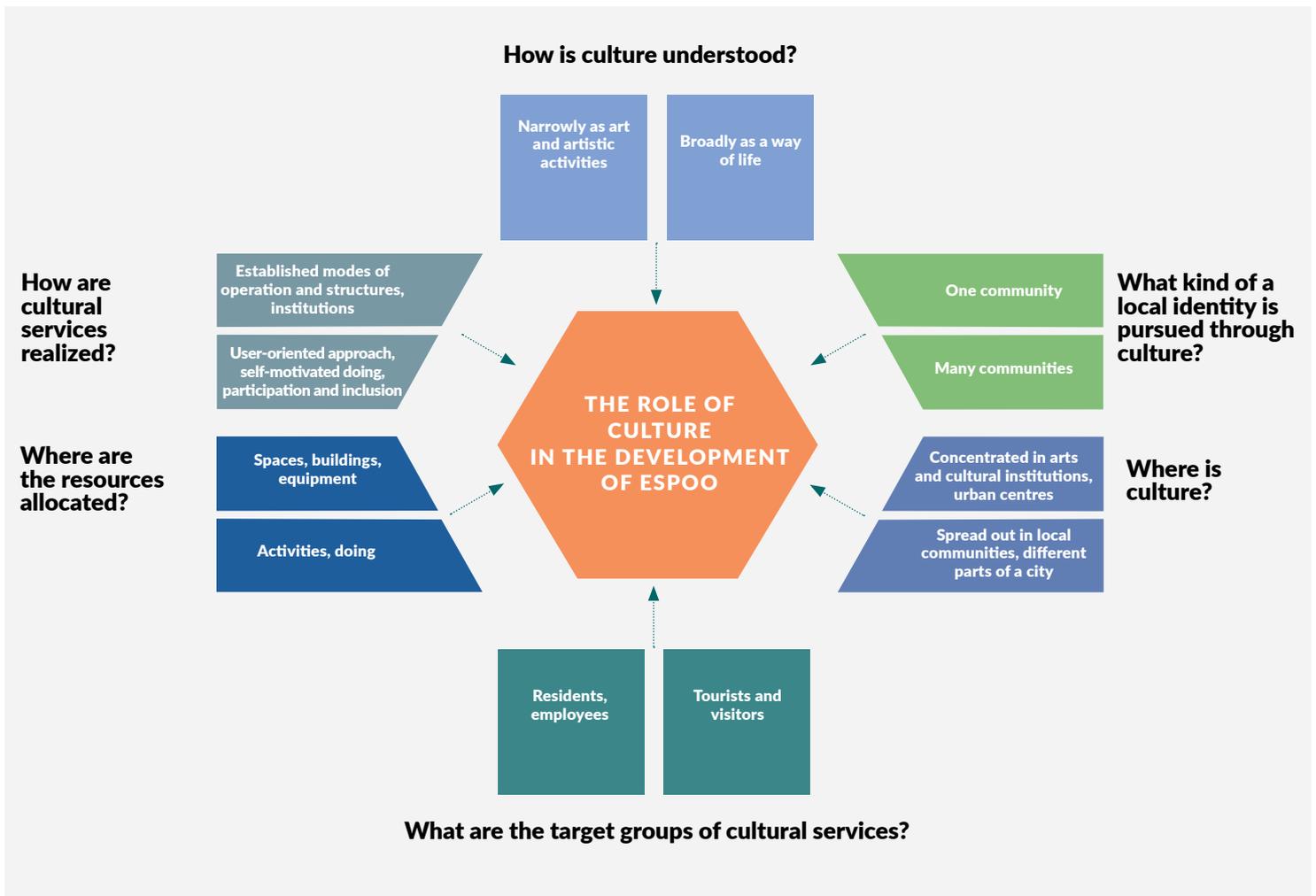
The core of a city's actions relies on its ability to respond to the local needs while paying attention to the local conditions. According to the Finnish Local Government Act (410/2015, 1 §), it is the responsibility of municipalities to enhance the vitality of the region and the wellbeing of their residents and to arrange services for them in a way that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Municipalities are also obliged to organize cultural services (Municipal Cultural Activities Act 166/2019).

Urban development is development work that penetrates the city's structures and processes from a broad perspective. In this view, the aim is to pool the city's resources – whether they are art, a way of life or something else – to serve the wider development of the city and society.

The potential that culture has to offer to a city in terms of, for example, education and skills, wellbeing, vitality and competitive edge, has been generally recognized in numerous studies.

For cultural activities to have an impact, they need to be taken into account in urban development and a city's development policies. Cities create their own profiles through the different choices they make with regard to culture. Choices of what a city invests in influence its development in various ways and the role of culture in this development.

Culture and urban development.



### 3. CITY OF ESPOO AS A FRAMEWORK OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The question of the role of culture in urban development strongly ties in with the question of the status and esteem of cultural policy and cultural activities in a city organization.

It is also influenced by the wider operating environment: the position of culture as part of local communities and general public policies.

#### **A city's strategies and programmes decisively steer how culture is positioned as a part of urban development.**

**THE ESPOO STORY** is the city's main strategy that all the actors in the city organization implement in their respective sectors. The strategy underlines that a good city is both a good place to live and a city with international appeal. (City Council 11 November 2017.)

*Espoo residents will have the opportunity to enjoy a rich and top-quality programme of culture. Living in Espoo will be about everyday life and encounters, for example at exhibitions at EM-MA, concerts by Sinfonietta and the Tapiola Choir, April Jazz, top sports and cultural events, matches and leisure time activities. We will collaborate actively with youth, culture and sports clubs, associations and scouts. We will guarantee all children and young people in Espoo the opportunity to enjoy hobbies. (Espoo Story.)*

**THE CULTUREESPOO 2030 PROGRAMME** lays out the goals of the Espoo Story from the viewpoint of culture. The programme places a strong emphasis on art and culture as a factor of development for the city. A central role is played by co-operation between the administrative sectors and with different stakeholders to achieve the goals. (City Council 9 November 2015.)

*Culture and art should have a more visible role in city planning, construction, learning, social services and health care. Culture can transcend the barriers in society both socially and economically. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

*A city needs a creative environment in order to be successful and develop further. Culture is the basis of a creative and successful city. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

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#### **Culture in the city organization**

The Espoo city organization includes 11 specialized committees. Cultural affairs are primarily overseen by the Culture Committee. Decision making with regard to culture is exercised also by some of the other committees: for example, the Education and Early Education Committee is responsible for basic education in the arts and art schools and the Swedish and Education and Culture committee for matters pertaining to Swedish-language cultural services.

In Espoo culture falls under the city's Educational and Cultural Services, with a separate Culture Unit responsible for cultural services. The city organizes and facilitates cultural activities by both producing them itself or by assisting or otherwise supporting private cultural actors.

## 4. CULTURE AS PART OF THE CITY ORGANIZATION AND LOCAL COMMUNITY

### AS AN ORGANIZATION

the city consists of decision-making bodies, administrative agencies and institutions that produce services. The status and positioning of culture in the city organization make a difference when the goal is to strengthen the role of culture in the city's development.

### STRENGTHS

- The attitudes in the city organization towards culture are principally positive.
- At strategic and programme level expectations are set for culture as a part of wider urban development.
- The city's financial resources for cultural activities are on national scale relatively good.
- The city's cultural services actively invest in enabling cultural activities and developing new operating models.
- The City of Espoo engages in diverse forms of cooperation with the third sector.
- Cultural operators are principally seen as good at developing new practices, opening new perspectives and recognizing and responding to problems that fall into the gaps in the traditional line organization.
- Cultural communities are largely interested in collaborating with the city and feel that the interaction is fruitful.

### AS A LOCAL COMMUNITY

the city consists of e.g. its geographical location, physical environment, population, industries, communities, history, value and culture. Future demographic developments reshape the service needs, the practices of using public services and expectations concerning the services.

- Espoo and its neighbours have a large cultural supply.
- Statistically, the residents of Espoo attend cultural events and engage in culture in their pastime actively.
- The residents who use cultural services are quite satisfied with them and appreciate that the city offers cultural activities.
- There is a large number of third-sector and civic cultural actors in Espoo.
- Advantages of the city structure and environment, such as closeness to nature, different local centers and diversity: "big city and small town" all in one.
- Possibility to reach out to audiences and participants also from other parts of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The new metro line brings along new opportunities.
- Cultural supply along people's everyday routes, at e.g. shopping centers, enhances participation.

### WEAKNESSES

- Culture is underrated and juxtaposed.
- The connection of culture with all the central goals of city development is not recognized or addressed in the city's strategy.
- In the CultureEspoo 2030 programme the perspective of the arts sector and its actors remains somewhat thin.
- The role of culture in urban development remains at the level of grand speech.
- Development ideas are not concretized as action.
- Limited resources.
- Cultural matters are poorly known outside the Culture Committee or the Culture Unit.
- Actors outside the cultural sector do not see the concrete possibilities culture would have to offer in the development of their own services.
- Administrative bureaucracy. Barriers to cross-administrative cooperation and interaction.
- The role of culture as a part of sustainable development is not recognized.
- There are clear differences in cultural participation between the different population groups and districts. Certain individuals, groups and districts fall into the margins.
- Lack of cultural facilities.
- Scarce information about businesses in the cultural sector.
- Dispersed city structure, long distances and partly poor public transport connections hinder access to the cultural supply and participation in culture in certain parts of the city.
- Competing cultural supply of other parts of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.
- The local identity and uniqueness of Espoo are not recognized.
- The cultural operators do not recognize their own role in the promotion of wider city policy goals.
- Lack of information on cultural services prevents participation.

Source: Interviews and surveys of the EspooCult research project.

## 5. INCLUSION AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

*Espoo wants to use cultural services to promote equality and to strengthen the sense of community, participation and well-being. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

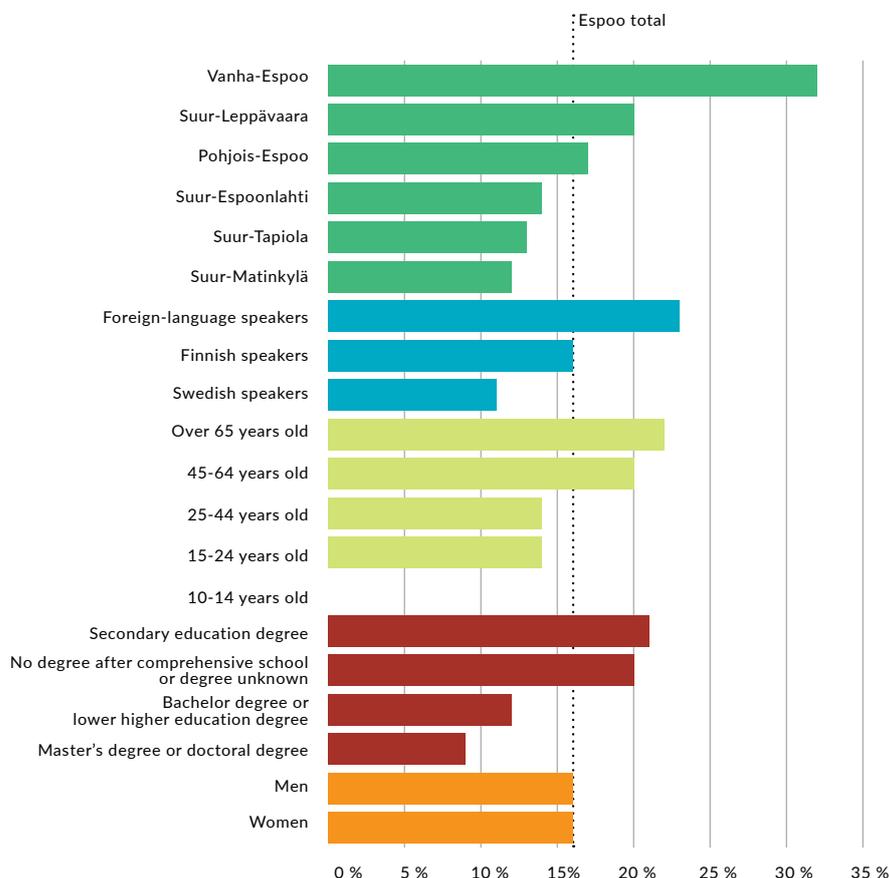
Possibilities to participate and feel included are prerequisites of the sustainable development of the city. Everyone has the right to participate in culture and cultural participation is a value in itself. It can also serve as a platform for building knowledge for individuals and communities as well as wellbeing, inclusion and local identities and for promoting local appeal.

Inclusion means participation in activities that people find important and meaningful to themselves. Inclusion can only be realized when all the residents of a city have the possibility to participate also in the city's arts

and cultural supply. Statistically, residents of Espoo attend cultural events and engage in culture in their pastime actively. There are however differences in the level of participation between the different population groups and districts.

Participation and inclusion and activities that promote them take place also outside the traditional definitions of participation. The objects, ways and platforms change, and the tools for monitoring the situation aren't always able to keep up with the changes. It is important to reflect on what kind of participation is promoted through, for example, cultural activities, and on who define what is desirable participation and how the defining is done in the city.

Persons in Espoo who did not attend any cultural event in 2017: Population aged 10 years or older (%) (did not go to a concert, the theater, the opera, a dance performance or the movies or visit an art museum, art exhibition or any other kind of museum even once. Source: Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Participation in leisure activities



## 6. THE DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPING URBAN CULTURE

*Espoo will be an attractive event city enlivened by an active urban culture. (Espoo Story.)*

*The urban culture promotes diversity and a sustainable way of life in cities. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

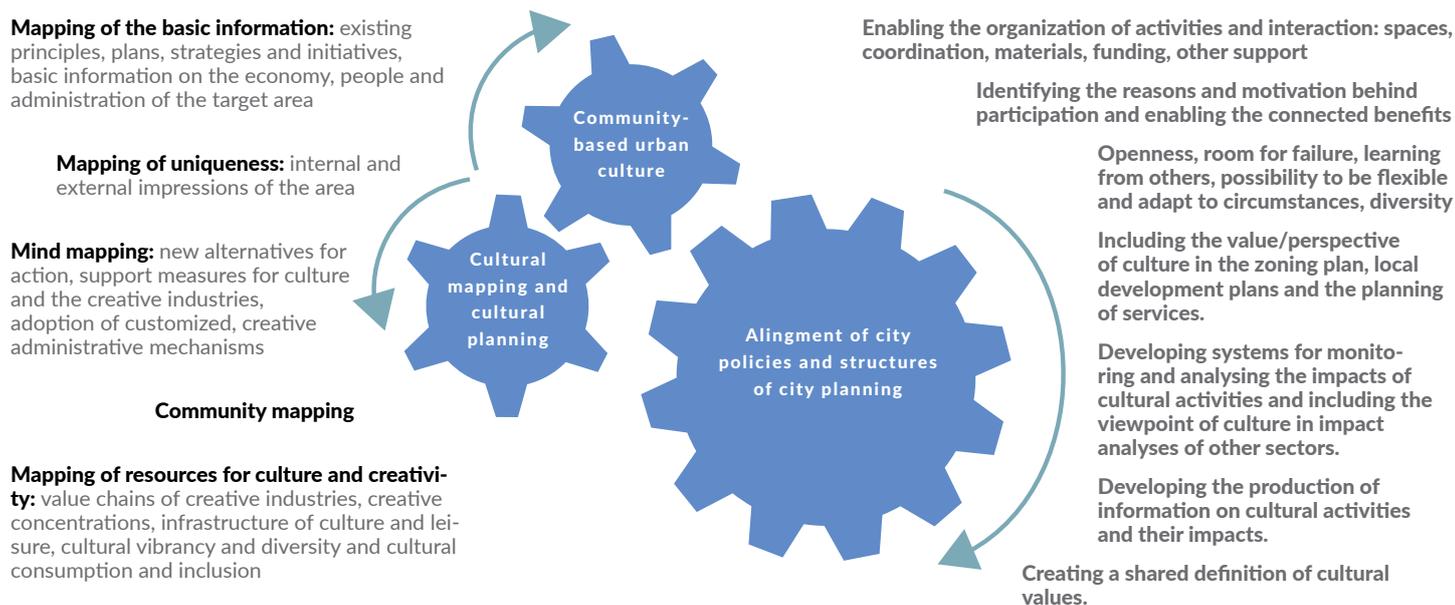
*The city encourages the residents to create inclusive urban culture events. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

*It is important to support voluntary work as it brings cultural services and pleasures to the different parts of Espoo and to the residents' immediate surroundings. (Response to an EspooCult resident survey.)*

The promotion of diverse cultural activities that pay attention to the distinctive features of the area and its residents is one of the key questions for Espoo. It requires that diverse perspectives are taken into account already at the initial stage of development projects and city planning at community level and a resident-led approach are more strongly embed-

ded in the administrative and political structure of the city.

Developing an area on a human scale calls for a definition of the values connected to places as well as professional planning and coordination. Community-based urban culture and self-motivated event production powered by the residents and urban activism are an integral part of the social and cultural sustainability of a city. Communitality and self-organization are not something that can be forced. A city can nevertheless endeavour to enable self-motivated action by the residents and a community-based urban culture. This requires information that can be accumulated through cultural planning. All this starts from the city's political and administrative strategies and structures that support inclusive methods of city planning and the enabling of a community-based urban culture.



## 7. CULTURE AND CROSS-ADMINISTRATION

*The best resources in Espoo are its residents, communities and companies. Active involvement of residents in the development of our services and our comprehensive co-operation with partners ensure effective services that meet the needs of the residents (Espoo Story.)*

*The CultureEspoo 2030 actions are cross-administrative, and their realisation requires commitment from the different sectors. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

### **Cooperation within the city organization and with actors from outside the organization is a prerequisite for the full potential of culture to come out in the holistic development of the city.**

A broad range of conceptions of what is a good city and on the ways to achieve the goals converge in city policies and development. Different groups may have different ideas about the direction of city policies and development should take. At the same time, the advancement of multiple goals calls for cooperation on a broad scale.

In Espoo most of the cooperation connected to culture takes place within the cultural sector and with the social service and health sector. Much potential remains untapped especially in the areas of tourism and marketing, development of activities together with the cultural field and artists, development of spaces and infrastructure for culture and cooperation through industry relations. The cooperation is hindered by many barriers connected to the prevailing structures, practices and attitudes.

Networks, partnerships and cooperation with actors beyond the city organization in the production of cultural services are important focal areas for the city. It is the responsibility of the city to enable and coordinate cultural activities in a good spirit of cooperation with communities, active residents, businesses and other partners.

### **The structures of the city organization need to support cross-administrative cooperation.**

Cross-administrative cooperation calls for broad-base actions and consensus on the processes through which the goals can be achieved. All the actors need to know their roles and responsibilities and be ready to work towards the common goals, with readiness to adjust according to the needs of the operating environment.

#### **Cross-administrative cooperation requires:**

- Permanent network-based structures and practices that cut across all levels of operation and policy sectors.
- Different funding instruments to support cross-sectoral cooperation and the work of artists in different sectors.
- More systematic monitoring of cross-sectoral operations and objectives and taking them into account in the existing indicators.
- Skills and internalising of strategic development and cross-administrative approaches broadly in the city organisation.
- Dialogue to find common denominators and to create shared visions and goals.
- Commitment to include different stakeholder groups and residents in the collaboration.

## 8. CONCEPTUALIZING THE IMPACTS OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

*We must acknowledge the importance of culture for the success of the city and the creation of sustainable well-being. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

*The value of culture and art is not measured by the material benefits of art and culture but by trying to imagine the kind of city Espoo would be without culture. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

*The Espoo Story sets the city-level objectives. CultureEspoo 2030 specifies measures to meet those objectives cross-administratively. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

Impacts of various kind are born as a result of the goals and measures. The effectiveness of cultural policies can be defined as the outcome of purposeful efforts: an ability to set goals and achieve intended effects.

The effectiveness and impacts of culture are often indirect by nature and therefore difficult to prove. Cultural activities often have impacts in ways that cannot be described by directly measurable indicators such as audience rates or number of performances. Cultural activities today seek for impacts in the field of culture itself and, on the other hand, also in the overall municipal policies. Effectiveness is easier to perceive by making a distinction between these two realms of impact. At the same time, it is essential that effectiveness is not discussed as the impact of a single organization alone, as impacts are created through partnerships and cross-administrative work.

The analysis, identification and enhancement of impacts and effectiveness require information and monitoring. The realization of the CultureEspoo 2030 programme is based on the city's wider, cross-sectoral goals and development programmes on the one hand and on the specific goals of the cultural sector on the other. In monitoring the implementation, change is sought at two levels: in the municipal organization and among the residents. The outcomes, i.e. effectiveness and desired incomes, are seen in the establishment of cross-administrative practices and as desired change from the residents' point of view.

Levels of monitoring the realization of the CultureEspoo 2030 programme: organizational and residents' points of view (adapted Sandfort & Moulton 2015)



## 9. CULTURALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*Development in Espoo is economically, ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable. (Espoo Story.)*

Espoo invests strongly in sustainable development and the city has a strategic vision based on four dimensions of sustainable development. One essential path of development towards a more strategic role for culture is to understand that culture is a part of sustainable development.

The strategy of the City of Espoo highlights the city's history spanning over 500 years and compares the development of the city with the overall cultural development of Finland. Culture can be seen as a key cohesive element that binds the different parts of the society together and can offer values that serve as bases for sustainable actions and unite people.

The aspect of culture as information and memory and its role in conveying them are

concretized in, for example, museums as memory institutions and meeting places. Their significance as interfaces between the past and the future in the creation of knowledge, stories and identity is still an integral part of culturally sustainable development. At the same time, culture offers, as creative expression, perceptions and insight on today's society. Enabling different ways of thinking, alternative models of action and unexpected solutions is an investment in the humanity of the future.

On a broad scale culture can be understood as a stream of global traditions, out of which cultural policy decisions single out those features of a culture that people want to emphasize and foster as future cultural heritage at a given time. The stream of cultural heritages encompasses all the economic, social, cultural and ecological measures that live in people's actions and interaction towards the achievement of the different dimensions of sustainability.

**Culturally sustainable development means, for example, paying attention to the following four dimensions as a part of sustainable development:**

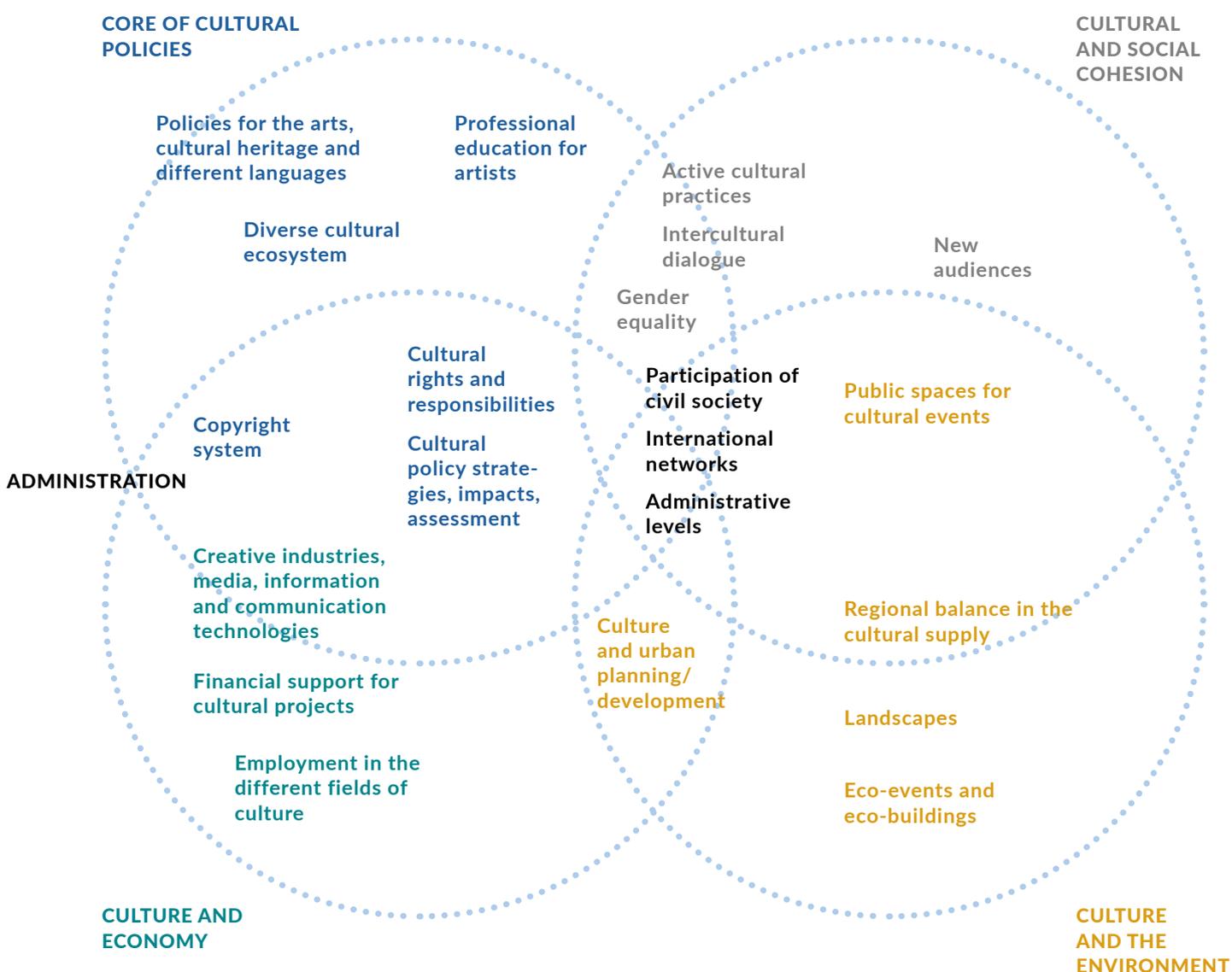
1. Culture as material and immaterial capital
2. Culture as processes and interaction with the environment, including broader conceptions of culture as a way of life
3. Culture as a cohesive element that offers values that serve as a basis for sustainable (or unsustainable) actions and bring people together; and
4. Culture as creative expression that offers perceptions and insight regarding today's society, environmental and sustainability issues and future concerns.

## 10. CONCEPTUALIZING CULTURALLY SUSTANABLE DEVELOPMENT

By recognizing the special nature of culturally sustainable development and promoting it actively it is possible to let the effectiveness and impacts of culture be seen as a part of broader changes in society. Research on culturally sustainable development offers models through which the role of culture can be

analysed as a part of both economic, ecological and social sustainability. At the same time, the significance of these three dimensions of sustainability can correspondingly be analysed as a part of the different dimensions of culture.

Culturally sustainable development as a part of cultural policies  
(Source: Jordi Pascual, 2009, UCLG.)

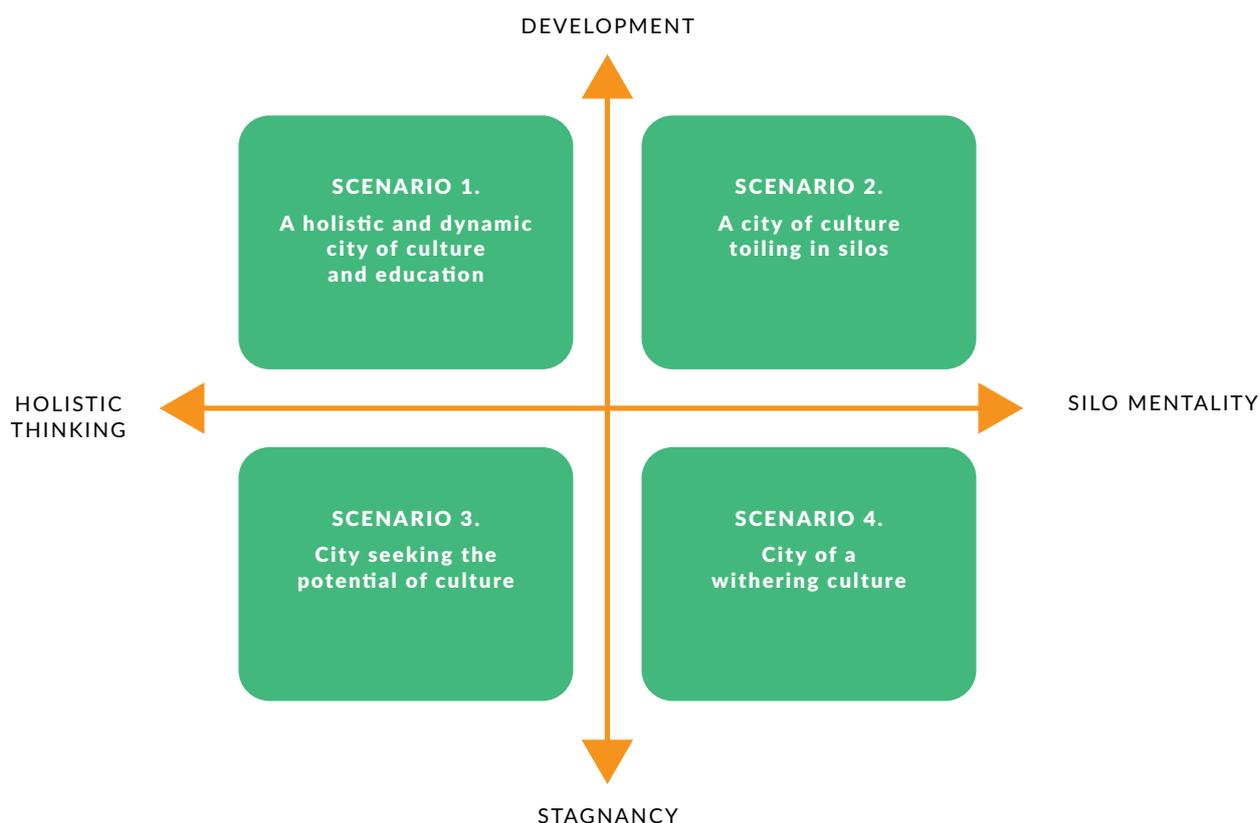


## 11. SCENARIOS ON THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE FUTURE OF ESPOO

*In 2030, Espoo will be a creative and bold city of culture that supports a sustainable way of life. There will be good cooperation between different sectors and the city will prosper through an experimental and curious approach. Culture and art will be present in the spirit of the city, the daily lives of the residents, the physical urban environment and the Espoo identity. (CultureEspoo 2030.)*

*Espoo is a network city comprising five city centres. The City of Espoo is a responsible and humane pioneer. Espoo is a good place for everybody to live, learn and work and be an entrepreneur. In Espoo, residents can truly have an influence. (Espoo Story.)*

In the EspooCult research project four future scenarios were drafted on how the role of culture in development will be manifested in the Espoo city organization. The scenarios were produced based on interviews with officials and persons in positions of trust in key occupations in the Espoo city organization. The scenarios were constructed around two crossing lines. The horizontal line illustrated the relation between a holistic approach and silo mentality. The vertical line runs between stagnancy and development.



The city policies of the **first scenario** strive for more convergences and understanding as well as a stronger community perspective. Culture is experienced as an active force that brings different population groups together and simultaneously serves as a means of strengthening the city's image and appeal.

The **second scenario** depicts a development in the city and the cultural sector that is stuck in silo mentality.

In the **third scenario** the endeavour towards holistic thinking is strong, but understanding of the common goals and resources to achieve them are lacking.

In the **fourth scenario** there is no development and everyone is confined to their foxholes.

### DESIRED FUTURE?

Based on the interviews, the scenario of a holistic and dynamic city of culture and education was the most desired vision for the city of Espoo and the role of culture in the city's development. It can be achieved by holistic development that consciously pays attention to the viewpoints of economical, ecological, social and cultural sustainability.

- The city organization and decision making must be transparent. The forms and mandates of governance need to be clear. The goals and responsibilities in cross-administrative operations and processes need to be clear and appropriately resourced.
- The cultural and lingual diversity of the residents should be seen as a resource and culturally diverse forms of services as important tools. Espoo should foster an atmosphere that is simultaneously local and global, which will as such also attract international competencies.
- The cultural policy strategy needs to be clearly articulated. A strong information basis on the importance of culture needs to be accumulated.
- Diverse channels need to be created for raising awareness of the importance of culture and to reach out to people. Communications and guidance are especially important in the creative field.
- Espoo needs to be a genuinely networked city whose different local centres are developed to maintain their uniqueness in cooperation with the residents.
- In this way the uniqueness of Espoo's culture gets to shine and the city gets to operate with a community-based small-town approach, only with a modern city twist.

## 12. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ESPOOCULT RESEARCH PROJECT

**The research project examined the current state of cultural activities and development needs in the city of Espoo.**

**A central part of the research was to review the key goals and structures for the city's cultural policies.**

### **There are expectations concerning culture at strategy level, but in practice its role remains unrecognized by many**

In the city's strategy (Espoo Story) art and culture are seen as significant especially in enhancing the city's vibrancy and competitiveness and the inclusion of all the residents. The CultureEspoo 2030 programme opens and identifies more broadly perspectives to the role of culture in the city's development. The definitions of the goals, measures and responsible parties are however in many respects unclear, which threatens to reduce the programme to a barrel of wishes. The way the programme relates to the field of arts and its operators remains thin.

### **The potential of culture doesn't come out in the city organization**

The attitudes in the city of Espoo towards culture are principally positive. In the city organization outside the Culture Board and the Culture Unit, the knowledge and competence regarding cultural matters are however lacking. Culture is also easily underrated and juxtaposed. The city's organizational structure does not at present support cross-administration, which is an essential precondition for culture to be fully included in the holistic development of the city. Lack of information and monitoring to support decision making also hinders the implementation and development of measures.

### **The diversity of the city's population and districts calls for diverse cultural services, and it also enriches the development of the city**

The diversity of people and places is a resource and strength and taking it into account is an important point of departure for the sustainable development of the city. While statistics show that the residents of Espoo attend cultural events and engage in culture in their pastime actively, there are clear differences between the different population groups and communities. Promoting diverse cultural policies that take the special features of local communities and residents into consideration is one of the major issues for the development of cultural activities in Espoo. It requires the inclusion of diverse perspectives already in the initial stages of development projects and a stronger emphasis on city planning at local community level and a resident-oriented approach as a fixed part of the city's administrative and political structures.

**What are the things that, based on the research, the Culture Unit and the city organization need to pay attention to, if they want to incorporate culture more strongly into the city's future development?**

### **Clear definitions and the creation of a shared understanding**

**Seeing to it that the definitions are clear and consistent.** It is important to justify and define what kind of a conception of culture is linked to a given strategic goal.

**Creating clear goals that everybody understands.** The specific goals of the cultural sector and the broader goals connected to culture must be expressed in a distinguishable way.

**Defining the key goals and emphases.** Choices need to be made in targeting resources and creating a cultural profile for the city.

**Clear definition of responsibilities.** The defining of the goals, measures and responsible parties and of the relations between them is a precondition for effective implementation.

### **Investment, commitment and competence in implementation**

**Strengthening the status of the Culture Unit and the cultural sector in the city.** Resources need to be allocated for long-term strategic development and increasing competencies in cultural affairs in the city's political organization.

**Promoting cross-administrative cooperation at the level of goals, practice and structures.** The cooperation needs to be resourced appropriately.

**Promoting inclusion at the level of goals, practice and structures.** Respect for the diversity of people and cultures, abidance to law, and an understanding of responsibility for one's own actions play a key part in the promotion of equal opportunities.

### **Information, monitoring and systematic communication**

**Clarifying the processes and sources of information production.** Clarifying what part of information gathering in the cultural sector could be incorporated in the functions of the information centre operating under the city organization.

**Creating indicators for the planning and monitoring of cultural policies.** Cultural policies call for indicators that both measure the achievement of the goals and examine the current state of affairs.

**Creating a broader conception of the economic impacts of culture.** The operating environment of the cultural industries needs to be mapped consistently and the data gathering needs to be more systematic.

**Linking the monitoring of cultural policies to geographic information.** The geographic dimension offers possibilities for cooperation with urban and zoning planning.

**Strengthening communication in cultural affairs and making it more systematic.** Developing communication within the Culture Unit and between the different administrative sectors as well in interaction with the residents and the marketing of the city.

## ESPOOCULT RESEARCH PROJECT

The EspooCult research project is the first comprehensive research about cultural services and the cultural profile of Espoo.



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