

## **1. Research Topic**

### **The Effects of Public Art on the Quality of Contemporary Urban Spaces from Multicultural Perspective in Helsinki**

## **2. Abstract**

According to the urban planning strategies of top-class cities, varying cultural approaches have been proposed to solve the challenges of contemporary public spaces across the world. As a result, public art has been introduced as a new tool in the 21st century for improving contemporary urban spaces. However, this talk rarely recognizes the evolving role of art in public urban spaces. The diverse roles of public art influence spatial cognition and behavior in urban spaces are attached to its primary valuation criteria, such as livability, diversity, and security.

My research focuses on recognizing the institutional starting points of public art and their further development as an integral part of public urban space for everyday use in Helsinki. Like other metropolitan areas in Europe, Helsinki faces challenges relating to the quality of life regarding the growing population, which most are coming from out of the country. In other words, people of different cultures meet each other in Helsinki urban spaces. Based on this cultural change of the city, public art can generate solutions to improve public spaces' quality. This study utilizes various theories of art and advanced analytical methods of urban space to enhance newcomer's sense of belonging through public arts. The results provide a platform for future policy making of Helsinki urban spaces.

## **3. Introduction**

In the 21st century, as the century of cities, seeking quality of life is one of the main goals of metropolitan areas worldwide. Looking at Helsinki as the main city of Finland demonstrates new challenges. The city faces internal challenges relating to the quality of life, as the growing population that most of them come from out of the country. The initial consequences of this change can be observed in urban spaces in which the diversity of newcomers to the city is apparent. Referring back to urban spaces' role in the quality of life, seeking new approaches to mitigate recent urban space changes is an essential need. One of these new approaches is attention to the role of public arts in urban spaces quality.

The era of contemporary public art starting after World War II also played a significant role in forming public space in a city. The Western world artists were recognized as holding a double affiliation between 'art world' and 'everyday life', which led to a societal debate, which took eventual form in Dickie-Shusterman's institutional theory of art. (Danto, 1981)

From 1980, a cultural approach to urban spaces that brings culture to the center of regeneration has been more prominent, especially in Europe, where such programs as the European capital of culture have been implemented. (Evans 2004) In this way, public art has been introduced as a critical factor in the cultural regeneration of contemporary urban spaces. (Vickery 2007). The dominance of art theory is not in the institutional actors alone but is continuously challenged and can be understood as a social theory of art.

Based on this perspective of art in urban spaces, if in the past, art was only affecting the aesthetic perception of public spaces, now it is at the core of the urban design process. At a higher level, art is the basis of regeneration, and the term of Art-led Regeneration shows the situation of art in contemporary urban space development.

According to this conceptual change, it is required to analyze public arts and urban spaces' interaction in depth. As a critical review of current literature, the substance of interaction of art and urban spaces has not been well covered. In addition, public art has been neglected in the urban spaces quality improvement process. Therefore, the research tries to find another way to introduce new literature.

Looking at immigrants' arrival to Helsinki with different cultures and the changing face of urban spaces in the city, we should be more sensitive about urban solutions, which are dependent on cultural concepts. Considering different types of public arts and conceptual relations of art and culture, using public art as a strategy for quality improvement of urban spaces is an appropriate tool for Helsinki without big intervention in urban spaces to enhance the immigrant sense of belonging to the city. Therefore, it is time to consider Helsinki public arts as decorative elements and as practical tools to improve urban spaces' quality, which is a big issue. The research is trying to open this window of public art in Helsinki, which will guide urban space policymaking.

## **4. Background**

### **4.1. The concept of public art & urban space identity**

Looking at the literature reveals the 1960's as the creation time of public art notion in American cities. Besides, other terms as street art and urban art have emphasized the urban emerge of public art. In a holistic view of public art's meaning, Maderuelo indicated it as a type of art that belongs to the public, and its place is urban open spaces. He also mentioned the roots of public art in the second half of the 17th century. Armajani points to such words like open, effective and common. (Casanovas, 2005)

Knight (2008) has mentioned that it is better to consider modern history of public art in America. The history is dynamic, and its roots also go back to Europe and federal government plans. Following the economic downturn leading from World War I, the Federal Art Project (FAP) was implemented in 1930 as the most extensive program that supports arts. During 1933-

1943 thousands of artists made hundreds of artworks. In this way, the Percent for Art Program effectively provided financial support for public arts, which was pursued in Western Europe in 1980. (Kwon, 2002). In 1959, Philadelphia implemented the plan, and Baltimore (1964), San Francisco (1967), and Seattle (1973) followed. (Deng, 2012). Nowadays, there are 300 governmental plans for supporting urban art (Knight, 2008), and this support led to shaping the more critical role of public art in everyday life of cities. (Goldstein, 2005)

From a substantive point of view, three approaches can be identified in the recent 35 years in American cities (Kwon, 2002):

1 - Art in Public Places: refers to those arts as Alexander Calder works as a statue without identified relation to urban places.

2- Art as Public Spaces: refers to those artists using urban spaces as a context for art like Scott Burton, Sia Armajani, Nancy Holt, Mary Miss, etc.

3- New Genre Public Art: refers to people-based public art. The name was suggested by Arlene Raven and theorized by Suzanne Lacy. Some artists like John Malpede, Daniel Martinez, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Hope Sandrow, Tim Rollins, Peggy Diaz, etc., whose artworks represent social and political subjects and encourage social cooperation belong to this approach.

In the recent literature, a significant challenge in the public art concept is its connection to the context, the context that is including physical setting and socio-spatial dimensions. (Bordieu, 1994) Public art may be defined as site-specific art in the public domain. Such art has arguably undergone something of a renaissance in recent decades, with increasing public and private sector commissions and an expansion of arts policy, as well as the involvement of artists in many areas with broader urban design and regeneration initiatives (Hall & Smith, 2005; Mccarthy,2006). The issue of public art is bound up with place identity, in that many observers suggest that such art should reflect or even strengthen local identity (Miles, 2005b). Identity in this context is socio-spatial concepts in that person endow places with meaning, leading to identification with shared characteristics between groups within a locality (Neill, 2004). In addition, some have questioned the fundamental notion that public art must be linked to location and context, and thereby local identity, since it may equally be argued that such art should instead reflect a wider notion of what is public (Miles, 1997).

Public art might play a role in the transformation of unpopular and stigmatized urban neighborhoods. In part, this involves an aesthetic valorization of the urban fabric of decayed historic neighborhoods. (Cameron & Coaffee, 2006). The aesthetic eye transforms ugliness into a source of admiration. Such an aesthetic sensibility is found particularly among social groups rich in cultural capital but poor in economic capital. At the core of such groups is the urban artist. (Ley, 1996) What the artist values and valorizes is more than the aesthetics of the old urban quarter. The society and culture of a working-class neighborhood, especially ethnic diversity, attract the artist as it repels the conventional middle classes. (Cameron & Coaffee, 2006)

Ley suggests that the artist is the pioneer for a specific fraction of the middle classes: a 'new middle class' – professionals in the media, higher education, the design, and caring professions, especially those working in the state or non-profit rather than the commercial sector – that he also refers to as the 'new cultural classes'. (Ley, 2003; Cameron & Coaffee, 2006)

In a brief review of the concept of public art, we can see in the history of the evolution of public art in urban spaces the social dimension is rising. This research is also pursuing such a socio-spatial approach in Helsinki with a concentration on a multi-cultural perspective.

#### **4.2. Public art & culture-oriented regeneration**

Inspired by authors such as Charles Landry (2000) or Richard Florida (2003), many cities invest in creativity and culture to improve their local economy and regenerate derelict urban areas. However, investing in creativity and culture has become a policy epidemic. (Tuijl et al., 2013)

In a critical point of view, some scholars such as Waitt (2008) noted that 'cultural industries,' 'creative quarters,' 'creative clusters' and the 'creative class' have since become buzzwords in planning and policy-related reports. Nevertheless, there is theoretical ground and empirical evidence that creativity and culture-oriented policies can benefit urban development. Claimed advantages of investments in creativity and culture include the attraction of knowledge workers (Florida, 2003), development of tourism (Judd and Fainstein, 1999), revitalization of old neighborhoods via mega-events ('the Barcelona effect') or flagship projects ('the Bilbao effect'), development of new creative industries and cross-industry knowledge spillovers and innovation. (Tuijl et al., 2013)

'Culture-led' approaches to urban regeneration, involving the encouragement of culture-related uses and activities to bring about broader social, economic, and environmental regeneration outcomes, are increasingly being applied in many cities (Bianchini, 1993; Ebert et al., 1994; McCarthy, 1998). Such approaches can lead to economic innovation and diversification (Williams, 1997; Mommaas, 2004; Scott, 2004), image enhancement (Ashworth & Voogt, 1990; Miles, 2005b) and social cohesion (Matarasso, 1997; Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 1999; Scottish Executive, 2000).

'Culture-led' approach involves the use of cultural activity as the primary driver of regeneration, with such activity assuming prominence as a symbol of regeneration activity. A key strategy in culture-led regeneration is a cultural quarter. A cultural quarter may be defined as a spatially limited and distinct area that contains a high concentration of cultural facilities compared with other regions (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000).

Public art within cultural quarters can, if integrated with other elements of regeneration, play a crucial role in enhancing or strengthening place or local identity, which in turn can increase the potential of such quarters to encourage creativity and innovation and bring broader regeneration outcomes. (McCarthy, 2006) The literature indicates that public art can contribute to a range of aims concerning regeneration. For instance, such art can contribute to the

promotion of city image, including 're-imaging,' where this is perceived as necessary to attract visitors and investment.

Therefore, public art may form part of broader promotional elements of city activity that has become necessary as a result of competition between cities globally for investment (Ashworth & Voogt, 1990; Avraham, 2004). In general terms, the role of public art can be seen as forming a spectrum ranging from aspects such as improving city legibility by acting as a simple landmark (Porch, 2000) to broader roles such as reflecting social criticism and reaction against the commodification of art (Miles, 1997).

In terms of other regeneration objectives, public art can promote a sense of community and an awareness of local or civic identity, promote social network development and sense of place, educate, and provoke social change. (Hall & Robertson, 2001) However, the extent to which public art in such contexts enhances or reflects local identities is problematic since it can also reflect hegemonic images of the city because of place branding priorities, which can lead to homogeneity and erosion of distinctiveness if applied as part of a process of serial replication rather than sensitive adaptation to context. (Mccarthy, 2006) It can promote cultural diversity, and encourage the integration of marginalized groups, mainly where such groups participate in creating art projects. (Hall & Smith, 2005). Therefore, it is clear that the linkage of public art and identity and/or image to bring about 'culture-led' regeneration outcomes within cultural quarters is disputed and problematic at both conceptual and practice levels.

Based on the role of public art in culture-led regeneration, this research will analyze Helsinki's empirical experiences, such as Pasila and Arabianranta, to reveal the evidence on the mentioned problem.

### 4.3. Public art in Helsinki

Looking at the background of public art in Helsinki reveals that in the early 1960's eminent female sculptors, such as Eila Hiltunen (1922-2003) and Laila Pullinen (1933-2015), took a distinctive role in the reform of public art in Finland. Young artists made excursions to the United States. They merged novel materials and techniques with modern Italian sculpture creating a non-figurative style of reflecting nature and culture abstractly. The public artworks were also characteristically larger than before (for example, the Sibelius Monument in Helsinki



*Figure1: Sibelius Monument by Eila Hiltunen and Rumba by Martti Aija at K.A.Fagerholm square, Ruoholahti, Helsinki.*

measures [1] 8\*10\*6 meters) and started to gain a more dominant role in public space. One

extreme manifestation of this development was seen in 1992 in Martti Aihla's Rumba in Ruoholahti, Helsinki. This artwork of massive 15\*15\*15-meter dimensions creates almost the only good punctuation in the traffic dominated public sphere.

The development of public art goes hand in hand with the development of public urban space, and the movement in Helsinki is growing where HAM (Helsinki Art Museum) is listed 3500 works of art around the city.

On 27.9.2017, the Helsinki City Council approved a motion put forward by Councillor Jörn Donner. The City Manager of the City of Helsinki decided on 15.2.2019 to appoint an independent committee tasked with drawing up a Helsinki vision for art and culture for the years 2019–2030. The final document, "Art and Culture in Helsinki 2030", which has published in March 2020, introduces an ambitious perspective of art in Helsinki's future. According to the document's goals, in a constantly changing reality, art helps Helsinki know itself, imagine alternative worlds, and build paths to the future. (City of Helsinki, 2020)

The people of Helsinki and their diversifying cultures are the heart of the city. These cultures must engage in a dialogue that increases common understanding and creates a shared spirit of Helsinki.

The vision considers art a multisensory form of thinking and conversing, a particular part of humanity, a way of comprehending reality and building alternative worlds. Art increases understanding between different people and ideas. The vision describes that the art field promotes a sustainable world. In Helsinki's unique cultural environment, nature and the sea are an integral part of the city. Helsinki leads the way and supports an environmentally responsible cultural life. The city has found ways to achieve an ecologically sustainable internationalism. The city's art and culture operators can respond openly and boldly to social challenges, such as those arising from constantly changing demographics. In a part of the document, the connection between art and public spaces has been noticed, expressing that experiencing public art in urban public areas, buildings, and courtyards improves living environments in Helsinki. (City of Helsinki, 2020)

Seeking quality of life in Helsinki, the vision notifies that art and culture promote equality and a sense of community and strengthen inclusion throughout the City's structures. Based on this concept, Helsinki will be the City that everyone has access to art and artistic activities throughout their whole life. The City puts special emphasis on providing opportunities for deprived and less privileged citizens to experience and create culture. (Art and Culture in Helsinki 2030, 2020)

Beyond the documents, in real life of art in Helsinki, Pasila is a significant experience. East Pasila has turned into a real street art district since 2017. Numerous domestic and foreign street artists have made around 50 pieces in the area. Art spreads now out to the central places and hidden corners of Pasila – walls, staircases, railings, and bridges – turning them into sights. In a

few years, the district has developed into a significant street art area, even on an international scale.

Pasila Street Art District introduces street art that is hard to come by elsewhere in Finland. It is a place where artists get lots of artistic freedom and can test their limits. It is also a place where local artists can show their skills, and visiting international artists can leave their mark. (Helsinkiurbanart, 2020)



Figure 2: Edward Von Löngus (Estonia) - Kelloilta 6

One another location that has long called attention as a successful policy and planning story is the Arabianranta area in Helsinki. This regenerated former wasteland area combines living, working, studying, and leisure functions centered on a holistic theme – art and design. As one of the first large-scale public-private partnerships for area-based redevelopment in Finland combines knowledge and innovation activity with new and diverse living environments, attracting new residents, companies, and students. (Tuijl et al. 2013)

The Arabianranta area plays a crucial role in Helsinki's history. It is the location where Helsinki was initially founded in the 16th century and the 'birthplace' of the factory of Arabia, one of the biggest porcelain companies in Europe. Arabianranta the leading center of art and design in the Baltic Area, a center organized around design and art, where education, production, and consumption coincide.



*Figure 3: Rihla, 2007, TIINA RYTKÖNEN, location: Car park roof, Arabiankatu 10*

The clear focus on art and design, managed through an inclusive partnership, allowed for developing a distinctive and economically vibrant planned knowledge location where people can “live, work and play,”. (Tuijl et al. 2013)

The area successfully attracted a variety of inhabitants due to different land ownership schemes, differentiated building contracts with developers catering to a variety of houses (e.g., luxury private housing and different types of social houses), and perceived high quality of life. It is located at the waterfront embedded in natural scenery, and design has been used to improve public spaces by means of public art. To realize art in public spaces, developers of the area were required to invest 1-2% of the total construction costs in artworks (e.g., sculptures and paintings). Also, gardens are collectively owned and integrated into yards where art projects are implemented, and interaction is fostered. (Tuijl et al. 2013)

Arabianranta has been considered a success story of a creative quarter that combines working, living, studying, and leisure. In this sense, it is important to learn from success stories, but not to copy these, as success is often dependent on the local context and influenced by global developments.





*Figure 4: Oasen, 2006, ANN SUNDHOLM location: Jan-Magnus Jansson Square*

Yet, Helsinki has long strived to be an art hub. Along with increasing the number of artist grants and residencies, Helsinki is Europe's first city to mandate that all new buildings allocate one percent of their valuations to public artworks.

## **5. Objectives, Questions, and Methods**

### **5.1. Goals & Objectives**

The research aims to analyze the role and effects of public artworks on the quality of contemporary urban spaces in Helsinki.

The objectives of this research are threefold:

- 1) To analyze public art's spatial characteristics in Helsinki, introducing a generative typology of public arts and urban spaces
- 2) To discover how people from diverse cultures think and behave about public arts in urban spaces

3) To introduce new perspectives of using public arts in quality improvement of multicultural urban spaces in Helsinki

## **5.2. Questions**

Based on the goals of the research main questions are:

1. How is the situation of public arts in Helsinki regarding the interaction with the substance of contemporary urban spaces?
2. How people from different cultures percept public arts in the urban spaces of Helsinki?
3. How can we use public arts in an effective way of improving the quality of multicultural urban spaces in Helsinki?

## **5.3. Methods**

The first stage is devoted to the literature review on public art, urban spaces quality, and multicultural urban spaces. Using the content analysis method, we will extract those qualities that are more affected by public art.

The research will adopt observational, historical-interpretative, and documentary studies to analyze origins and current public art typology in Helsinki.

The third stage of the research is choosing relevant case studies in which demographic analysis and the Delphi method based on an interview with artists and urban experts are vital.

We are using the observation method regarding Jan Gehl's techniques for analyzing public artwork's current situation in selected urban spaces. An in-depth interview with users of designated cases is also a supportive method to assess the quality criteria accurately.

Perceptual analysis based on questionnaires is a required method of the next stage to find how people of different cultures think about public art impacts in Helsinki's urban spaces.

At the final stage, the interviews with experts in public arts in local municipal organizations and academia will ensure the results' validity and reliability. Fig2 shows the research process and methods in each stage.

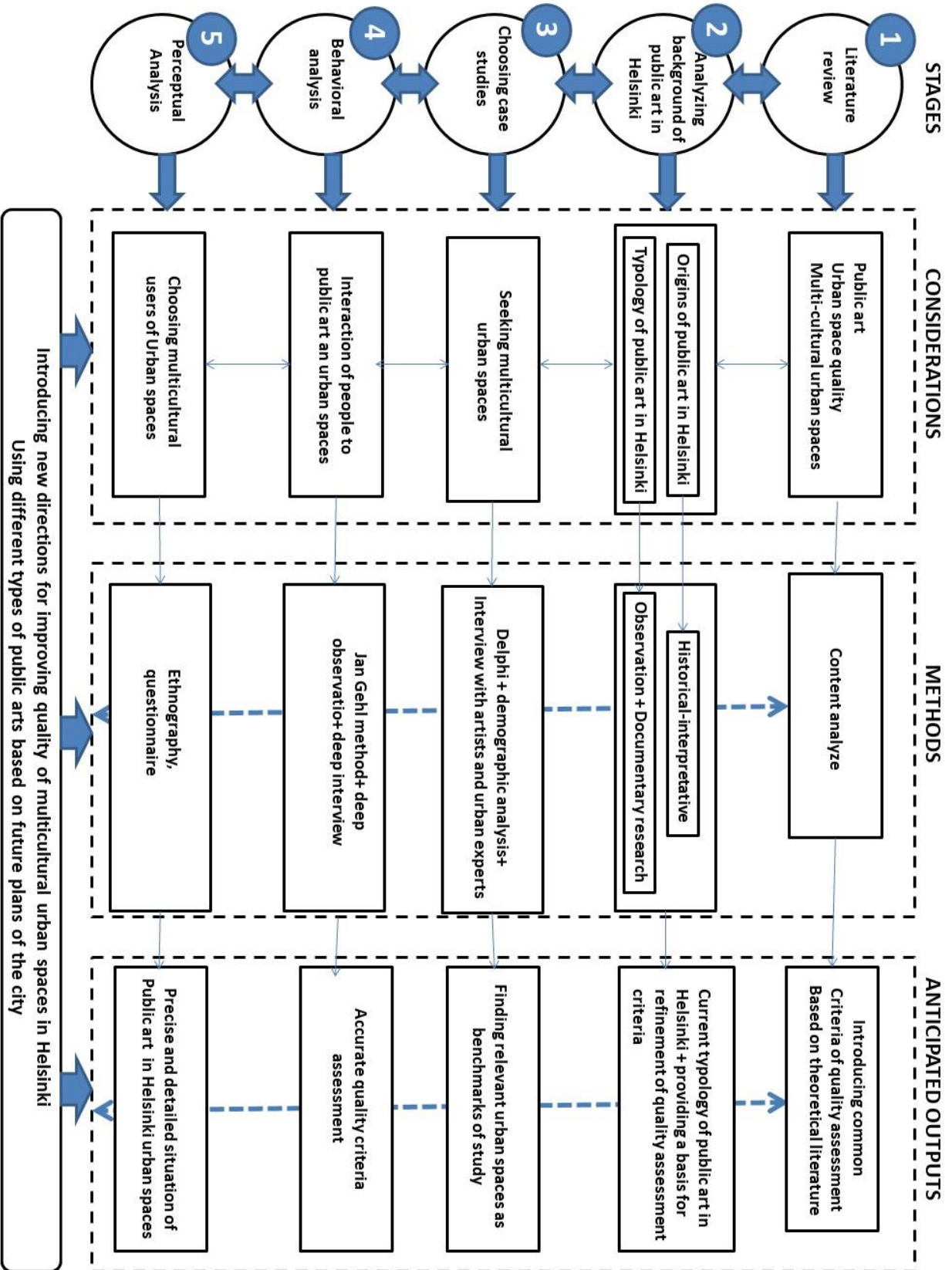


Figure 5: research process

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