



# ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

## ONLINE PEER-LEARNING VISIT HOSTED BY THE CITY OF VANTAA

# DEVELOPING A LOCAL CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

LEAD AUTHORS: PHILIPPE KERN AND NILS SHEFFLER

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Focus of Vantaa's online peer-learning visit (22-26 March 2021)

The focus of the online peer-learning visit hosted by Vantaa was the participatory, cross-sectoral development of their Cultural Environment Programme. The main themes presented and discussed during the "visit" were:

- Vantaa's cultural environments and its values
- Developing Vantaa's Cultural Environment Programme
- Engaging citizens in the development of the programme and identifying the local cultural environments
- Cross-sectoral work for cultural environments
- Using cultural heritage and cultural environments to support economic development, city attractiveness and inclusion

### Background of Vantaa's Cultural Environment Programme

Vantaa is a growing and dynamic city near Helsinki. The preservation of its historical and cultural environment is seen as a key resource in the city to promote sustainable development, improve people's quality of life, reinforce social and cultural cohesion and support to build its city identity. Thus, to make use of its cultural resources in this perspective, the city of Vantaa developed their Cultural Environment Programme in a participatory, co-design process.

For an introduction to Vantaa and its cultural environment, please watch [this video](#).



## Main take-aways of Vantaa's online peer-learning visit

- Cultural heritage and cultural environments, whatever size, are an essential resource to build identity, sense of belonging and can serve for social cohesion, pride and integration.
- Linking cultural environments with different policy areas can make it a key resource for the development of the city and strengthen the importance of the protection of cultural environments.
- Cultural environments can be used as a soft tool for integration and inclusion of people with different social and cultural backgrounds.
- Cultural investments should be seen essential to local economic development and territorial attractiveness.
- Successful programme development is supported by:
  - Defining what the city administration expects from the co-operation and participation in the beginning
  - Identifying the core stakeholders to be involved
  - Cross-sectoral collaboration between city administration units
  - Low-threshold engagement activities with residents
  - Artistic intervention as a powerful tool to trigger citizens participation
  - Special engagement activities for businesses
  - Virtual games to involve the youth and children
  - Full-time person in charge for the elaboration and participation process
  - Political support

For more information on Vantaa's cultural environment: [video 1](#) and [video 2](#). All presentations are available [here](#).

# ANALYSIS

## Cultural environments

"Cultural environments" (CE) is a common term in Finland. The protection of cultural environments is even enshrined in the Finnish Constitution and other legislations.

*Cultural environments are the human built or human influenced environments like places, landscapes and built heritage that are relevant for the identity and well-being of the people.*

## Vantaa making use of its cultural resources to build its city identity

Vantaa is a young city (only 50 years old) from an administrative point of view. However it is growing very fast and is now the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in Finland with 370 000 inhabitants. Squeezed between Helsinki-Vantaa international airport and the Finnish capital Helsinki, it is challenged by establishing a sense of community and avoid being categorized as a suburbia with no will, identity on its own. At the same time the city is faced with the need to ensure social inclusion for a population that is increasingly diverse and non-Finnish with 21 % of the population with migration background (Russia, Estonia, recently also from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan).

Vantaa's "classical" cultural heritage resources include e.g.

- over 350 archaeological sites
- 1 old church from the 15th century
- 9 manors
- oldest rock-built railway station in Finland (nowadays a City Museum)
- 19th century farmhouses
- first listed suburbs (1960-70's apartment buildings)

In addition, Vantaa has cultural environments, which together with local cultural (heritage) resources, the city uses to build an entire narrative aimed at providing the city with an identity:

- street art
- a city museum
- festivals and events
- culture and creative Industries (to support the development of a digital narrative subject to a web application)

## Lessons learnt

Cultural heritage and cultural environments, whatever their size, are an essential resource to build identity, sense of belonging and can serve for social cohesion, pride and integration. Thus, it is important to know your local cultural resources and make use of them to serve the attractiveness of the place and its identity.

## The cultural environment programme of Vantaa

### ...from the urban development and inclusion perspective

The city of Vantaa aims to protect and make use of their cultural environments as a key resource for city development. The “Cultural environment programme” (CEP) points out the cultural environments of Vantaa from prehistorian time till today and describes why and through which laws the cultural environments are protected. Further it contains a vision, mission, guidelines and 50 actions for the protection and development of Vantaa’s cultural environments and for monitoring it. The Vantaa Cultural environment programme has called upon its local cultural resources to set in motion its branding strategy: city connected to its past with roots, but looking towards the future, making use of new forms of artistic expressions (street art, art festivals and gaming to reach out to a younger audience). For the development of the CEP (staff and involvement activities) € 168.000 were spent. Sources: € 50.000 city planning department, € 50.000 education department, € 40.000 Finish Heritage agency € 28.000 Vantaa city museum.

The Cultural Environment programme has been a smart “vehicle” to mobilise local cultural resources to develop the city’s identity narrative.

Lessons learnt: Strength and features of the CEP

#### **Linking the cultural environments with different policy areas**

A strength of the CEP is that it strives to link the cultural environments with different policy areas like education, culture, real estate, tourism, entrepreneurship to thereby make it a key resource for the development of the city and at the same time strengthen the importance of the protection of the cultural environments.

#### **Using cultural environments as soft tool for integration and inclusion**

The city of Vantaa also uses their cultural environments as a soft tool to make long-term inhabitants and newcomers feel at home and attached to Vantaa. In this regard they use the cultural environments also for the inclusion of migrants.

#### **Using cultural environments for economic development**

A strong cultural offer makes a territory more attractive, enabling to retain or attract talents that wish to live in vibrant cities. The city of Vantaa – as highlighted by the head of the economic department – uses its culture to enable the development of a service economy (bars, restaurant, micro-brewery) that improves the urban experience. Thus, culture becomes a key element in the experience economy and a contributor to the attractiveness of a place for settling in or for investing when you are an entrepreneur. Quality of life, served by a strong cultural offer, is an essential parameter to economic development.

**Learning point:** Cultural investments should be seen essential to local economic development and territorial attractiveness (real estate, industrial or service based). Cultural policy should make the most of local cultural and creative industries (working with the local game company for instance in developing story-telling and interactive apps or with local artists – street art and festivals). The head of economic department had a great understanding of the value of cultural investment. However he was not able to tell the size of the cultural and creative sector in the city and its contribution in term

of employment and value added. It is important for a city to know its cultural resources and map its creative ecosystem to make the most of it.

Thus, with the cultural environments of all time layers the city of Vantaa follows a strong concept of integration, both in terms of topics and policies and in terms of people. This approach seems to base in a positive understanding among the institutions in Vantaa about the importance and significance of cultural environments for the attractiveness and vitality of the city.

### ... from the governance perspective

The CEP was developed in a cross-sectoral and collaborative approach, engaging residents, local associations, local businesses, land and property owners, experts, different city departments, politicians and other public stakeholders from regional, national and international level. The city

- organised about 35 meetings and morning cafes with more than 90 officials,
- organised and took part in about 57 events, involving more than 3.000 residents
- Took part to the cross-sectoral committee for cultural environmental preservation.

With this approach the city aimed to ensure the support of the CEP in politics and in the city administration. The city also ensured locals' understanding and ownership of the content of the programme and to increase their support for the implementation of the programme actions. Another objective was to make the residents feel that participation has an impact on the outcome.

Lessons learnt: Strength and features of the collaboration approach

#### **Defining what the city expects from the co-operation and participation in the beginning**

Before starting a collaborative approach, the city administration defined with which purpose they wanted to involve the core stakeholders. In the case of Vantaa the goal was to gain knowledge and understanding, to increase participation in the decision-making and to develop actions the stakeholders feel ownership for. These purposes helped design the cross-sectoral and participative approach.

#### **Identifying the core stakeholders to be involved**

An important aspect of the collaborative approach was the identification and activation of core stakeholders in the very beginning of the process and to involve them – target-group oriented – based on their interests. The lesson learnt of the Vantaa experience is to plan sufficient time for activation activities and pilot projects bringing people together.

#### **Cross-sectoral collaboration of two city administration units**

The city of Vantaa has applied successfully known methods of cross-sectoral collaboration. First, they hold meetings with all heads of departments to explain what the CEP is about and how taking part in the process can be of benefit for their department. Afterwards for the cross-sectoral collaboration the city used a cross-sectoral committee.

Cross-sectoral collaboration was also ongoing in the cross-sectoral committee for cultural environmental preservation. The committee consisted of staff from example the city planning department, museum, environmental services, maintenance and building permits. They met 4-6 times per year and commented on the programme drafts. The committee will be the authority that will follow up the programme's progress. The decision-making processes are handled in the cross-sectoral

cityscape committee. Many of the representatives in these committees are the same, but in the cityscape committee there are also members of the city council.

In the 'Committee for cultural environments' the culture and urban environment departments met with experts to prepare and discuss the content of the CEP.

These committees helped to bridge sectoral thinking. They allowed discussions on topics from different professional perspectives and get to understand better each other's perspectives. Further, they helped making everyone think about the handling of the cultural environments and come up with a joint list of potential actions and get feedback to other proposals. These meetings also helped to get to know each other and discuss topics internally in an informal setting, which might ease future cross-sectoral collaborations.

Here, it is recommended to have a full time and experienced person in charge of the conception, preparation, moderation and follow up of the meetings, guiding the participants to a common target and ensuring that the meetings are beneficial for the participating parties. This ensures their constant and active participation.

Cross sectoral collaboration works better when there are incentives to cross collaborate. In this way, such committees should not be limited to public institutions only. Relevant private stakeholders as i.e. from the business or cultural sector should also be involved.

For further recommendations on cross-sectoral co-operation in Vantaa look at [this presentation](#)

### **Low-threshold engagement activities with residents**

To engage with the residents, the city of Vantaa organised low-threshold activities to make participation as easy as possible. At the beginning people were asked about their interest and how they would like to participate in the development of the CEP. Based on this information, Vantaa organised engagement activities aligned to the interests and designed in a way that they do not take too much of the residents' time. Engagement activities included:

- Story Sharing workshops
- Valikko network
- Vantaa in photographs
- Historical walks
- Vantaa's birthday
- European Heritage Days
- Voluntary work events
- Class reunion
- Facebook groups
- Vantaa to Wikipedia
- Round table discussion
- King's picnic

Existing events of other institutions and initiatives were also used to approach citizens. During these activities, residents were involved in the identification of the cultural environments of Vantaa, with a double objective in mind:

- make residents aware of the cultural environments and their features,
- identify the cultural environments that matters to them, taking into consideration personal stories, feelings and memories of local cultural environment.

Ideas of actions were collected and discussed as well as the feedback obtained. Through these activities the city achieved to make citizens aware of their cultural environments and make it a topic of discussion (at least during the elaboration process).

For such engagement activities it is important to plan target group specific activities. Seniors might become engaged through different activities than youngsters, and a sport enthusiast might be engaged through different activities than a cultural enthusiast. It is recommended to meet and engage the people at the places where they spent their life, best at cultural environment spots.

### **Special engagement activities for businesses**

Vantaa also targeted businesses in the tourism sector and businesses which use the local cultural environments. Special formats to meet and discuss with such companies were designed as

- Forsman Oy: Vantaa tea
- Restaurant Backas: history walk
- Suomen Messut Oy: Vantaa stand
- 6Aika: Time travelling -project
- Cafe Charlotta Vernissa: place for meetings
- Culture house Vernissa: place for seminar
- Cafe Kuusijärvi: King's picnic
- Businesses and environments –seminar

Business opportunities based on the cultural environments were discussed as well how the businesses could benefit from the cultural environments. For the businesses the cultural environments present in particular a beneficial “scenery”. They provide stories and identity, which companies can use as a soft factor to attract employees and “entertain” clients. For businesses in the tourism sector new places as tourist destination could be identified and marketed.

### **Virtual games to involve the youth and children**

To raise the awareness of children and youth about the cultural environments, the city developed a digital game in the manner of Pokemon Go. You find it [here](#) or take a look at this video. Social media were also used to reach young adults. Other events were planned as the night of the museums with food and music but could not take place because of COVID restrictions.

### **One full-time person in charge**

Key for the successful elaboration and participation process was the hiring of a full-time person in charge of the preparation, organisation and being the contact person for the involvement activities. An important trait of that person is to be outgoing, people-friendly and have good activation and coordination skills.

### **Museums as “lawyer representative” of the cultural environments**

A particular feature in Finland is that museums are the “lawyer representative” of the cultural environments since a law from 1985. Museums can apply to get this “position” (and with staff resources). Being the “lawyer representative”, museums are involved in negotiations that concerns the cultural environments. They provide statements, are involved in the decision-making process and cooperate with other city departments. Since 2020, more museums can be involved, so that decision making is as local as possible.





## Importance of political support to carry out the activities and trigger cross collaboration between services (leadership)

### ...from the social cohesion and well-being perspective

The Cultural environment programme plays an important contribution in increasing well-being in the community. Residents wish to “feel at home” and be part of a distinctive community with an identity. The community is working together to build this identity through the programme. This contribute to social cohesion and harmony. Unfortunately, the implementation of the programme did not involve the social department of the city but there is clearly a potential for cross collaboration.

The strong participatory element of the programme (events, walks, competition, food gathering) is an opportunity to engage and empower citizens. Very good examples were also given in this context by the city of Rijeka with its programme of artistic intervention aimed at triggering citizen’s participation and engagement during the European Capital of Culture year (2020).

#### Lessons learnt

Artistic interventions are powerful tools to trigger citizens participation. Cultural investments contribute to social policy in the city (integration, intergenerational dialogue). The project also showed the importance of appointing a strong staff member able at building bridges between the various stakeholders to mediate exchanges.

For further information about co-creating Vantaa's cultural environment programme watch this [video](#).

### Main takeaways from participants (non-exhaustive)

City/region/ stakeholder	Main lessons learnt	Future use of ideas and knowledge gained – projects that were shared and that could be transferable to your local context
Espoo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set your goals</li> <li>- Know your stakeholders</li> <li>- Listen to and interact with your stakeholders</li> </ul>	With the gained knowledge I will complete the Espoo Cultural Environment Programme by the summer 2022.
Plovdiv	All cultural heritage sites are different, and projects need to take the local context into account.	Direct inclusion of types of approaches and think-tank process triggering.
Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Try to be involved as early as possible in the planning process to make sure your priorities are heard</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask residents feedback throughout as they are the target audience</li> <li>- There are innovative ways to get people interested (online games, walking tours, etc) and to ensure that you are reaching your target audience (whether actual residents or tourists)</li> </ul>	
Flanders region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation=people and time needed</li> <li>- Working cross-sectorial and integrated approach = 1+1=3</li> <li>- Integrating the landscape dimension into all policies which may have a direct or indirect impact on the quality life pays off (see also <a href="#">here</a>)</li> </ul>	
Laappentranta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The importance of making a plan to increase participation and awareness of cultural heritage</li> <li>- Having a full-time employee for the cultural heritage programme</li> <li>- Revitalisation requires collaboration across the council / NGOs / residents</li> </ul>	By working on our plan to increase awareness of local cultural heritage and encourage residents to be more active.
Kalava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of refugees and immigrants via cultural heritage</li> <li>- Gamification as a way to support engagement</li> </ul>	<p>I was particularly interested in the section of new technologies and gamification, as we are currently building a new digital cultural route for intangible cultural heritage. This presentation was very useful to provide a roadmap and an example for our local programme.</p> <p>Culture near you from Ireland. The main concept of citizen engagement for heritage identification is the transferable idea that simply must be adapted to our local needs and specificities.</p>
Procida island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- give importance to citizen participation</li> <li>- increase the use of new technologies</li> <li>- put effort into networking between institutional bodies</li> </ul>	

Fortress of Culture Šibenik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Almost every organization faces the same challenges when starting initiatives related to public (audience) engagement</li> <li>- Creating a cultural environment is a long process, but worth it</li> <li>- Great things can happen when all sectors cooperate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I basically screened potential ideas for our future projects and initiatives, especially the ones that could encourage cross-sectoral cooperation and engagement (especially gamification to attract younger audiences).</li> <li>- Inspiring murals in Vantaa (currently thinking about doing historical murals)</li> </ul>
Hauts de Seine département	<p>Vantaa Cultural heritage programme achieved to convince me of cross sectoral collaboration. But how to convince my organisation to do so?</p> <p>The finish values base on wellness for inhabitants are for me the best to make sustainable cities</p>	Very inspired by cultural heritage walks tours (we used to do some), cultural heritage digital games, street art.
Umbria region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The role of museums in cultural environmental planning</li> <li>- The use of gaming in tourism promotion</li> <li>- The way the community is always involved in the decision-making process</li> </ul>	Use of gaming as a tool for tourism experience
Heritage Scotland	<p>Very interesting to hear about Vantaa's masterplan for preservation and I will investigate it in more detail. In Scotland and in Edinburgh where I worked on the management plan for the WHS we work on a plan for development as opposed to preservation- this was an interesting difference.</p> <p>Also interested to hear about ideas on how to engage 18–25-year-olds and on the concept of pop-up volunteering.</p>	
Sendzimir Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- city representatives should understand the need to protect cultural environments in the participatory way. I was impressed by the fact, that the city officials were really interested in and involved in the programme</li> <li>- If it is difficult to encourage someone sceptical, it is always</li> </ul>	<p>I would love to include the international perspective in my projects. Thanks to contacts I made during the visit will be easier and more efficient.</p> <p>"Sustainability of preservation versus demolishing": this project attracted my attention. I need to find out if it is transferable to Polish context.</p>

	<p>good to start talking and trying to include each stakeholder perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The level of heritage buildings protection varies between countries. I appreciate the discussions that happened in the chat, where participants from several countries described their context.</li> </ul>	
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## LIST OF REFERENCES AND PROJECTS SHARED

### Projects mentioned by participants

- [Project SHARE](#) on Sustainable approach to cultural heritage for the urban areas requalification in Europe. Interreg Europe project led by the Umbria region.
- [Procida's project](#) 'culture never isolates' for the Italian capital of culture 2022 is available in 26 languages and the video is available [here](#)
- [The Journeymen project](#) on generations sharing heritage by the Finnish local heritage federation
- [Plovdiv Urban games festival](#) implemented with Matera (Italy) European Capitals of Culture in 2019
- 4 examples of citizen participation from Plovdiv: [Plovdiv Neighborhoods TOGETHER](#), [sense of a city](#), [re-create Plovdiv](#) and [Ayliak Parade](#)
- [What's your heritage](#) programme in Scotland
- [Projects Mela social enterprise](#) on designing places through the equality, diversity and inclusion lens

### Best practices from catalogue of cultural heritage in action mentioned during the visit

- [Leuven](#): OPEK, public depot for the arts. From ashes to cultural hub
- [Ghent](#): Circuskerk. Circus and activities for young people at risk
- [Daugavpils](#): Regeneration of Daugavpils Fortress. Revitalising an unattractive urban area
- [Rotterdam](#): Archive for an inclusive city. Crowdsourcing intangible heritage

### Other news, examples and tools from participants

- [Eurocities' publication](#) from April 2018 on 'State of the public art' in European cities: trends and support actions
- [The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme](#) awarded £4.5 million for historic towns and cities in Scotland
- [Example of street art](#) in Leuven
- [Example of street art](#) in Vantaa
- [The games](#) used in Vantaa
- [Timeout](#). A series of tools used in Vantaa for constructive discussions between residents and city officials
- [Another example of gamification](#) shared by Vantaa
- [European Heritage Days 2021](#): Heritage all inclusive! And the [toolkit](#) with tips and case studies for inclusive and accessible events and activities
- [The map of Culture Near you](#) in Dublin

## USEFUL CONTACTS

	Name	Email address
<b>Hosts</b>	Maiju Hautamaki – project coordinator of CEP	<a href="mailto:Maiju.hautamaki@vantaa.fi">Maiju.hautamaki@vantaa.fi</a>
<b>Experts</b>	Philippe Kern Nils Scheffler	<a href="mailto:pkern@keanet.eu">pkern@keanet.eu</a> <a href="mailto:scheffler@urbanexpert.net">scheffler@urbanexpert.net</a>
<b>Cultural heritage in Action team</b>	Julie Hervé Solène Molard Jérôme Schuman	<a href="mailto:Julie.herve@eurocities.eu">Julie.herve@eurocities.eu</a> <a href="mailto:Solene.molard@eurocities.eu">Solene.molard@eurocities.eu</a> <a href="mailto:Jerome.schuman@eurocities.eu">Jerome.schuman@eurocities.eu</a>