

cultural planning meeting

HELSINKI 11-12 JUNE 2026
HOUSE OF SCIENCE AND LETTERS

University of Turku
IN SITU Horizon Europe
Society for Cultural Environment Studies

11 JUNE PROGRAMME

Moderator Maunu Häyrynen

- 1:00 pm Dr Laura Puolamäki, U of Turku: Welcoming by Chair of Society for Cultural Environment Studies (online)
- Prof Maunu Häyrynen, U of Turku: Opening word
- 1:20 pm Lia Ghilardi, founder of Noema: In an age of disruption, can cultural mapping help reconnect and rebuild communities?
- 1:50 pm Erica Månsson, founder and Vice Director of Nilsson & Månsson: Is a crisis required for cross-policy collaboration? Perspectives on cultural planning from some Swedish municipalities
- 2:20 pm Coffee break
- 2:50 pm Liz Gardiner, Director of Fablevision: Implementing Cultural Planning in Practice: Celebrating Success and Analysing the Problems, Issues and Barriers from a Scotland based perspective (online)
- 3:20 pm Simon Roos, Development Officer for Municipal Cooperation Region Skåne: Where Culture Shapes Place: Lessons from Small Municipalities in Skåne (online)
- 4:00 pm Dr Nancy Duxbury, Principal Researcher, Centre for Social Studies at the U of Coimbra, PI of IN SITU Horizon Europe project: Cultural mapping and planning in view of cultural and creative industries and place-based innovation in European non-urban areas (online)
- 4:20 pm Prof Patrick Collins, National U of Ireland / Galway: Theoretical insights into cultural mapping (online)
- 4:50 pm Maunu Häyrynen: Wrap up

12 JUNE PROGRAMME

Moderator Lia Ghilardi

- 9:00 am Project and case presentations, participants, 15 minutes each
- 11:00 am Round table: What do we still need cultural planning for and how should it evolve?
- 11:30 am Discussion about the possibility of a Nordic conference on Cultural Planning

CONTEXT (FOR INTRODUCTION)

Cultural planning and cultural mapping became an active area of urban development in Sweden in 2000s and started to gain ground in Finland in 2010s, besides other Nordic Countries. This development was marked by the pioneering work of Kerstin Lundberg & Christina Hjorth (2011) and others, in the building of the Swedish-Nordic Cultural Planning Network and in several development and research projects, relating to cultural mapping and planning exercises in Nordic cities and regions. The activities were inspired by prolific international research and publishing, parallel to other corresponding forms of urban collaborative planning and knowledge co-production.

The core ideas of cultural planning have been debated from the start and have gone under several revisions. The intricate balance between strategic planning and engagement has sometimes worked, sometimes not. The emphases of different projects have varied between enrichment and empowerment of communities and boosting of local economic viability. The role of culture may have primarily been seen in terms of an expression of local ways of life or as a leverage for development and branding.

Also the roles of cultural planning processes in local governance have proved ambiguous. When initiated by municipal organisations, the processes have been prone to entangle in sectoral politics and hierarchies – especially true in Nordic cities with deep and layered administration. Political pressures have tended to stress quick wins. Processes carried out by external facilitators have often lacked in long-term continuity and truly iterative approaches have been rare. Principal goals of promoting deliberation and cross-sectorality have not necessarily been reached. The communities may have felt let down by the slowness of processes and scant impacts perceived in everyday lives.

The criticisms of cultural planning have led to suggested alternatives: less cumbersome cultural planning "light" or nimble and versatile forms of placemaking on the one hand, holistic transdisciplinary transformational processes addressing widely questions of sustainability on the other. At the same time, cultural mapping and planning have found uses in wholly new development contexts ranging from urban nature to non-urban or rural areas as in the IN SITU project. The cases of Sweden and Finland show different paths recently: in Finland research, publishing and academic teaching about cultural planning has continued but actual cultural planning or mapping processes have become scarce, whereas in Sweden the opposite holds true.

The purpose of the symposium is to bring together researchers and practitioners of cultural mapping and planning from Sweden, Finland and elsewhere in order to take stock and explore possible futures. Have the original goals of cultural planning, or some of them, still traction? Does the wide definition of culture still hold and how should it best inform planning and development? Is the scope of culture altogether too narrow, maintaining a dichotomous ontology and excluding ecological considerations? Is the negotiated approach of cultural planning too idealistic and if yes, who should have the last say in the processes: communities, experts, the administrators, politicians? Lastly, should cultural mapping and cultural planning be seen as two sides of a coin or would cultural mapping be better off developed independently as a method for participatory research and co-creative development?

