

English Supplement

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Season of Light expands Page 2

Helsinki will pass the darkest time of the year with the help of light art. The city centre will be transformed into a stage for a series of inspiring light artworks in the first week of January. The Season of Light happening will light up the city centre more extensively than in earlier years. The happening is joined by top international light artists.

Citizens and visitors can take a "journey of light" in Helsinki daily between 5 pm and 11 pm from December 31 through January 9.

The journey begins from the Espia Stage in the Esplanade park, at the installation *Village of Light* by **Jouko Kärkkäinen**.

The focal point on Senate Square will be the Cathedral and

its magnificent architecture, caressed by light. **Mikki Kunttu's** *Mercy* has a spiritual basis.

The journey continues on Unioninkatu, where *100 Years* by **Martin Kuhn** will lead people through diverse atmospheres. In the courtyard of Topelia on Unioninkatu, a fire art performance by **Antti Suniala** will celebrate the beauty and warmth created by fire by means of circus and dance.

Good Light – Bad Light by **Tülay Schakir** will liven up the Kaisaniemi park in an enticing manner.

Ralph Larmann's photo exhibition in Sanoma House will include magnificent pictures of last year's Season of Light happening. Larmann is a world leader in documenting light and light art happenings.

Parliament House will be illuminated by **Per Sundin's** *Soul of Suomi*.

For further information, www.seasonofflight.fi

FRONT PAGE



Season of Light expands and grows international

Ralph Larmann

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Strategist's view to foreign-born population:

Immigration

at an important
juncture in Helsinki

By Johanna Lemola

The foreign-born population of Helsinki is growing rapidly, inevitably and essentially for the city's future. How are immigrants integrating? The picture is emerging.

"Movement of culture, money and people is part of the world we live in today," says **Annika Forsander**, Helsinki's Director of Immigration Affairs.

"What is the alternative?" she asks. "Take health care: 15 percent of the doctors at the Helsinki health centres are foreign born. So are nearly half of the metropolitan area bus drivers." ►►

Ten percent of Helsinki residents are foreign born, and the frequency is higher among young age groups. The percentage is expected to rise to 20–25 by 2025 – close to the level in Stockholm today.

Challenges to immigrants

The main challenge to immigrants is jobs. “I have never seen an immigrant who wouldn’t want to work,” Dr Forsander emphasizes. She has worked in the immigration field for over 20 years including immigrant adult education.

The job market also reveals the success of immigration policies through mobility – how long it takes for immigrants to find employment and secure jobs at their level of education.

“We only have two decades of experience in immigration,” Dr Forsander continues, “so it will take a while longer to see how the second generation of our immigrants will cope on the job market. It’ll be very interesting to see what happens.”

Taking examples from countries based on immigration, mobility is some of the worst in the United States, where only the third generation is fully integrated into society. ▶▶



Newcomers becoming part of society

Numbers suggest that Helsinki’s foreign-born population is here to stay and integrating, if slowly.

Only 10–15 percent of foreign-born people in Helsinki are refugees.

In 2007, 40 percent of the people who arrived during the surge of newcomers in 1989–93 owned their dwelling.

In 22 percent of new marriages today, at least one of the spouses is foreign born. In fact, the main reason for immigration is still the traditional one: the opposite sex.

A rapidly growing group of foreign-born people in Helsinki is students pursuing academic degrees – well over 6,000 today excluding exchange students, and their numbers are expected to go up by some 2,000 per year.

In Stockholm, which started to receive large numbers of immigrants decades before Helsinki, it takes seven years on average for immigrants to get any job from the open market.

Dr Forsander sees language skills and lacking social networks as the main impediments to immigrants in Finland. "If you don't know Finnish or Finns, it's very hard to get a decent job," she confirms.

Are we missing out on something?

The Helsinki region is home to half of all foreign-born people in Finland. The situation is universal: cities are places where things happen, and they attract people. Dr Forsander says, "immigration is what differentiates cities from their countries".

If managed right, cities can also benefit the most from immigration.

The public sector including the City of Helsinki is an important employer for foreign-born people in Finland and actively seeks to recruit them. However, the needs of some public sector players and the pursuits of others can be in conflict.

Finland educates large numbers of students from other countries on

Finnish taxpayer money, but they are not taught even elementary Finnish. Many of these academics could find employment in the public sector if they knew Finnish. After graduation they are forced to leave the country even if they wanted to stay.

"What is the point of this?" Dr Forsander questions. She reminds us of the vast needs of skilled people in the public sector, including education,

Helsinki recognized for efforts in integration

Finland's Ministry of the Interior has recognized the City of Helsinki for purposeful and successful work to promote immigration and to advance the integration of immigrants.

"Our principle is to treat all people of Helsinki on equal basis. The City's management and political leaders, as well as personnel, are deeply committed to this goal", say Annika Forsander.

"Our principle is to treat all people of Helsinki on equal basis."

social services and technical fields, and the rapidly growing numbers of foreign students in Helsinki.

Political decisions bear fruit

The City of Helsinki has so far avoided many ills that plague other cities with high numbers of immigrants.

Helsinki suburbs are largely not segregated, thanks to city planning policies that go back decades emphasizing mixed types of housing. Practically all schools are public, and most children go to the neighbourhood school. As a result, school districts are also mixed. The same applies to day care.

Services in Helsinki are provided on the principle of "positive discrimination": areas with the most challenges, such as poverty, unemployment and a large share of immigrant children, receive some extra funding for their services – another age-old Helsinki policy.

"This shows the importance of political decision making based on deep understanding of social realities," Dr Forsander concludes. The seeds of segregation are sown decades before the effects become apparent.

Who manages immigration affairs?

The City of Helsinki Human Resources Centre's Immigration Division, headed by **Annika Forsander**, is a strategic development unit tasked to support City departments and offices in questions related to integration of immigrants and to ethnic diversity.

Integration belongs to municipalities in Finland, while the government makes immigration policies (that is, who can come). "We work a great deal with the government to shape immigration and integration policies," Dr Forsander comments. Her unit also works closely with other European cities and monitors developments elsewhere.

She sums up the City's activities and goals with integration: "The City seeks to produce information and other services to help immigrants feel at home. The goal is to make Helsinki a better place for all residents regardless of their background. Our unit assists in solving needs for integration policies and services in the City functions."



Immigrants Info moves down town

The Info Centre for Immigrants now located in Itäkeskus will be transferred to Helsinki City Hall at the beginning of next year.

The general information desk for residents and visitors Virka Info and the Info Centre for Immigrants will be merged and consequently, the City Hall Info Desk will serve all Helsinki residents, original and immigrant alike. Services are available in more than ten languages.

"The basic idea of this reorganization is to develop the information given to the city residents in such a way that it meets the needs of people

Christina Huotari will be the director of the City Hall Info Desk from January 2011.

with different backgrounds not making a difference between original Finns and immigrants", says **Christina Huotari**, now heading the Info Centre for Immigrants and future director of the City Hall Info Desk.

The City Hall is located in the very heart of Helsinki. Virka Info is accessible either by Sofiankatu 1 or Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13. Opening hours: Mon-Fri 9-19, Sat-Sun 11-17.

The story of the City hall

Exhibition for Children

Did you know that the Helsinki City Hall used to be the finest hotel in town? Virka Gallery's new children's exhibition tells the fascinating story of the City Hall.

The exhibition unfolds the different phases and present use of the Helsinki City Hall, originally built Hotel Seurahuone in 1833. The building has transformed from the finest hotel in Helsinki and the society's meeting place to a modern office and a mutual lounge for the Helsinki citizens. The City Hall is viewed in a cultural historical light including the architecture of the building, works of art as well as the current action that takes place in the edifice.

You can now empathise the times of Hotel Seurahuone by signalling through fans and beauty spots. It is also possible to take a peek through video at the town manager's study and other spaces enclosed from public. You can try out voting for rallying points in the miniature council.



Riikka Niittonen

From www.virka.fi you can find educational material in the section *Oppisoppi*. There are tips, additional information and exercises for both before and after a visit to the City Hall.

The exhibition is produced by Virka Gallery in co-operation with students from the department of art pedagogy in the Aalto University.

Virka Gallery till 16.1.2011
www.virka.fi

News and cultural topics in English

By Päivi Arvonen

Alexis Kouros missed English-language media in Finland. To have some, he founded his own: SixDegrees and Helsinki Times. Both publications have also been embraced by many Finnish speakers.

Iranian-born **Alexis Kouros**, a doctor, moved from Hungary to Finland in 1990 to conduct advanced studies in medicine.

"I took up Finnish studies immediately on my arrival in Finland, and after two months I was already working as a doctor in the Pori City Hospital," Kouros says.

However, writing had always been close to his heart. He had written poetry as a young man, but he never thought that writing could become a profession for him. In Finland, he ▶▶



Photos: Päivi Arvonen

wrote a novel, quit the medical profession, and devoted himself to writing, journalism and TV production.

Kouros writes in both Finnish and English. His novels are in Finnish. He has scripted, produced and directed more than twenty documentary and short films and one TV series.

Kouros founded the production and publishing company Dream Catcher in 1997. Since 2003, Dream Catcher has been publishing the free monthly magazine SixDegrees. In 2007, he founded the Helsinki Times company, which publishes a weekly newspaper of the same name.

Helsinki Times is the highpoint of the week

"I wanted to read about Finland in English when I came here," Kouros explains. "Today there is news in English on the Web, but Helsinki Times remains Finland's only newspaper in English."

The online edition of Helsinki Times is updated on every weekday. Originally the print edition was to be a daily, but the recession put an end to that plan.

"Helsinki Times is the highpoint of the week for many. We have one reader who sends his driver to pick up a copy from the printer if distribution is delayed," Kouros says.

Helsinki Times has circulation of 15,000 and over 30,000 readers. The majority of the readers are non-Finns who work in embassies and multinational companies.

SixDegrees, which focuses on culture and multicultural topics, attracts Finnish readers, too. The magazine has circulation of 50,000 and over 100,000 readers.

"My intention with SixDegrees was to offer content for both Finns and foreign-born people. I believe that both have a lot to learn from each other."

SixDegrees is available from 500 spots in the Helsinki metropolitan area, Turku, Tampere, Jyväskylä and Oulu.

"SixDegrees receives some support from the Ministry of Education, but it's not enough to produce one single issue. The magazine is mostly financed with advertising," Kouros says.

Translated by Johanna Lemola

Annoyed about biased picture of immigrants

Alexis Kouros has done his utmost to integrate into Finnish society.

"I have sought to retain values of my native culture and to adopt good things from Finland," he says. "If you leave everything behind, you can't give anything to your new home country."

Two decades in Finland have made Kouros a Finnish citizen but not a Finn. "I don't see myself as a Finn, because Finns don't want me – or any other immigrant – to be a Finn. Not even people of foreign background who were born here are easily accepted as Finns. Take America as a comparison, you can be accepted as an American within a few years!"

Kouros is disappointed about the image of immigrants in the Finnish media and among the general public.

"The discussion is almost exclusively about refugees, and the debate emphasizes negative aspects of immigration. Immigrants in Finland bear huge amounts of unused potential.

"The City of Helsinki employs many immigrants, and I'm hoping that Helsinki can set an example for the rest of the country," Kouros says.

See Alexis Kouros's publications online: www.helsinkitimes.fi and www.6d.fi



How to prevent segregation in City welfare services



FRONT PAGE

A new study published by the City of Helsinki Urban Facts reviews and compares challenges to City welfare services in different parts of Helsinki.

The study, by **Annina Ala-Outinen**, serves as a basis for further discussion on how Helsinki's public service network should be developed.

Public services to support equality

The public service network in Helsinki has been planned to prevent the rise of inequality, which could result in a cycle of deprivation in worse-off areas.

City of Helsinki departments have worked a great deal over decades to even out differences inside the city through their services. They have increased staff in districts where demand for services is higher, raised the professional standards of staff, and recruited foreign-born staff.

Since the beginning of the current decade, the City's services have been organized on the principle of positive

discrimination – areas with the most challenges such as poverty, high unemployment, low education levels or a large share of immigrants – receive extra funding for their services.

Findings of the study

The current study is based on a survey of City employees at primary schools, family centres and health stations in areas with differing socioeconomic status. The goal was to find out how various City departments have promoted areal equality and sought to prevent areal inequality.

The responses reveal that areas differ in three respects: (1) areas with higher incomes and education levels are set off by higher standards expected from services, (2) areas with low, and sometimes medium, socioeconomic status face inferior accessibility to some services, and (3) higher concentrations of the immigrant population pose special challenges in the areas affected.



The higher standards expected from services in areas with higher socioeconomic status can lead to exceeding the requirements. In turn, the extra resources allocated to services in areas with lower socioeconomic status have not always yielded the expected results. Lack of resources is particularly marked in child welfare and family work, where the staff are forced to select clients on different criteria in different areas. At its worst, there is no time for early intervention, and child welfare is only provided at the emergency stage.

The biggest challenges are faced by health stations in areas of low socioeconomic status, which face difficulties in recruiting doctors and, as a result, weakened availability of service.

Conclusions

The phenomena discovered through the survey can lead to divergence of service standards and endanger areal equality in terms of City services.

According to the study, special and differing needs have been taken into consideration in strategies and operational plans. Nevertheless, the extra resources allocated to areas with special challenges have been quite small. City departments have implemented positive discrimination in differing ways, without commonly agreed practices and with varying levels of monitoring.

On an international comparison, Helsinki city districts are largely not segregated, and the current study could be used as background for policies and practices to prevent rise of segregation.

The study is part of a Helsinki suburban project (2008-2011) and it was financed by the **Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland**.

The study is in Finnish (*Hyvinvoinnin tukiverkko koetuksella*) but includes an English-language preface and conclusions. See the web pages of City of Helsinki **Urban Facts**.

Glossary

English	Finnish
Welfare services	<i>hyvinvointipalvelut</i>
Segregation	<i>eriytyminen</i>
Public services	<i>julkiset palvelut</i>
City services	<i>kaupungin palvelut</i>
Health station	<i>terveysasema</i>
Family work	<i>perhetyö</i>
Immigrant population	<i>maahanmuuttajaväestö</i>
Positive discrimination	<i>positiivinen diskriminaatio</i>
Areal equality	<i>alueellinen tasa-arvo</i>
Socioeconomic	<i>sosioekonominen</i>
Early intervention	<i>varhainen puuttuminen</i>
Lack of resources	<i>resurssien puute</i>



New Year's Eve in the Senate Square

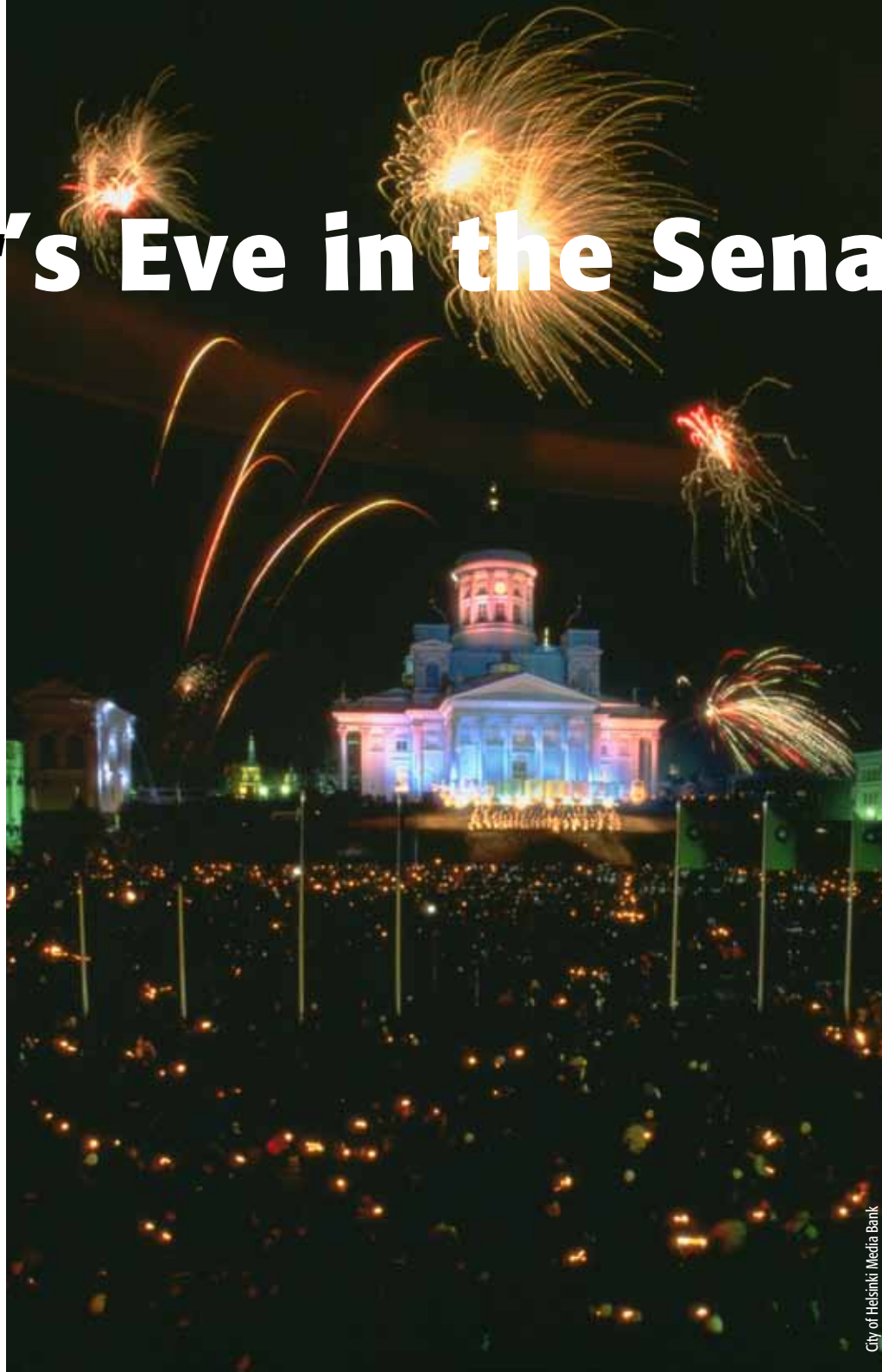
The celebration of New Year's Eve in the Senate Square is a two-hour cavalcade of luminary performers and scintillating atmosphere.

The evening starts at 22.15 hrs with light tunes by Philomela Choir. At 22.45 hrs, the focus is momentarily on the audience when the rhythm group of Sambic Dance School invite people to join in a cheerful dance.

TV spectators can join in from 23.00 hrs on, when TV1 broadcasts the Senate Square event live. At first, poet **Sinikka Vuola** cites a poem she has written to the New Year, and after that the stage is taken by one of the brightest fixed stars of Finnish popular music, **Paula Koivuniemi** with her orchestra.

According to New Year traditions, Bishop of Helsinki **Irja Askola** and Mayor **Jussi Pajunen** address the public who are then invited to sing the National Anthem together.

The event culminates in fireworks created by Pyroman Oy, this year's Firework Champion of Finland.



Children's New Year concert

The City of Helsinki celebrates New Year by organizing a children's concert where the year 2011 is greeted with old children's songs.

Kapsäkki Music Theatre will perform their "Muistoja isoisan laulukirjasta" (Memories from Grandpa's Song-book) number which is suited to the whole family and takes listeners to the warm atmosphere of beloved children's classics. The star of the concert is Paavo Kerosuo.

The concert venue is the main festival hall of the University of Helsinki, address Aleksanterinkatu 5, from 17 to 18 hrs .

Tickets

Free tickets, max. 5/family are available on 27.-30.12.2010 from 9 to 19 hrs in Virka Info in Helsinki City Hall, address Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13. Surplus tickets can be enquired at the entrance of the Main Festive Hall two hours before the concert starts. No advance reservations.

Christmas market



The traditional Christmas market named after St Thomas has taken over the Esplanade Park in the Helsinki city centre.

There are 140 stalls selling crafts, baked goods and Christmas delicacies. Smiths are at work, and Santa Claus pays visits.

The market will be open through December 22, 9 to 19 on Mondays to Fridays, and 9 to 18 on Saturdays and Sundays.

The current St Thomas market is organized now for the 17th time. The organizers wish to emphasize the value of Finnish handicraft.

PEEKABOO – Current South Africa

South Africa has in the past fifteen years developed into a major centre of contemporary art, with several artists in the international limelight. *Peekaboo* is Finland's first major review of the artists and themes in contemporary South African art.

The key theme shared by the featured artists is society in a constant state of flux. Apartheid was abolished in 1994, but its scars are still visible. In addition to historical traumas, the artists are concerned with present insecurity, the changed role of religion and the possibilities offered by new kinds of identities.

The show features 20 artists. Some works explore personal experiences and others comment brutally or poetically on the surrounding reality, sometimes using humour or satire. The history of European art and modern life in South Africa converge in unexpected ways.

**Helsinki Art Museum
till 16.1. 2011**



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Info kit

Information for all residents

Virka Info telephone service (09) 310 11111 (Mon-Fri 9–15) and **information point** in the City Hall lobby, address Pohjoisesplanadi 11–13 (Mon–Fri 9–19, Sat–Sun 11–17). www.virka.fi

Info Bank is an online service aimed at immigrants, offering information on Finnish society and life in Finland in 15 languages. The website also contains local information on Helsinki. www.infopankki.fi