

How to combat polarisation by cultural planning: Designing mobility hubs for shared (mobility) cultures

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Background:

- Research project "Reconceptualizing justice in planning: A recognition-theoretical approach to diversity-sensitive urbanism" (2025–2029) funded by Kone Foundation
 - Team: Hanna Mattila, Urban planning/Urban studies (UTU), Tiina-Riitta Lappi, Ethnology (UTU), Onni Hirvonen, Philosophy (JYU)
 - <https://koneensaatio.fi/apurahat-ja-residenssipaiikat/reconceptualizing-justice-in-planning-a-recognition-theoretical-approach-to-diversity-sensitive-urbanism/>
- Philosophical approaches to diversity and justice combined with ethnographic research on planners' and inhabitants' understanding and experiences of justice in socially and culturally diversifying cities
 - Mobility hubs are one of our empirical objects of study

What is cultural planning?

Two streams in cultural planning:

Culture as art:

- Forward-looking; focused on creativity
- Respects the authority (and relative autonomy) of the artist, though often also includes co-creation

Culture as local traditions and ways of life:

- Focused on the existing traditions; often knowledge-based (mapping, ethnographic studies etc.)

In practice, these two streams are typically intertwined to enable the evolution of local cultures

If cultural planning is the answer,
what is the question?

Cultural planning is needed, if we wish to work with diversity and combat polarisation

Diversity in cities and communities:

- Multiculturalism
- Socio-economic differences
- Political polarisation
- Diverse actors such as local communities and developers; or car-drivers and bicyclists/pedestrians
- Etc.

Fragmentation in planning institution:

- Finnish urban planning is land-use/zoning oriented and does not connect well to transportation planning, service network planning, housing policy, etc.
- Finnish planning education is either architecture or engineering-oriented and does not primarily promote the understanding of culture and society

Case: mobility hubs

For example...



What is a mobility hub?

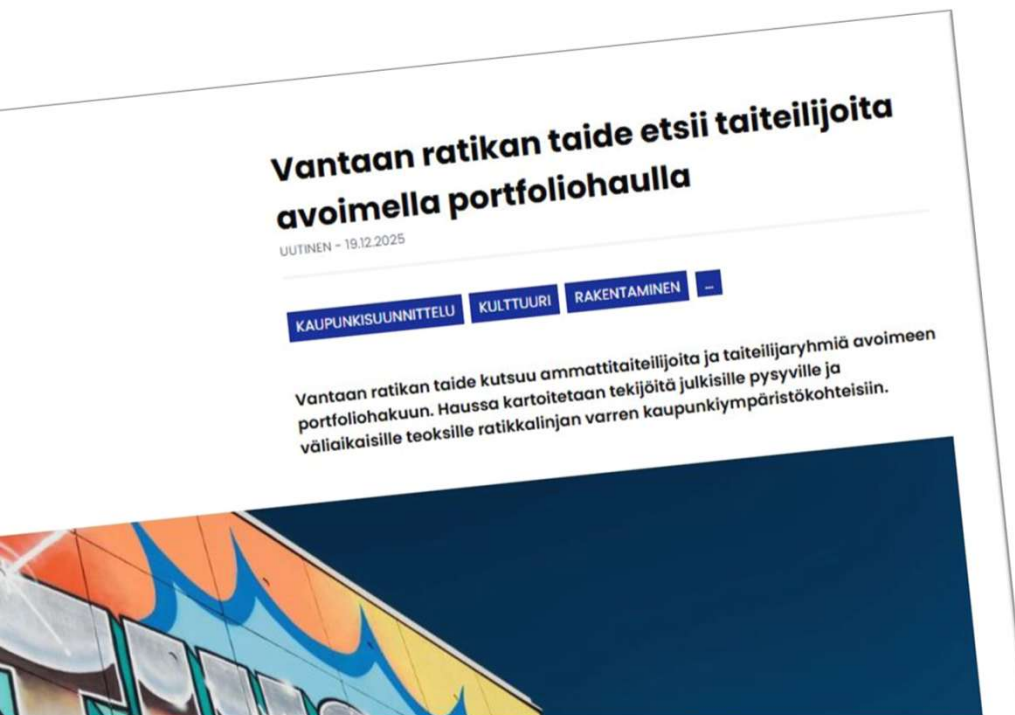
- A node in a mobility system where people can switch from one mode of transportation to another
 - A public space, or a "common" where people can meet, interact, express themselves, communicate with each other, negotiate cultural values etc.
 - A node that attracts public and commercial services and investment
- > Multi-functional mobility nodes make everyday mobility smoother, quicker and foster social activities

Mobility hubs provide an interesting field of experimentation for cultural planners

- Mobility hubs and related transportation and other services are considered important in revitalisation of neighborhoods in decline as they advance mobility justice:
 - They connect these neighborhoods to other parts of city, help local communities to access jobs, etc.
 - In addition, they attract investment and businesses, thus enhancing livability of the neighborhood
- Mobility hub design also requires cooperation between transportation planning, land-use planning, urban design, service network planning, local communities and businesses

Mobility hubs: ongoing projects

- RECURB project studies
 - The Vantaa tramway and Hakunila
 - The Turku tramway and Varissuo



Mobility hubs are often fields of cultural conflict

- Revitalisation through new mobility hubs often includes demolition of existing infrastructure & buildings and may thus displace local people and businesses (gentrification)
 - Local culture may suffer
 - All locals do not benefit from new transport services
- In addition, revitalisation through transportation infrastructure projects often encounters resistance from wealthier communities
 - Wealthier communities do not always wish to be connected to poorer communities, even when there is evidence that the property values will rise also in wealthier areas with the enhanced connectivity; wealthier communities are often more car-dependent and have prejudices towards public transportation

How to mitigate these conflicts? What kinds of conceptual tools we have for cultural planning?

- Working with the concept of recognition: Philosophical, Hegelian recognition theory suggests that struggles for justice are not fundamentally about the distribution of wealth but of cultural recognition (Honneth 1995)
 - Recognition as a basic human need and as a fundament of human well-being



What is the novelty in recognition-theoretical approach?

- Three types of recognition: 1) Respect of rights, 2) earning social esteem and 3) caring for friends and family
- Traditionally, the focus has been on the rights to participate. In our project, we are interested especially in social esteem:
 - How will the mobility hub design in urban revitalisation help vulnerable groups in earning esteem through their work? Who benefit from the new jobs and services?
 - Why are the wealthier communities afraid of rail-based solutions? Is their esteem – or of the neighborhood – threatened? Are they misrecognizing the other communities?

Get inspired.



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