



**HELSINKI
CITY MUSEUM**



HELSINKI CITY MUSEUM
(AS AN EXPERT OF CULTURAL
ENVIRONMENT) AND CHALLENGES
OF PARTICIPATION IN OPEN SOCIETY

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ICOM Milano 2016, CAMOC sessions



HELSINKI CITY MUSEUM

- The Board of Ancient Monuments founded by the City Council in 1906 to document and record the rapidly changing city
- City Museum founded in 1911 to continue this work
- 2003: 11 museum branches -> 2016: 5 museums
- 2008/2013-> the New City Museum project launched; shift from a building and removal project into a development and transformation project





”EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO FALL IN LOVE
WITH HELSINKI”

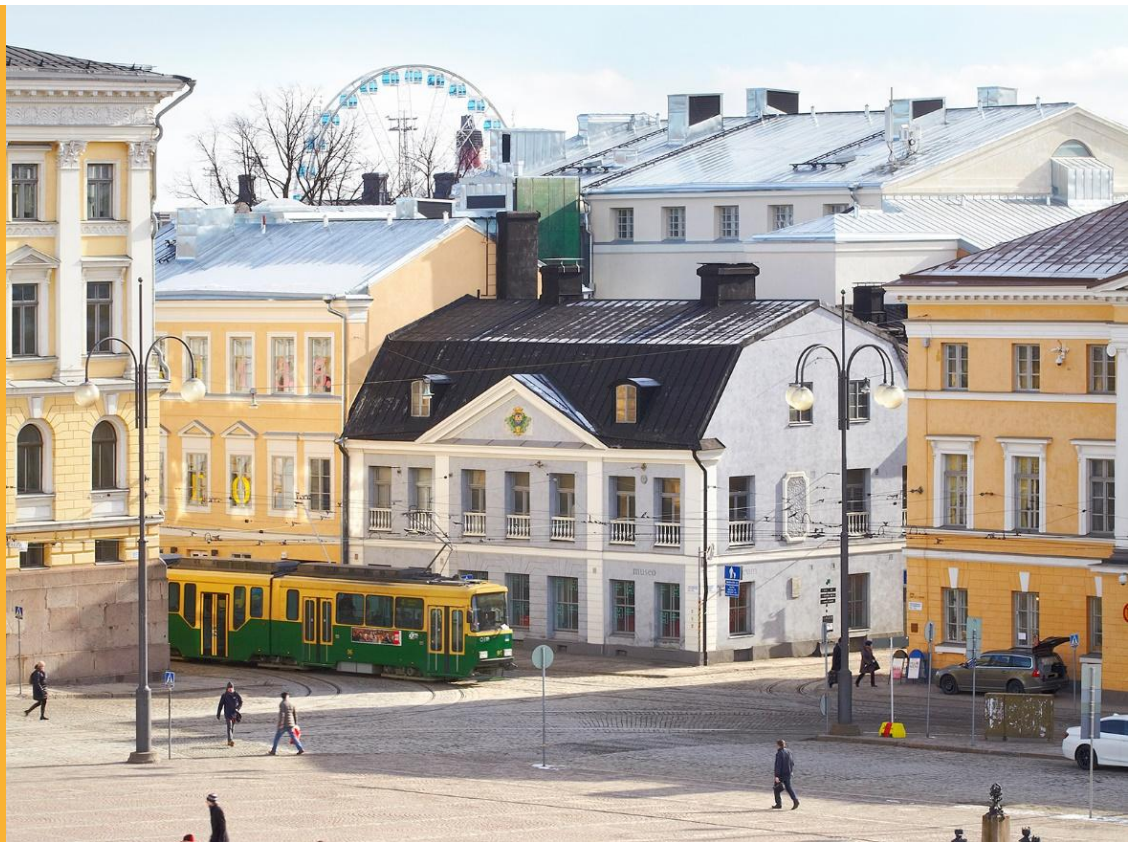
- LET’S DO IT TOGETHER!
- WE THINK ABOUT THE AUDIENCES
- WE STRENGTHEN THE DIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

THE VISION AND STRATEGIC PREFERENCES AS GUIDELINES

- The guidelines in the making of the new museum and its services – were drafted involving the whole staff and stakeholders in several workshops
- To be "exposed" to the audiences: understanding the customer needs better in order to develop services; applying design thinking (service design);
- Interviews, observations, workshops, customer panel etc.
- The objective to become an easily accessible, emotive museum with a strong sense of place in the historical heart of the city, a place where Helsinki residents could find something to connect with, something familiar and memorable.



The new
City Museum opened
13.5.2016 at the
corner of the
classical Senate
Square, in the
historical core of the
city:
5 old buildings
previously mainly in
office use + new
addition + 3
courtyards
→ a new open place
for citizens



THE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...

- Experimenting with co-creation
- Planning the contents and services according the carefully studied motive-based customer profiles
- Inviting Helsinki residents to participate in projects and sharing their memories & stories & experiences – enhancing the feeling for the city



Co-creating the #Flashback exhibition with a group of 12 residents. An important learning process for museum professionals.



Reaching new target groups and people not interested in museums. Interviews at Helsinki Streets event.



An opportunity to participate (collection of local objects and stories) in Museum of Broken Relationships exhibition

THE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...

→ Creating the museum as a platform:

The new City Museum invites & encourages to use the museum in multiple ways, as a meeting place etc.

Giving space and voice to different communities who have their own perspective and view of the city and their special places



The 1st floor lounge offers free space for meetings, rest or working and at the same time inviting to learn from and enjoy museum contents. The experience begins from the museum courtyards.



The new City Museum is designed in terms of free admission...



The new City Museum, Helsinki Bites exhibition: One part of the exhibition created by a skateboarder group expressing their personal spaces, belonging and emotions for the city.

THE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...

- Creating a strong sense of place, a feeling and engagement for the city
- Engouraging to use museum and its heritage with user friendly applications and interfaces



The new City Museum, Helsinki Bites exhibition: the Helsinki Panoramas of 1866, 1912, 1930 are exhibited and can be scrolled by the visitors allowing beloved bird's-eye views over the cityscape



The new City Museum, Helsinki Bites exhibition:
A scale model from 1920s depicting Helsinki in 1870s, just on the verge of
new urban development and breakthrough of industrialisation

THE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...

→ Creating emotional experiences and helping to remember

Trusting in the power of objects and authentic material

Creating immersive spaces to be experienced, rooms with objects to be touched and handled

Making history fun!



The new City Museum, Helsinki Bites exhibition:
A typical 1950s home interior where you can sit and listen to radio programs, read magazines or even sleep on the heteka-bed.



The new City Museum, Children's Town:
A Granny's home from 1970s.



The new City Museum, Kasari (80s) meeting room. Two top comedians giving a 80s-show

THE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...

- Sharing the immense photo collections (~1 million photos) in a new way: showing how to use the material for example by curating the collections, animating and editing the photos
- Creating new & exciting experiences and opportunities



The new City Museum: Time Machine with animated and coloured 1900s photos from the collections

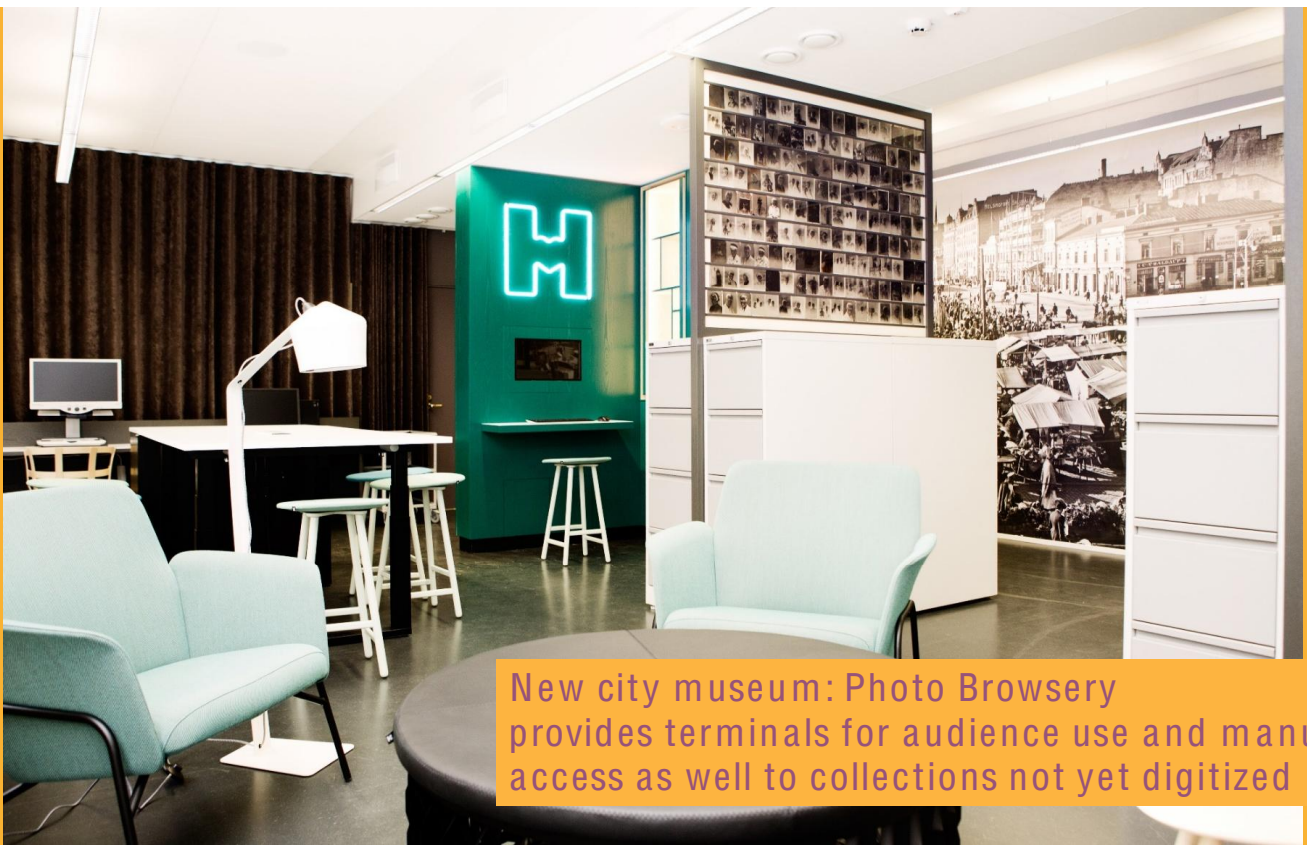


The new City Museum: Time Machine & VR contents
→Part II in 2017: participatory planning taken further
(crowdsourcing, hackathons etc.)

THE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...

→ Sharing the collections on-line:

open access (CC BY 4.0 licence) to on-line data through Finna information search service (which brings together the collections of Finnish archives, libraries and museums)



New city museum: Photo Browser provides terminals for audience use and manual access as well to collections not yet digitized



CHALLENGES OF EXPERT WORK

- How to adapt some of these principles and objectives of participation to expert services and cultural environment work as well? – Can they be adapted? Does it make any sense? Could we give up a little bit of our authority role? Could it produce win-win?
- How to combine the accessible expert services and the new city museum as a place?



THE EXPERT ROLE IN CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

- From ~1970s among the core tasks is protection and preservation of cultural environment
- Supported by legislation: Museums Act and Degree, Land use and Building Act etc.
- Delegation agreement with the National Board of Antiquities, the highest authority in Finland
- C. 650 written expert opinions or statements annually
- Proactive advisory work, inventories, research
- Negotiations and consultancy
- Team of 8
- Close co-operation with City Planning Department and Building Control Department

THE CHALLENGES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – TRANSFORMATION OF EXPERT ROLES OF THE MUSEUM

- The citizens have new active roles and changing expectations & demands of democracy and access to information and data
- Social media has changed the playground: active local and thematic groups interested in city development and history
- The people are "reclaiming" and sharing the city spaces: restaurant day, cleaning day, street food events etc.



Restaurant Day, Dinner Under the Helsinki Sky and other events occupy the parks and streets

THE CHALLENGES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – TRANSFORMATION OF EXPERT ROLES OF THE MUSEUM

- The position of authorities is being questioned and attitudes towards the "protectors" can be outdated and more conservative than the reality is
- Contrasting interest can lead to minor conflicts; even the ideas in city strategy program "fun and functional" city, "the most entrepreneur-friendly city" can lead to too high expectations and turn temporary and experimental urban projects into permanent changes in the cultural cityscape



Katajanokka, Allas—a private seapool and entertainment center project in the Southern harbour—in a national landscape.

THE CHALLENGES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – TRANSFORMATION OF EXPERT ROLES OF THE MUSEUM

- Museum needs to find ways to participate positively in the public discussion; how to share knowledge between the authorities and city residents in order to add up the common good?
- How to "walk side by side", to give opportunities to participate, to create space for "citizen wisdom" and learn new ways to be an expert?
- Participation or volunteers?
- Museum as a partner who has clear, solid and well-grounded arguments in discussions at the right moment produces positive results

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD?



- Two experiments:

1 Pasila 1970s suburb - a participatory inventory and listing project with the residents. Finding the locally important places and buildings



2 Adopt a Monument project:
Local environment, experience of participation and ownership, active and concrete input and effect;
role of the museum as an expert advisor

AND SOME ADDITIONAL OPTIONS TO WORK WITH...

- More active presence in communications, in social media groups – where the discussion is
- Utilizing museum's own customer panel and other crowd sourcing methods in enriching the knowledge capital (already good examples such as "Hometown Trails" produced by local activists)
- Being brave and "exposing" yourself to audiences/citizens does not mean giving up your expertise or professional role, but learning to use and apply it differently

WHAT IT FINALLY IS ABOUT?

- What's it - Helsinki/any city - about? Helsinki is a project produced by human beings, and it can be understood through the people and their experiences
- A city resident is an actor in developing the city, who has needs to be heard, emotions to express, needs to belong and find attachments to the city in the everyday life.

→ The city museum - as a service and a place - has tremendous opportunities in this!

Thank
you!



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