

Turku Ten Years On: A pre-10th anniversary culture and strategy “Health Check”

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Foreword

This fieldwork for this review was carried out at the end of 2019 and much of the analysis at the start of 2020. Before the corona virus struck. Yet the sharing of its findings comes as we are coming to terms with the virus and starting to ease the restrictions defeating it required.

Originally this review examined how the 10th anniversary of Turku's European Capital of Culture year could be both a celebration and reflection of that event, and also an important staging post en route to Turku's 800th anniversary in 2029. Those 2 anniversaries are still relevant and important. But, especially for 2021, perhaps in a different way.

The analysis in this document tells its own story. The cultural and sporting facilities overseen by Turku's Recreation Division receive some 5 million visits per year. 2 million to Turku's libraries, 400,000 to museums, 60,000 to the concert hall and 1.6 million to municipal sports facilities. That shows the extent to which the people of Turku appreciate the facilities available to them. Inevitably those facilities have largely been unavailable during the lockdown. And reopening them is not as simple as switching everything back on.

However, this report talks about re-creation and reconnection. Despite not being able to be physically present, we have seen on-line culture's ability to bring joy and to connect us even in the toughest of times. So culture can be a huge asset in the quest to get back to "normal" - to reconnect and re-create our way of life. At the same time the cultural system will need help in recovering from the impact on events, funding and longer-term possibilities of some social distancing. We very much hope that our work in producing this report and its further development will help in using culture in the most productive way possible for Turku and to speed the recovery of its cultural system from the challenges of early 2020.

The core of this document is based on the premise of Turku building on a lot of good practice and ideas that already exist. Strengthening the community impact of its cultural activity and maximising its impact on health and well-being. Supporting some really interesting work on measuring the impact of cultural activity on peoples' health. And using culture in to underpin exciting urban development plans to make Turku not just a smart city, but one that is known for being "culturally smart". Cultural smartness is certainly needed at the moment, not least in supporting a cultural sector which will have been hard hit by the crisis.

We therefore hope that this document achieves its original purpose, but also that its analysis and recommendations can help in planning Turku's recovery from covid 19.

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1. Introduction

This paper summarises the findings and recommendations from Inside Track's culture and strategy "health-check" which was carried out in October 2019. The work was done by two international cultural professionals from the Inside Track association (UK and Germany). They carried out a short strategic consultancy review for the City of Turku and its key cultural and creative stakeholders.

The timing of this work was planned to inform Turku both in terms of thinking about the 10th anniversary (in 2021) of Turku 2011, the City's year as Finland's European Capital of Culture and also perhaps more importantly to start the process of planning for Turku's 800th anniversary in 2029.

We interviewed almost 40 people in all. Both from the current Turku administration and key external stakeholders, together with a number of people who had left Turku since 2011 but who hold important national roles. A full list of those interviewed is shown at Annex A. We are hugely grateful to all interviewees for the openness and thoughtful way they approached our discussions. We are also grateful to Director of the Recreation Division Minna Sartes and colleagues Saara Malila and Heini Parkkunen who arranged our programme and were generous hosts for our visit. We are especially grateful to Niina Niemi-Nagy who pulled our programme together and kept all interviews and meetings perfectly on track.

We were very impressed with the quality of thinking which is going into the delivery of a wide-ranging change and development programme for the City of Turku. We hope our work will support this, especially by providing a framework for further development over the period between now and Turku's special birthday in 2029. People we spoke with also seemed to welcome the opportunity to think strategically and creatively about what was achieved in 2011. Also, how the important upcoming milestones in the City give Turku a unique opportunity to draw together a new strategic focus. One which has many of the benefits of being European Capital of Culture, but without some of the downsides of a programme whose resources and programme focus on a single "super-year".

2021 is given added significance as it is the year in which the next Finnish European Capital of Culture will be chosen. So, with good planning, 2021 could be both a special and important year for Turku in terms of sharing and building on the 2011 experience, but also providing an important cultural focus for Finland as a whole. Evaluating what has been learned in the 10 years since the last ECoC and sharing that learning with the next successful candidate, and also those Finnish candidate cities who apply but do not secure the title.

2. What we did

The approach to this exercise in Turku, with fieldwork in Turku taking place Monday 7 – Friday 11 October, was to use an analytical framework built on the criteria for European Capital of Culture applications. If Turku was applying for ECoC now, how would the city answer against the 6 criteria of:

- 1) Concept and vision for the City
- 2) Cultural programming and involvement of the cultural sector
- 3) Outreach – communities, their challenges and cultural audience
- 4) Cultural capacity – the strengths and weaknesses of the current cultural system
- 5) Political support for culture and creativity
- 6) European and international connections: is Turku making the most of them?

Using this as a broad framework we held a series of interviews and discussions with cultural, business and political figures. We also took the opportunity to review the “cultural network” via focussed visits to key cultural institutions and venues and a desk review of key strategy documents. We have adapted those criteria flexibly to Turku today. This is the report of the findings.

3. Did Turku Do Good?

Culture Does Good was very much a feature of the Turku 2011 evaluation model, specifically examining the relationship between culture and health. This is an important issue which we discuss in more detail later in the report. But using that phrase as the basis of our opening question, we believe that some 9 years after the opening of Turku 2011 it is universally acknowledged that Turku did good (!) in 2011. **Being European Capital of Culture was good for Turku.**

As is often the case when looking back at successful European cultural capitals, it is frequently the intangible aspects of the year’s impact which leave the biggest impression. Most interviewees spoke of a change in atmosphere and spirit, a feeling that Turku had become more open, more outward looking and more European. They also spoke of a reconnection of the city with some of its principle assets, notably the River Aura which has been transformed to form a vibrant cultural space with a high-quality restaurant scene, interspersed with a number of core cultural buildings. One which works shows the possibilities to use riverbanks as well as any city in Europe.

There are also, of course, plenty of examples of tangible legacies from 2011. Logomo – the centre which successfully mixes culture and the creative economy in a former locomotive workshop close to Turku railway station - is a vibrant physical example. Perhaps one of the most impressively sustained examples of building- repurposing from former ECoCs. Potentially too, Logomo could become a key component in plans to further enhance its surrounding areas as a modern creative zone for the city. This is described in the section where we look at urban development and culture.

Cultural Festivals and organisations which were given a boost during 2011 continue to thrive. Examples include Turku Music Festival which is able to recruit international stars to Turku, and continues to grow its reputation as a significant European classical music festival. Jazz City Turku began as Flame Jazz Club in 2011 and has grown from a weekend festival to a week-long core festival alongside a range of other events and festivals throughout the year. More

public art and connections between culture and science which build on the relationship with the city's Universities are also in evidence.

The idea of culture and its role in overall well-being was also a feature of the 2011 programme and subsequent evaluation. Arguably the results of that initiative in terms of a clear and sustained impact on improved physical and mental well-being are still rather unclear. But this has become an increasingly important European topic. We think that Turku is well placed to build on some of the experience it already has and some excellent current local cultural and research initiatives. Later in this report we describe possibilities for Turku to play a leading role in this area. Exploring how greater cultural activation can become a driver for improved health and well being in ways which mirror shifts towards more preventative rather than reactive health interventions.

This would also be very much at the leading edge of how Finnish cities respond to the Municipal Cultural Activities act which was updated in 2019.

4. Responding to the Municipal Cultural Activities Act

The updated act (in 2019) serves as a useful template against which to measure how Turku is currently using culture in response to national priorities. These include:

- Opportunities for creative expression and activity and experiencing art and culture
- Providing equal opportunities for all groups to engage in culture and education
- Improving citizens' wellbeing and health, as well as inclusion and community engagement
- Enhancing the vitality of the area (minedu.fi/en/local-authority-cultural-activity).

In many respects those priorities mirror the kind of approach to the use of culture to play a deeper role and scope in wider City development. This is very much in line with the ethos of a European Capital of Culture and its legacy. The timing of this review can also be helpful in reflecting how Turku is geared to deliver its national remit for culture. There are also proposals in the policy framework around capacity building and evaluating impact and access which we refer to in our analysis.

5. Re-creation Division

Use culture: use the city

The organisation and management of culture in Turku is established through Recreation Services Division. The Director is responsible for culture, sports and youth services. Reporting to the overall Director are Directors of Sport, Youth Service, Libraries, Museums and Turku Philharmonic Orchestra. The Division also includes cross cutting managers responsible for its own HR, Development, Finance and Communications. Overall the Division provides just over 610 person years (a combination of full and part-time staff). Overall budget is 74.9m and 10.3m

is received in income through ticket sales etc. So the net “cost” of recreation services in Turku is some 64m.

There is also a close relationship with Turku Theatre, once Finland’s oldest municipal theatre, but now an independent limited company, albeit the stock is 100% owned by the municipality

The use of cultural and sporting facilities is high and Recreation Division has 5m visitors. Some 71,000 people take up Culture card which is connected to the library card and provide discounts to attend cultural events and productions and even free visits to openings, rehearsals etc. Both for municipal cultural productions and for those from independents.

There is much civic pride in the Library service, part of the Vaski library network, a consortium of around a dozen public libraries in Western Finland. The central library is a “beacon of busyness” in the intersection between city and river, full of people and activity. People referred to the Central Library as the “living room of the city. Overall the libraries receive 2m visitors per year, and increasingly popular are 24 hour self-service libraries in community locations. Turku’s libraries see annually around 3.1 m borrowings and host some 1900 events.

The music hall welcomes almost 60,000 concert attendees with a 94% attendance rate. The City Orchestra has approximately 90 concerts per year (including symphony, chamber music and church concerts, theme concerts, visits by the orchestra). Year’s 2018 major production *Symphony for The Ball Game Hall* concert at Kupittaa Sports Hall on the eve of Turku Day was a huge success, attracting more than 2,650 people.

There are 6 museums which form the Turku Museum service. Between them they receive almost 400,000 visitors per year. There are also impressive plans (see below) for the development of a new History Museum, planned to open for the 800th birthday in 2029.

A culture grants and subsidies process overseen by the Cultural Division Committees allocates (2019) almost 1.8m to 96recipients. Grants are also made to by the Sports Committees There are 1.6 million visitors to municipal sports facilities and the city awards grants of 1.4m to sports organisations.

The Youth Committees allocates some 300k in subsidies to 62 recipients. Youth services had 620 000 visitors at the various facilities and events. Below is a summary of total grants made.

Division Committees	Grants and subsidies (€)	and Recipients
Cultural division Committees	1,8m	96
Sports Division Committees	1,4m	205
Youth Division Committees	300k	62
Total	3,5m	363

Recreation Division, Allocated grants and subsidies in 2019

“If you can’t find anything to do, it’s time to go home..” was a phrase that was mentioned to us during our fieldwork. Certainly, there appears to be no shortage of people taking up the opportunity to use the range of culture and recreation services being provided by the city of Turku.

6. Growing social and community impact

One of the key opportunities - and also challenges - for culture everywhere is its ability to create a stronger social impact. But what does this mean? The division’s common focus areas in 2017–2021 are:

Promoting equality and reducing inequality

Promoting participation, activity and multidisciplinary cooperation

Strengthening partnership with the third sector

This is very much in line with both Finnish national policy aims and European best practice in the social value of culture. It also mirrors some of the leading thinking in European Capital of Culture development and other strategic international initiatives. These see an increasingly **important role for culture in effecting positive social change.**

The European Capital of Culture project over the 35 years since its inception in 1985 has – at its best – offered its host cities the chance to experiment and try different things. For example, the current feedback to candidate cities talks of “deepening the connection between culture and broader city development”.

Some of the most innovative examples from former ECoC programmes, including Turku, have tried to develop new ways to connect culture with positive social change and community impact. This has offered the possibility for culture to develop from a “top down”, institutionally owned approach to one which at its best is fluid where culture can be used to connect with and find solutions for some of the key issues which face today’s communities.

We found a number of examples of what is becoming known as “socially engaged best practice” in cultural delivery in Turku. The strength of community libraries, the take-up of the Culture card, the Kimmoke and senior wristbands which both give people in receipt of benefits or pensions reduced price access to municipal culture and sports facilities, community based cultural programming (eg neighborhood weeks) and some innovative work on strengthening cultural support for older people all tick the best practice box.

We also received a very helpful paper from Turku’s Welfare Division in response to this review. The paper responded to our strategic questions about the biggest community challenges facing the city. 3 were identified:

- The impact of loneliness and isolation on an ageing population
- Increasing incidence (or recognition) of mental health issues across all population groups

- Addressing pockets of social exclusion and using the possibilities of greater cultural and civic participation. The aim would include addressing issues of worklessness and low motivation amongst communities, young NEETS being a primary example.

Our discussions with a number of stakeholders, the Welfare paper and our own experience from a passion for this type of activity identifies some universal challenges. Possible solutions are often project based and include relatively small numbers of people, or when the project concludes disengaged young people (for example) are forced back into the very programmes (or lack of them) that caused their disengagement in the first place. Over the longer term, **the first city to really get to grips with some of these issues in a clear, measurable strategic way will be a beacon for others. And why not Turku?** With its experience, examples of good practice and the special opportunity of using the 2021 and 2029 years as “external drivers”.

We strongly recommend that **Turku should place a key strategic emphasis on becoming an internationally recognised leader in the development of “socially engaged best practice” in the use of culture.** There are some good ideas and examples – including pockets of good practice from ECoC cities – including Liverpool 2008, Kosice 2013, Rijeka 2020 and emerging ideas from Kaunas, Tartu and Bad Ischl amongst others. There are also some strategic approaches set out in the World Cities Culture report (2012) which set out the **“second strategy” model of cultural development.** And some of the Finnish candidates for 2026 may also identify interesting approaches to Outreach and broader cultural impact.

However, there are few – if any – examples which have as much good practice already as Turku has. **Some of these initiatives need further development and more “joining up”** because, if adopted more universally, they could deliver the kind of interventions which could make a huge difference to the way cities work. By way of example, the Welfare budget (at around 780m euro) is around 10 times the budget for Recreation Division. Pressure on welfare budgets is growing world-wide. And Finland is going through major reforms in health and social care. Other countries – especially UK – are developing “social prescribing” as an alternative to prescribing drugs for some mental health conditions.

So we see an outstanding opportunity to build on some earlier good work during ECoC 2011 which perhaps can be seen as unfinished business. So joining up a number of existing good practices – including the Kimmoke, the Senior wristband, the Culture card, the Omakirjasto (own library) project bringing library and digital services to old peoples’ homes and the exploration of taking culture and well-being to care homes could make a huge difference to the cultural connectivity of Turku. We expand on this below.

Other opportunities come from the plan to adopt an Icelandic style model for young people who are each allocated around 300 euros to “follow a hobby”. This could be an opportunity to make further connections with young people, especially the disconnected. There are also initiatives that could be further developed to link culture more clearly to the school curriculum. These could include exploring the Norwegian “Newton Rooms” concept. We can help make connections here.

7. What the people say!

As part of this exercise, the city undertook a survey of local people, their views on culture and what – if anything – they wanted to change. The results were very positive about the city, though a little unspecific. For example, the idea of “happy community, spending time together. They also wanted what one of our interviewees spoke of as the unexpected encounters with culture. “Singing together at the riverbanks, performances all around city so that people can take part.

Encouragingly Finnish audiences seem to be keen to participate more. People also said that they don't necessarily need spectacle events, but it was crucial to feel that they belong to something.

“ We want to see people smiling on the streets and see that they are happy” was a beautiful quote and one which can and should underpin the sense of culture and city development which is at the heart of the way Turku can take things forward as indicated below.

People also spoke of the increasing importance of nature, and the presence of nature in the city centre (more nature-related events, nature meets city center, green houses etc).

8. Reconnection and Re-Creation

The feelings from local people are very instructive. It has been argued that the last decade has been the decade of disconnection. Some 80 per cent of people (higher in groups like 18/24 year olds) now have smart phones. More than double the number than at the start of the decade. Yet feelings of isolation and the search for meaning and personal contact in a digital world are causing big problems. **What is the role of the city in this context?**

With a downward pressure on city budgets and an upward demand on services such as social care, there can be an inevitable tendency to focus on providing basic core services such as care and schools, affordable housing. And also on “hard” economic projects.

But in a world where – as we saw above - people are also looking for reconnection, **culture (in its widest sense) can provide meaning, and a vehicle for people to connect to each other and to the city.** As we described above, the European Capital of Culture project helped Turku to connect with itself and find its soul. Can we do that without the external driver of a “mega event”?

And although some interviewees have spoken of a need for a stronger, separate role and voice for “Culture”, we believe that the synergy of sport, culture and youth services in the same division offers a greater opportunity to deliver – at best value – the priorities Turku (and the Finnish government) have set. A “ministry of fun” bringing joy, emotion and participation but with a deeply serious purpose and goals. We believe that cities and communities (even countries) need Re-creation. And **Turku's response at the start of this new and very special decade for the city could be built around this concept of Re-creation.**

There is already some evidence that this sense of culture/re-creation being at the heart of the city's sense of itself can support the delivery of core cultural services. We saw an impressive presentation of plans for a new History museum, aiming to open in 2029. What was most impressive was **the sense of a close and participatory relationship between the ethos of the museum and the people of Turku**. The idea of making the city's stories come alive and help people, past and future plans come together. It was great to see that spirit at the core of the museum's relationship with the city. We also note the way Turku has used its twin city relationship with St. Petersburg to develop a relationship with the iconic Hermitage Museum. This was taken forward during a "Hermitage Day" in November 2019 where representatives from Turku, St. Petersburg and other culture strong twin cities took part in a day-long workshop looking at various aspects of museum best practice.

This network of "partner museums" – including also culturally strong partner cities like Cologne and Gdansk – has a lot of potential. **The model of the "participatory museum"** is quite a topic amongst many up-coming European Capital of Culture cities. We think this is an area for Turku to consider for its future strategic positioning.

We also saw further good examples of city connection from the orchestra – we gave some examples earlier and there was also a clear excitement at **the possibility of developing a major public concert during 2021** – which sees not only the 10th ECoC anniversary but also the planned re-opening of Turku's Market Square, currently under reconstruction. The other exciting development for the orchestra is the possibility of a new concert hall which a number of key stakeholders have raised as a highly desirable project. One which provides **a fitting location for the orchestra, but also an iconic new venue to support the continued development of the independent sector, for example Turku Festival**.

We also saw that Turku theatre seems to be going against national and international trends in terms of its audience. In many European – and especially Finnish – cities, theatre audiences are aging and reducing. But in Turku this does not seem to be the case. We picked up a sense that the audience was actually growing across all age groups. This is very positive and not a little unusual. Perhaps Turku Theatre needs to share their model, not least with the other Finnish 2026 candidate cities as theatre is a very important component of Finnish cultural life. But also with other cities – perhaps through a theatre development project for other European Capitals of Culture.

The evidence above suggests that the potential for "re-creation" is alive and well in the core cultural services of Turku. **But could we do more across Turku's cultural sector as a whole?**

9. Independent development

The focus on Municipalities as owners and drivers of culture in Finland does have implications for the development of the independent sector. Looking at the overall budget, almost 2m goes in grants to independent cultural organisations which does skew the emphasis strongly in favour of the "core" municipal organisations. That is not an unusual model in many European (and especially Finnish) cities. But are there opportunities to deepen the impact and value of

the independent sector in Turku? And to engage their special skills, qualities and art in the development of Turku.

We had an interesting and informative visit to Kunstallen, a building located in the Old Town which also houses some arts organisations and projects. We met representatives from several arts organisations who are supported by municipal grants. Many also apply for and receive e.g. national funding from the national arts promotion office **Taike**. Taike give 1-5-year grants to applying arts organisations across Finland. In 2019 Cultural committees raised the subsidies in Turku for 3-year contract partners with 300k, which has made positive impact, the grants from Taike have grown in 2020. For example, Turku's professional chamber choir Key Ensemble, Jazz City Turku, Aura of Puppets and Läntisen Tanssin Aluekeskus (Western-Finland's Dance Centre) and Kuninkaantien muusikot (Baroque Orchestra and Choir) have received financial support from Taike.

We met many of these organisations during our visit. They also spoke positively about Turku 2011, and it is clear (as we said earlier) that independents like Flame Jazz have grown significantly as a result. We also felt an appetite to do more on the part of those organisations. We also recognise **that it is important for cities like Turku to grow and develop a strong and effective independent sector offering some distinctive opportunities and programmes**. The people we spoke to were passionate and full of ideas. Some are thriving, for others it's more of a struggle.

The Arts Café idea forms the basis of a network for the independent sector holds meetings on a monthly basis, also supported by Taike. The city's culture team also attends some meetings, which seem to be attended by many of the most active independents in Turku. **We recommend that further effort is given to the development and capacity building of Turku's independent sector**. Both in terms of growing more "star organisations" but also in sharing best practice and also – without compromising their independence – contributing to the delivery of key city agendas, especially around social impact. Also enabling greater international connections and funding. Also using Kunsthallen to form a centerpiece of an redevelopment of the Old Town, but with the twist of contemporary independent culture.

In this way, all of Turku's cultural organisations – not just municipally owned ones – can form part of a second wave of Turku's cultural re-creation.

10. The road to success is always under construction: culture and urban development

A city needs symbols, said one of our interviewees. Turku's key current symbols are the Market Place and the River Aura. The river and its development have already become a key part of the narrative of 2011 and its legacy. The Market Place is currently under reconstruction, with a planned reopening in 2021. A fitting symbol for the 10th anniversary of European Capital of Culture and an important statement in a more wide-ranging series of regeneration projects which frame the lead up to Turku's 800th birthday.

Cultural projects loom large in Turku's urban plan. The new museum, the much hoped for new concert hall. Other potential developments including new investment in the area near to Logomo which would provide the potential to create a new "creative district" near to the city centre.

We had a very constructive discussion with Turku's Director of Urban Planning. It was clear that culture is very much part of his thinking and plans for the future development of Turku. We discussed how, in the past, enlightened development built **a stage for urban life**, and whilst that still holds true, perhaps cultural life is almost the most important thing for places today. As we said above, in a world where disconnection is prevalent, the ability of cultural life to create meaning and ownership for communities needs to be connected to the plans for "harder" urban development projects.

Our discussion took place during the year of the 100th birthday of the Bauhaus movement. It is helpful to recognise that as well as the iconic architectural design which characterizes Bauhaus, its success was as much dependent on capturing the balance between the "solid" and "fluid" elements of urban development. The combination of buildings, space and facilities can inspire people. We spoke about the need for planned "smart city" development to be not just a cold, gleaming white set of structures, but that development needs to be "culturally smart" too. In other words that **development needs to serve the people of the city and not to over focus on impressing them**. The Aura river provides an excellent example of this. Again (as well as the Library) it was referred to as the Living Room of the city. And two living rooms can be highly effective!

We saw a strong connection between the values expressed in the planned development of the museum and (potentially) concert hall and this idea of **culturally smart and connected urban development**. The best development models can encourage people to take part in the future narrative of their city to create a collective spirit of endeavor and adventure which has both economic and community benefits.

As well as the museum and other cultural developments, an exciting development programme is planned. A "Knowledge Quarter" in which a revitalized old town is better connected to the University. Here some of the independent arts organisations could contribute to a sense of quirkiness and individuality rather than the rather tired, old town models which some places are trapped with. A "free city" with more pedestrian streets and urban lighting. And the potential for the new development close to Logomo which could create the kind of urban creative area – for example like Liverpool's Baltic Creative district – which brings a distinctive and different new part of the city into play.

The planned reopening of the Market Square in 2021 offers an iconic ignition to an exciting programme of redevelopment including the new museum opening in 2029 framing the range of other developments. We think that building this plan into **a new development narrative** for Turku from 2021 – 2029 could be highly engaging for local people. As an example, Liverpool's progression from the "Big Dig" to the "Big Gig" used the 2008 European Capital of Culture year to galvanise the story about Liverpool's recovery from its tough times, and the impact of what at the time was known as "culture led regeneration". Turku could – along with other

international partners (see below) create a more modern version of that urban development narrative – of cities which can be both smart and culturally smart.

A couple of other issues we touched on. Much of the discussion focused on developments in and around the city centre. And it's also evident that since 2011, Turku's citizens have come to appreciate better their city centre. But evidence suggests that many people still see their own neighbourhood as the preferred location to enjoy cultural life. We understand there are 9 main districts in Turku (although in reality many people – as in all cities – see themselves belonging to a smaller, tighter area). Given the 2021 – 2029 nexus, we wondered whether- in conjunction with our proposals for a focus on more socially engaged cultural projects - Turku could initiate some form of “District of Culture” programme taking place between those years, and being launched in 2021. There are some examples of this (London and Liverpool in the UK have “Borough of Culture” initiatives). There are also connections with the national programme in Finland to promote “best areas”. We recommend that consideration should be given to such a programme.

We spoke too about trends many European city centres to face difficulties because of internet shopping and out of town malls. In the UK we are talking about “BID Plus” models – BID being Business Improvement Districts (a business retail development which emerged from America and was quite useful in business-led, retail strong city-centre developments). We discussed the potential of a version of “BID Plus” we have been working on which would be more of a “cultural improvement zone – CID”. This would be a more holistic model of city centre development which could also be of interest to Turku, given its range of potential projects. We would be happy to discuss further if useful.

Finally, we spoke with some interviewees about facilitating possible visits to see other interesting examples of city development – for example creative districts – which would be interesting to Turku. We would be happy to help identify possibilities.

11. A cultural economy?

In past European Capitals of Culture, we note that the most regularly captured impact evidence is about growth of tourism and the visitor economy. In part, some cities have also been able to demonstrate growth in creative industries as their increased cultural profile at a national and European level has encouraged more creative businesses to cluster together, perhaps even in new creative districts.

In Turku, the Head of Visit Turku talked about 2011 as a “tipping point” in terms of the City's attractiveness to visitors. The strength of the food culture for example is given as an example where Turku is able to attract visitors from the capital, so the flow of visits between the two is no longer a one-way street. Turku continues to be a gateway to the Archipelago, but the indications are that people are no longer just passing through.

The strength of the Southern Finnish trio of cities – Helsinki, Turku and Tampere – is also growing much more quickly than anywhere else in Finland with strong Universities, developments and a higher level of cultural investment than in other parts of the country.

Nevertheless, this positive picture is counterbalanced by real challenges to municipal budgets through the impact of cuts to budgets and the combination of an ageing population and reducing tax revenues. We did not detect an appetite on the part of senior stakeholders to reduce funding for culture and recreation. However, as we set out above, universally there are few comprehensive models which demonstrate the impact of investment in culture. Yet to develop such models would better inform decisions on which cultural areas to invest in, as well as having the potential to relive some of those higher welfare budgets, or support demonstrable improvements in educational attainment and so on.

At the moment much of the best available information on cultural impact is more input driven – number of users, audience etc – and perhaps there should be a stronger focus on **Outcomes**. There is already good work going on in Turku – and more described further below. And **this should become a key topic for 2021**, potentially in partnership with a number of other interested partners.

Two other economically related issues. We noticed that there were a number of **different marketing messages and slogans for Turku**. These include what we understand was the popular Kiss My Turku and also a slogan about The Boldest City in Finland. Of course, Turku will be the oldest and boldest city...especially at 800 years old in 2029! But should Turku use 2021 and the build up to its 800th birthday to consider whether to have a more integrated approach to the City's image?

The final issue is unemployment. It is not realistic to ask culture to solve the rather striking issue of stubbornly high levels of unemployment in Finland, especially amongst well educated young people. As visitors, it is a surprise to see this in a country which is as innovative and smart as Finland. We hear of what could even be termed “unemployment tourism” where young people on benefits move to more vibrant and attractive places like Turku from other part of Finland, but still stay on benefits rather than moving into work.

We also heard of the really positive example of the shipyard which had created large numbers of jobs – directly and indirectly – in Turku. And yet we understand that relatively few of those jobs are being filled by Finnish nationals. By way of contrast we understand that Maribor in Slovenia – which followed Turku to be European Capital of Culture in 2021 – has seen unemployment levels reduce by over 50% since its ECoC year. Why has Finland not seen a similar change? Is it an economic or cultural issue?

Given that pretty much all of the Finnish 2026 candidates experience some variation of this worklessness topic, which could get even worse if things like Artificial Intelligence reduces some types of job in the future, we suggest that consideration should be given to examining the “culture of work”. **We recommend that this is given serious consideration.**

12. National and international context

We also spoke with people both in Turku and at national level about the impact of 2011 and how that plays into national and international issues.

It is evident that Turku plays a very active and positive part in a number of international networks and has positive relations with some very good and culturally strong twin or partner cities – we mentioned St. Petersburg earlier for example. Turku is a prominent member of Eurocities and has been a welcome experienced former cultural capital in the European Capitals of Culture network. The city also is a member of the Union of Baltic Cities and part of its commission on sustainable cities which links well with the urban development plans we described earlier.

It is impossible for cities to be everywhere and do everything internationally. But we are struck by the sense of positivity about international relations in Turku. A more outward looking and international reputation can attract innovative people to come to Turku and to cement its reputation as a smart and wise city and the ability of culture to be part of that proposition.

Some international developments which we suggest for Turku include:

- Being a leading player amongst former ECoC cities in terms of supporting the development of international cultural partnerships, capacity building and independent sector international funding
- Using the Union of Baltic Cities as a stronger framework for the development of the region as an important European Cultural area. There is a great opportunity to do so in the next few years given the fact that Kaunas (2022), Tartu and Bodo (2024) and the next Finnish ECoC in 2026, together with planned competitions for ECoC Latvia, Poland and Sweden from 2027 – 29 (possibly including other twin cities of Turku) will provide further networking and partnership opportunities
- Hosting in 2021 a significant international conference in Turku to look at the impact of culture on health and well-being, in particular working with fellow ECoCs who are also exploring this topic and some are already partners -see below.

At national level, as well as important work on culture and well-being, 2021 could be an important opportunity for Finland to present itself as a stronger cultural destination. The current tourism model for Finland is largely based on nature tourism. However, the 10th anniversary of Turku 2011, coinciding with the announcement of the next Finnish European Capital of Culture, gives an opportunity for the National Tourist Board to raise the profile of Finland as a highly interesting and underexplored cultural tourism destination. With a very good mix between wonderful nature, an increasingly good food offer and fascinating and well presented culture and heritage. Culture can become a stronger “attack brand” for Finnish Tourism.

13. A Measure of success?

We wanted to reflect some very interesting work being done around the topic of creative well being which could help to develop some of the ideas set out above about this topic. We met with Anna-Maria Rosenlöf, a senior advisor in a project about cultural well-being at Turku's University of Applied Sciences. We talked about the national network being developed through a coordination centre for Arts and Health.

Again, as above, there is a feeling that projects to explore culture and health have a tendency to be just that. Small, useful projects but which don't have the scale and impact that they perhaps could. And that perhaps culture could learn from sport.

We are more and more convinced of the potential for this work. The academic networks we spoke about also include other future ECoCs like Bodo, Norway 2024. Plans in Turku to use art in elderly care, art educators in Tampere, building culture into Oulu's new hospital development the Newton Rooms and Cultural School Bag models in Norway and increased use of social prescribing in the UK are all examples which individually are very good. Joined together they could be great.

So if Turku could specialize in just one area, this could be it. So what about doing something quite big for 2021 which could provide a major demonstration of the relationship between culture and well being? What if the people of Turku were invited to keep their own activity diary for 2021 and we measured the results at the end of the year in terms of how they felt, their well-being and feelings of connectedness. Their school performance? And what if some other international partners were invited to undertake a similar exercise? What could we learn? We think this could be really useful - both for Turku and more widely. **We recommend that such an initiative is given some consideration and would be happy to help frame it and suggest possible partners.**

14. What Could 2021 Look Like?

There was a consistent view that Turku should recognise 2021, but not with a huge programme of events which was more appropriate to the 800th birthday in 2029. Instead 2021 should be a chance to reflect, to initiate some new projects, to restate Turku's international and cultural credentials, and to act as a **key staging post** in building Turku's 800th birthday narrative.

The opening of a regenerated Market Square would provide an excellent example of a milestone moment – ideally connected to a cultural event, such as a major concert – which would fit perfectly into a 2021 programme. Perhaps Turku could also consider whether **to hold 1 significant new event each quarter** or a “special edition” of an existing Festival – for example Turku Music Festival.

We also discussed whether **Turku should offer to host the presentations and decision making for the 2026 Finnish European Capital of Culture** which will be made in 2021. Normally this takes place in the Capital City, but given that it will be 10 years since the previous Finland ECoC,

there is much to be said for “decentralizing the process”. This could also help to frame a 10th anniversary debate about the impact of culture in modern society and in Finland especially.

Using the remainder of 2020 to focus on how to take forward ideas on the development of the independent sector – maybe inviting them to co-curate one or two major events – and in terms of the strategic focus on health and well-being would also be highly useful. And of course, this will also be critical in how to re-ignite the cultural sector in what we hope will be the aftermath of the Corona virus.

As indicated above, we believe that **Turku should design and host a significant conference in 2021 on the impact of culture and in particular on health and well-being**. And the city could give active consideration to developing the idea of a cross city “culture and well-being diary”, together with initiatives to activate the districts of Turku and raise their profile to show that culture should not just be confined to the city centre.

The combination between culture and Turku’s physical development could be set out in a really useful strategy or plan which sets out what is planned between 2020 and 2029 (we understand some of this may already in place).

Turku could also host some other international meetings – for example initiating a cultural network for the bigger cities in the Union of Baltic Cities – and also reflect key synergies between 2021 and 2029 with some key partners (for example bidding for Polish and Swedish ECoCs, Swedish partner Gothenberg’s 400th birthday in 2021).

We also recommend that **Turku should consider designating a 2021 coordinator to pull some of this work together**.

15. Conclusions and recommendations

By way of a brief conclusion, we would only add that it has been a real privilege to work with the City of Turku on this review. It is clear that Turku is a well-run city with many talented and passionate people in key positions right across the city council and key stakeholders.

There is a clear sense that culture does good for Turku, but that **2021 gives the city a chance to reflect on and add to much good practice that is already taking place**. Some key opportunities include the need to build on and develop the link between culture and well-being, to support the development and internationalization of Turku's independent sector and to continue to position Turku and the wider Baltic region as a powerful and distinctive European cultural area.

Our **main recommendations are set out below**

Turku's narrative at the start of this new and very special decade for the city could be built around **the concept of Re-creation**.

Turku should consider designating a **2021 coordinator**.

Turku should place a key strategic emphasis on **becoming an internationally recognised leader in the development of "socially engaged best practice"** in the use of culture.

Further effort should be given to the **development and capacity building of Turku's independent sector**.

Turku should **offer to host the presentations and decision making for the 2026 Finnish European Capital of Culture** which will be made in 2021

Turku should design and host a significant conference on **the impact of culture on health and well-being**.

Turku should consider developing some **specific ideas for neighbourhood cultural development**

The **people of Turku could be invited to keep their own activity diary for 2021** and results measured the results at the end of the year.

Consideration should be given to **examining the "culture of work"** perhaps involving other Finnish cities bidding to be European Capital of Culture

Turku should use 2021 and the build up to its 800th birthday to consider whether to have a **more integrated approach to the City's image**.

" We want to see people smiling on the streets and see that they are happy" should be the most important measure of success in delivering the city's cultural plans! That is an even more important goal in helping to recover from the impact of Corona virus. If that can happen, culture certainly will have done good.

Inside Track

UK and Germany, February 2020

List of Interviewees

Turku Municipality

Minna Arve Mayor of Turku

Elina Rantanen Chairperson, Turku City Council

Lauri Kattelus, Chairperson, Turku City Board

Minna Sartes, Director of Turku Recreation Division

Saara Malila, Director of Communications, Turku City Council

Rebekka Pilppula, Director of Library Services

Annina Lehtiö-Vainio, Director of Youth Services

Arto Valkama, Director of Turku City Theatre

Kimmo Levä, Director of Museum Services

Timo Hintsanen, Director of Urban Planning

Antti Kirkkola, Director of External Affairs

Mika Akkanen, Manager of International Affairs

Pekka Sundman, Director of the City Development Group

Heini Parkkunen Development Manager, Turku Recreation Division

Niina Niemi-Nagy, Cultural Secretary, Turku Recreation Division

Cultural and artistic stakeholders

Risto Ruohonen, Director General, Finnish National Gallery

Liisa Ketomäki, Managing Director, Turku Music Festival

Sanna Vainionpää, Executive Director, Turku Artists Association

Sanna Meska, Executive Director, Dance Centre of Western Finland

Sanna Soni, Puppetry Agent, Aura of Puppets

Jani Rättyä, Association for Sculptors Jöötti

Hilla Tuominen, Executive Director, Photography Centre Peri

Jukka Aaltonen, Director, Åbo Svenska Theatre

Jussi Fredriksson, Chairperson and Producer, Flame Jazz/ Turku Jazz Association

Heli Nieminen, Director of Communications, Manu Events/ Eat my Turku

Riitta Monto, Editor-in-chief, Turun Sanomat (written comments)

Other Turku Stakeholders

Anne-Margret Hellen, Director of Tourism, Visit Turku

Päivi Rytsä, Managing Director, Logomo, Special Adviser, Arts Promotion Centre Finland

Henri Terho, Senior Specialist, TAIKE - Arts Promotion Centre Finland

Anna- Mari Rosenlöf, Senior Advisor, Cultural Well-being project, Turku University of Applied Sciences

Anu Salminen, Kakola Tour Guide

People linked to Turku 2011

Christopher Taxell, Chair of Turku 2011 Foundation

Cay Sevon, Chief Executive, Turku 2011 Foundation

Suvi Innila, Turku 2011 Programme Manager

Laura Aalto, Turku 2011 Marketing Manager (now CEO, Helsinki Marketing)

Maija Perho, 2011 Chair of Cultural Affairs Committee

Kaija Hartiala, Deputy Mayor, 2011 (key part in ECoC application).

Local People

277 people responded to a questionnaire about their cultural preferences.

A huge thanks to everyone who was so generous in giving their time and so open in sharing their experiences and ideas.