Participatory turn in cultural policy?

An analysis of the concept of cultural participation in Finnish cultural policy

Jutta Virolainen

Jutta Virolainen (MSSc) is a researcher at the Foundation for Cultural Policy Research, Cupore and a doctoral student at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She is an author of a range of research publications in the field of the Finnish cultural policy including her most recent research focused on cultural participation. Email: jutta.virolainen@cupore.fi

SAMMENFATNING


Nøgleord

kulturel deltagelse | deltagelsesvending | kulturpolitik | policy dokumenter | Finland

ABSTRACT

Due to the advent of digital culture, changes in the consumption of media culture and in the nature of leisure activities, the perceptions of cultural participation have changed. Furthermore, increased discussion about new forms of participation and participatory democracy in a broader sense has taken place. Based on these fundamental processes, the article discusses and problematizes the concept of cultural participation in relation to public cultural policy in Finland. The focal standpoint is to question the palpable understanding of cultural participation per se by recognizing cultural participation as an idea that has been discursively and actively constructed within the framework of the political discussion (Fischer 2003, Palonen 1997).
A set of key cultural policy documents will be the object of analysis, as they provide an opportunity to examine what meanings and dimensions the concept of cultural participation receives as well as how the so-called participatory turn translates into Finnish cultural policy. As a result, the article presents a typology of the main discursive themes that construct the idea of ‘cultural participation’ in Finnish cultural policy. The typology is particularly relevant for reviewing Nordic cultural policies, but can also be extended and used even in a wider European context.

Keywords

| cultural participation | participatory turn | cultural policy | policy documents | Finland |

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the article is to analyze and problematize the concept of cultural participation in relation to public cultural policy in Finland. Cultural participation of citizens has been a key dimension of cultural policy ever since the introduction of contemporary cultural policies in the 1960s and 1970s. However, renewed interest in promoting cultural participation has recently arisen within comparable Nordic and European countries. Sørensen (2014) argues that cultural policies of modern “welfare” states have undergone a significant shift from education through experience to participation. Pirnes and Tiihonen (2010:215) similarly state that instant experiences and well-being have become the main outcomes of the era of consumption-based cultural policy that dates back to 1990s. This kind of participatory agenda, as a part of the governmental and institutional strategies, emphasizes democracy but it is surrounded by (neo-liberal) keywords such as “social impact” and “added value” (Sørensen 2014:5).

Simultaneously, an increased discussion about new forms of participation and of a renewal of democracy in a broader sense is taking place. Finland has been confronted with the same fundamental postmodern transformation processes as other modern welfare states, such as globalization, marketization, increased mobility, individualization and de-institutionalization (Mangset et al 2008:2). As a response to a “democratic deficit”, characteristic of contemporary political systems, a diversity of interests and approaches towards deliberative democracy has come to the fore (Fischer 2012:457; Harisalo et al 2007:102–104). The aim of the so-called participatory turn in national policies is to enhance citizens’ participation in political decision-making by introducing new ways to take part in democracy. These transformation processes have also had their effect on cultural life and cultural policy.

Based on these fundamental development processes the article investigates and discusses the role of cultural participation in contemporary Finnish cultural policy. The focal point here is to question the palpable understanding of cultural participation *per se* by recognizing cultural participation as an idea,
This article provides an interpretative approach, examining the concept of cultural participation by analyzing recent key documents in Finnish cultural policy by means of a discursive oriented policy analysis that emphasizes language as action. As a result, the article presents a typology of the concept of cultural participation in the context of public cultural policy. In this way, the article sheds new light on values and transformation processes in cultural policy. The typology is particularly relevant for reviewing Nordic cultural policies, but can also be applied in a wider European context.

Firstly, the article presents a short literature review of the concept of cultural participation. After a discussion of the methodological framework used, the article subsequently moves on to an interpretative analysis of how cultural participation has been presented in the aforementioned key cultural policy documents. In doing so, a typology of cultural participation is suggested in order to outline the main discursive themes of cultural policy in Finland.

THE CHANGING UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL ACTIVITY

The term cultural participation is a multifaceted and ambiguous word, also in academic literature and studies. Depending on the objectives and focus, according to Kalvina (2004:44–45), a number of other terms, such as ‘arts participation’, ‘involvement in arts and culture’, ‘participation in cultural activities’, ‘participation in cultural life’ and/or ‘attendance and cultural consumption’ have been employed to refer to the social phenomenon called cultural participation. Kalvina states that modification in the ‘outfit’ of the phenomenon – both in theoretical studies and policy documents – are to a great extent a reflection of the change in cultural policy rhetoric regarding the notion of culture and the function of cultural participation.

The rapidly changing media landscape has initiated new Understandings of cultural participation. In the traditional model of cultural participation, attending events as a member of an audience has been seen as signifying active citizenship and participation in society (Liikkanen 2006:70). Later, the concept of an audience has been accompanied by concepts such as ‘user’, ‘participant’, ‘citizen’, ‘consumer’ and ‘customer’ (e.g. Balling & Kann-Christensen 2013;
Puustinen 2011). Related to art and culture institutions and culture events interest has also been taken in the definition of ‘visitor’ vs. ‘non-visitor’ (e.g. Lindholm et al 2011) as well as ‘participant’ vs. ‘non-participant’ (e.g. Balling & Kann-Christensen 2013). In continuation of the so-called omnivore thesis, it has been put forth that those in higher status occupations are more likely than others to participate in fine arts activities as well as in also almost all other types of cultural activities (see e.g. Peterson 2005:263–264).

Simultaneously, in the wake of digital culture, changes in media consumption and the nature of leisure activities, cultural habits and perceptions of cultural participation have changed. In a broad sense, these developments have led to diminished art audiences, as observed by many art and culture institutions, and created additional pressure to create new ways to engage and to widen the access to cultural services. Cultural communication has moved away from enlightened information and the interpretation of art and culture as seminal objects towards immediate experience, subjective topicalisation and user engagement (Sørensen 2014:2). According to Tomka (2013:260), the popularity of old terms like ‘community art’, as well as a whole range of new terms – ‘crowdsourcing’, ‘crowdfunding’, ‘participatory museums’, ‘immersive theatre’, ‘flash mobs’ etc. – shows us that there are new forces shaping and acting on the field of art and culture.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical assumption underpinning this article is to understand language as an activity-oriented phenomenon, where actions and words are intertwined, thereby constructing the social reality. Consequently, policies are assumed to have their own textual references to form the basic requirement of the identification of a policy phenomenon (Hänninen & Palonen 2004:5–7). This argument is influenced by discursive policy analysis (Fischer 2003) as well as an approach to politics as activity (Palonen 1997, 2003). The discursive policy analysis considers language to have a more basic role in structuring social action. According to Fischer (2003:41), the very terrain of social and political action is constructed and understood in terms of the languages used to portray and talk about political phenomena. Thus public policy is not only expressed in words, but it is literally constructed through the language(s) in which it is described (Fischer 2003:41–43). A discourse, in this respect, links the words and sentences that compose it according to distinct patterns or reasoning. In this way, discourses represent specific systems of power and the social practices that produce and reproduce them (Fischer 2003:73–74).

The central standpoint of this approach is to understand politics as activity (Palonen 2003). According to Palonen (2003:172), who again draws on Weber (2009), politics is oriented towards changing the existing state of affairs and he argues that power is the medium of politics through which one can act politically. It expresses the contingent character of politics-as-activity and as ‘only’
a possibility, or an opportunity to do something. According to Palonen
(2003:182) there is no politics ‘before’ politicization, meaning that politiciza-
tion marks an opening of something as political, as ‘playable’. Names, con-
cepts and classifications are the main objects of the activity, when a horizon of
action has been created and made ‘to play’. The goal of discourse analysis is
thus to show how actions and objects come to be socially constructed and what
they mean for social organization and interaction (Fischer 2003:73).

The empirical material of this article consists of the key state’s cultural policy
documents. Policy documents may be regarded as strategic documents that are
intended to work as guidelines for those individuals and organizations charged
with delivering government objectives (Stevenson et al 2015:3). Additionally,
state cultural policy documents can be seen as contemporary cultural self-port-
traits of the state itself. According to Häyrynen (2013:624), public cultural pol-
icy documents function as more than simply made-to-order instructions for the
various cultural policy-makers. The policy documents may also include
attempts to demonstrate the importance of a policy sector and, as such, to legit-
imate the (political) existence of their makers. In order to achieve this, the pol-
cy documents need to contain the key topics of the field, “the fundamental fea-
tures of modern western cultural policy doctrines” as Häyrynen (2013:624)
defines them. Simultaneously, the documents are intended to act as revisions
of the policy narrative by means of new political ideas (ibid.).

I approach the policy documents as a literary genre, in which case it is possible
to analyze the political nature of the texts (Palonen 1997; Fischer 2003). The
argument is that policy documents as texts are actual expressions of politics.
The policy documents do not only describe cultural participation, but are in
fact constructing the whole idea of ‘cultural participation’. Accordingly, the
purpose is not to perform a conceptual analysis as such, but instead do an anal-
ysis of cultural policy as practiced by the Finnish Ministry of Education and
Culture in regards to cultural participation. The main aim of the analysis is to
‘read-out’ the politics of cultural participation. As a result, the main compo-
nents of the discourse are presented as a typology of discursive themes and the
way they, on the one hand, approach the concept of culture, and, on the other
hand, position participants (see Fischer 2003:80).

The key cultural policy documents include Strategy for Cultural Policy (ME 2009),
prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture for cultural policy
up to 2020, Culture – Future Force (ME 2010); a general cultural policy doc-
ument submitted by the Finnish Council of State to parliament; and further
specific work-group papers (Connections between cultural and well-being;
Perspectives into applications of art 2008; Effectiveness indicators to strengthen
the knowledge base for cultural policy 2011; The development of the statutory
system of the museum, theater and orchestra subsidies 2013; Final Report by

---

1. The Ministry of Education became the Ministry of Education and Culture on 1 May
2010.
Additionally, other relevant documents such as the *Programme of Prime Minister Sipilä’s Government* (Government Programme 2015) and *Ministry of Education and Culture Strategy 2020* (MEC 2010) are examined. Even though the documents differ from each other on how significant they are in shaping social action, they can be seen to comprise a body of key cultural policy documents that are producing and reproducing the idea of cultural participation as well as operationalizing it as an actual field of politics. In other words, the documents create a horizon of action, where the main object of the activity is the concept of cultural participation.

**CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN FINNISH CULTURAL POLICY**

**Institutional structures and public spending**

In Finland, the government steers the implementation of cultural policy by means of legislation, the government programme and other policy instruments. Within the government, the Ministry of Education and Culture supervises and supports cultural provision on a national level via funding and implementation of its policies and objectives via a range of other organizations and institutions. The Ministry focuses on strategic planning and governs and guides through information provision and performance contracts.

State funding for culture is mostly the responsibility of The Ministry of Education and Culture. The major role in financing the arts and culture in Finland is played by the public sector. For instance, the state’s main responsibilities include the arts support systems, national cultural and art institutions and university level cultural and arts education. Together with the municipalities the state shares the financial responsibility of maintaining the nation-wide system of performing arts institutions and cultural services. In the 2015 Government Budget, the total funding allocated to culture expenditures amounted to EUR 463 million. Most of the allocations to culture (two-thirds) in the administrative sector of Ministry are directed at national art and culture institutions and municipalities as statutory and discretionary State subsidies. (MEC 2015a.)

Increasing access and participation to culture is included in several appropriations in the state funding for art and culture. For instance, enhancing participation in culture is included in the Ministry of Education and Culture’s appropriations for development projects related to art and culture in municipalities and regions, and for cultural activities for disabled people as well as enhancing the accessibility of cultural services in general. The European Union structural funds have also allocated funding for “cultural well-being projects”, which provide further opportunities for widening the cultural participation. However, it should be pointed out that the vast majority of the state’s support to art and cul-

2. Translated from the original document published in Finnish. The author takes responsibility for any mistakes in the translation.
tured is being allocated to a relatively small number of art and culture institutions (Saukkonen 2014). For example, in 2015 there were 57 theatres, 28 orchestras and 121 museums that received statutory state subsidies (MEC 2015b).

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN FINNISH CULTURAL POLICY DOCUMENTS

The cultural policy documents published by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture clearly indicate a commitment to increasing cultural participation. Cultural participation is widely recognized in the policy documents and several measures have been highlighted in order to increase the citizens’ engagement to culture.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a strategy for cultural policy, spanning up to the year 2020. The strategy was intended to steer the Ministry’s actions over the coming years. This was the first time the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared such a specific cultural strategy. Enhancing cultural participation of citizens was strongly included in the strategy. The desired state of affairs and the underlying goal of the 2020 strategy were consequently formulated:

The primary desired outcome of cultural policy is […] actively participating citizens, the promotion of well-being, and the enhancement of the economic impact of culture (ME 2009:23).

In multicultural Finland, citizens actively participate in cultural life. Cultural and library services are accessible and available to all on equal basis, and the inclusion of different population groups and their opportunities for cultural pursuits are realized in the Finnish cultural scene. (ME 2009:24.)

Later in 2010, the Ministry of Education and Culture Strategy 2020 (MEC 2010) was launched as to outline the directions of development and reconfigure operations beyond the government terms as a response to major ongoing trends of social change. In the strategy, the concepts of ‘participation’ and ‘inclusion’ were strongly emphasized as a guarantee for Finland’s success.

Desired state 2020: Finland is in the vanguard of knowledge, participation and creativity. A strong basis of knowledge, creativity and inclusion is a warranty for Finland’s success. (MEC 2010.)

Additionally, in the Ministry’s publication of Effectiveness indicators to strengthen the knowledge base for cultural policy (MEC 2011:35) – which was published with one of the intended goals to identify and define effectiveness indicators in the key areas of cultural policy – it was argued that the key objectives of cultural policy include supporting citizens’ independence, activeness and participation, as well as enabling equality in the availability and accessi-
bility of cultural services. Despite of the emphasis on enhancing cultural participation, a distinct definition of cultural participation is, however, rarely made clear in the documents.

According to Virolainen (2015), it is possible to recognize numerous projects and programs, which aim to promote cultural participation in Finland. These often focus on special and minority groups as well as specific age categories, such as children, youth and elderly people. Despite the high number of projects, the aims and the intended outcomes remain often rather unclear. As Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen (2015:5) pointed out; the commitments to increasing cultural participation manifest themselves in various types of activities and interventions. At one end of the spectrum policy actions can be broad and un-targeted, such as promoting audience development methods in the art and cultural institutions or providing financial support for bringing culture to remote locations. At the other extreme, more focused interventions may include a subsidy for entrance tickets to theatre productions or concerts, or time limited ‘outreach and engagement’-projects with certain ‘communities’ defined in various ways. (Stevenson et al 2015:5.)

Debates on citizen participation in culture have emerged in cultural policy over the decades in different phases (Kangas et al 2014:47). During the 1960s and 1970s, the focal points of cultural policy were concepts of democratization of culture and cultural democracy, respectively. Democratization of culture finds its underlying meaning within the concept of dissemination. The aim was to distribute art and culture services to as many populating groups and geographical areas as possible within the nation state (Kangas 1988:52). At the core of this post-war welfare state paradigm was universalism, redistribution and a combination of efficiency and equity (Kantola & Kananen 2013:813). The strategy was to break down economic and geographical barriers to ‘the arts’ and to provide access to those cultural activities that had historically been seen as the preserve of the elite (Stevenson et al 2015:10). The objective of democratization of culture in terms of equal distribution and access to culture services is present in the Strategy for Cultural Policy (2009):

Differences between the different parts of the country are growing and the regions have different profiles in cultural terms. […] The less affluent regions are at risk of being excluded from this development, which may undermine equal access to culture and possibilities to pursue cultural activities on an equal basis. (ME 2009:17.)

Again, in the Strategic Program of Prime Minister Sipilä’s Government, one of the key projects for the governmental term is to facilitate access to art and culture. The objective is to incorporate culture into children’s daily lives, support the creativity of children and young people, and make art and culture easily accessible to all (Prime Minister’s Office Finland 2016). The process of cultural policy evolution can thereby be seen as an accumulation with the coexistence of old and new foci over time (Sokka & Kangas 2007:187).
Cultural democracy in turn offered an alternative way to define the objectives and means of cultural policy. It emphasized people’s own understanding of their needs and culture (Kangas 1988:52). According to Duelund (2003:509), this did not mean that the dissemination of professional art in all its forms was demoted – it was instead supplemented with a cultural policy based on a more local and broader approach to culture. The concept of culture thereby came to include the multitude of values, lifestyles and activities of everyday life (ibid.). In cultural policy documents, cultural participation is often referred to as a basic human right, which conveys the rights to participate in cultural life. This kind of approach is applied in *Culture – Future Force* (ME 2010:12), a government report created as a result of a committee work to outline the futures of culture. The point of departure for the committee’s work was recent reforms undertaken within the art and culture sector, ongoing programs and recent development proposals. The Futures of Culture committee was specifically assigned to assess the current state of affairs in culture, national and international challenges facing culture, and the significance of culture for the balanced development and welfare of citizens in general as well as in different demographic groups.

According to the *Culture – Future Force* (ME 2010:12), cultural participation is based on cultural rights. The report pays attention to the realization of these rights among different groups of populations:

The Finnish Constitution guarantees economic, social, cultural rights to the citizens. Cultural rights are human rights. They are central to the identity, coherence, autonomy and self-esteem of a nation. […] Fair culture means the realization of people’s cultural rights and inclusion in cultural signification, irrespective of their age, gender, sexual orientation, language, health, ethic, religious and cultural background, or financial standing. (ME 2010:15.)

Participation in cultural life was expressed for the first time in Article 27 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. According to Laaksonen (2010:23), the right to participate in cultural life (Article 27) forms a basis for any later development of cultural participation rights as seen in the context of cultural rights. Such notion of the right to participate in cultural life also includes identification of cultural heritage, as emphasized by the Council of Europe Convention on the *Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (the Faro Convention 2005) (OMC 2012:11).

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a committee to promote equality in regards to the access to art and culture. In its final report, the Access to Art and Culture committee (2014) focused on promoting accessibility of art and culture as part of enhancing the realization of the cultural rights of people. According to the report, the foundation of cultural rights is seen in the opportunity to maintain and develop one’s own language and culture. This is realized in different ways depending of the population group. The report
focuses on the promotion of the realization of ‘accessibility’, particularly with reference to special and minority groups, but also for population groups that find themselves in a challenging situation due to economic or geographical reasons (MEC 2014). The concept of accessibility can be described to be more demanding and complex than the concept of availability, which was widespread at the time, when the idea of democratization of culture was developed (Karttunen 2012:50).

The Access to Art and Culture Committee (2014) further employs the concept of ‘diversity’ in order to take different kind of audiences, minorities and subcultures into account.

In the Committee’s report the diversity of different art and cultural services is understood in terms of how well the interests of different kind of audiences are taken into account in the provision of the services, as well as to what extent different experiences and minority cultures are expressed. Individual art and cultural products cannot possibly speak to all audiences, but a large variety of art and cultural should be able to offer something for everyone.3 (MEC 2014:16.)

The Access to Art and Culture Committee (MEC 2014) emphasizes the role of audience development in the art and cultural institutions activities by suggesting audience development to be taken into account and considered one of the future key indicators to be used as a tool by the state when making budgetary decision.

The committee proposes that audience development, carried out by art and cultural institutions, will be taken into account in the development of incentives in the statutory system of subsidies4 (MEC 2014:13).

This dates back to a report (MEC 2013) prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture in regards to the development of the statutory system of the museum, theater and orchestra subsidies. In order to enhance the conditions of participation of all the population, the report suggests the statutory system of subsidies reformed in such a manner as to take the effectiveness and impact of the art and cultural institution activities into account in the funding allocation processes. The report proposes a number of indicators to be used when assessing the quality of the activities produced by the institutions. Among the indicators, audience development is included.

Recently, more emphasis has also been put on art-based projects in social contexts. In 2008, the Ministry of Education published a report Connections between cultural and well-being: Perspectives into applications of art, which

3. Translated from the original document published in Finnish. The author takes responsibility for any mistakes in the translation.
4. Translated from the original document published in Finnish. The author takes responsibility for any mistakes in the translation.
focused on art-based projects creating new encounters at the interface of different sectors. The report put forward proposals for further measurements for increasing cooperation between the social, health, labor and cultural sectors (ME 2008).

Participation in culture has been addressed in policy documents not just as a tool to be used by art and culture institutions for audience development, but also as a vehicle to highlight other priorities within public policy (Jancovich & Bianchini 2013:63). Art-based methods are considered to have both a direct and an indirect economic impact. This kind of emphasis is also present in *Culture – Future Force* (2010).

Art and culture have been shown to have important beneficial effects on people’s well-being. They give meaning to life, invigorate, promote inclusion and strengthen everyday activity, promote social cohesion and prevent marginalization. Art and culture may be successfully exploited, for example, in care work, health care, working life, therapy and rehabilitation. Creation of art and culture applications in these sectors contributes to the realization of cultural rights and saves costs in other sectors of society. (ME 2010:16.)

In the Strategy for Cultural policy (2009), the promotion of inclusion is presented as one of the aims of cultural policy along with ‘creativity’ and ‘plurality’:

The aim in government cultural policy is to promote creativity, plurality and inclusion (ME 2009:11).

Notwithstanding the similarities in arguments and shared ‘buzz words’, the spirit of animated community arts or audience development is in fact quite different compared to the emphasis on social inclusion that shapes the ‘official’ cultural policy discourse (Belfiore 2002; Kawashima 2006). The current focus on the arts as a tool for social inclusion is deeply rooted in the instrumental notion of the arts and cultural policies established in the 1980s.

According to Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen (2015:11), the discourse of social inclusion and cohesion as part of cultural participation policies is related to the role that ‘culture’ has in connecting people and creating communities, societies and nations. This has a clear connection to the larger social policy development on ‘social exclusion/social inclusion’, first developed as a sociological concept in France, and subsequently embraced by the European Commission since the late 1990s (Belfiore 2002:92; Kawashima 2006:56). The discourse has been further supported in the sense that those most likely to be socially ‘excluded’ – for example populations with lower socioeconomic status and migrants – were also the most likely to be regarded as ‘cultural non-participants’ (Stevenson et al 2015:12). Similar rhetoric is distinct in Finnish cultural policy:
Participatory Turn in Cultural Policy?

In order to better understand the development of Finnish cultural policy in regards to cultural participation, it is useful to analyze the concept of cultural participation as part of the wider question of citizen participation in society. As a response to a “democratic deficit”, a growing interest towards participatory democracy has become apparent. According to Fischer (2012:457), during the past decades, participatory governance – which can be described as a variant or subset of a deliberative governance theory that puts emphasis on public engagement – has made its way into the political practices within a spectrum of political organizations. As a more encompassing term, these tendencies have been described as the so-called ‘participatory turn’ (e.g. Saurugger 2010; Tomka 2012). The participatory turn can be understood as the participation of civil society in decision-making processes (Saurugger 2010) or as a demand for political reforms to expand citizens’ and different interest groups’ access to politics as well as to restructure the process of democratic decision-making (Dalton et al 2003).

One can also observe these tendencies in Finland, where a growing interest towards ways to better involve citizens in the decision making processes is taking place (Harisalo et al 2007:102–104). A number of specific projects targeted towards increasing the participation of citizens and strengthen local democracy were launched in the Nordic countries, particularly in the 1990s. The underlying ideas behind these projects can however be dated back as early as to the 1970s and 1980s (Laiho 2000). These tendencies have been further reinforced and gained increased momentum during the 2000’s and the 2010’s, when citizen engagement was heavily incorporated into various policy programs and citizens’ participation played a role in many legislative reforms (Pajula 2014:19–20). As a result, a variety of instruments, such as participatory budgeting, has been developed and employed.

Participatory Governance and Active Citizenship

Part-cultures may become differentiated and isolated from the rest of the society. This development would add to polarization in society. Immigrants are also at risk of being marginalized from the mainstream culture. Preventing such a trend will also require cultural policy measures. (ME 2009:16.)

The necessity of new policy measures stems from a belief that non-participation would result in exclusion from society. As such, these groups’ ‘non-participation’ – i.e. marginalization from the ‘mainstream culture’ – would act as evidence of their ‘exclusion’ and thus to facilitate their ‘participation’ is considered synonymous with facilitating their ‘inclusion’ (Stevenson et al 2015:12). As Sørensen (2014:5) has argued, this kind of ‘participatory agenda’ in cultural policies is often embedded in a socially transformative rhetoric and perceives cultural participation as a mean to achieve a socially transformative goal.
When it comes to culture and democracy, art and culture can be seen as a medium through which citizens are taking part in the development of the democratic society (Fridberg 2003:351). This is where art and culture spheres collide with political participation and a concept of a citizenship. According to *Culture – Future Force* report:

Cultural and library services assure the availability of culture and knowledge as a precondition of cultural citizenship (ME 2010:16).

While the concept of citizenship from a legal standpoint has been closely linked to being part of a particular nation, which includes being privileged as well as burdened with certain duties and rights, the concept of cultural citizenship refers to the right to be different and the right to belong (Kangas 2012). Cultural participation is seen as fundamentally shaping individuals’ sense of (active) citizenship, preventing social and political exclusion.

Shared cultural meanings are pivotal definers of humanity and citizenship and tools for preventing marginalization and for promoting inclusion and societal engagement (ME 2010:17).

The basic assumption is that increasing cultural participation supports active citizenship (see Tomka 2012:165). Consequently, it can be argued, that the ethos by contemporary cultural policies coincides with the rhetoric of deliberative processes of the society. According to Tomka (2012:178), a growing number of cultural organizations are joining the participatory turn. For example, museums are becoming participatory as well as theatres with their interactive, immersive, participatory performances. In these practices audiences are understood as valuable, knowing, active individuals, who co-create meanings, actions and artistic experiences – practices that again support the broader culture of participation (Ibid.). Interesting to note is the role of the experts in this new development. Participatory activities have often meant a transition from professionally dominated activities to more citizen, or citizen-based, activities. In this context public servants have become facilitators of public engagement (Fischer 2012:458). According to Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen (2015:12), a similar development is distinct in the discourse of social inclusion, which values the individual to a degree that considerably problematizes the expert’s role.

Underpinning this development is a paradigm shift from a welfare state to the competition state, which in Finland was constructed in the 1990s and consolidated in the early 2000s (Kantola & Kananen 2013). According to Kantola and Kananen (2013:822), the competition state functions as a personal coach by providing detailed advice to its citizens on how they should conduct their everyday lives. This type of neoliberal governance is characterized by emphasizing individual freedom as well as producing the subjectivity of individuals as rational, active and responsible citizens/consumers. As a counterpart, an image of a passive and excluded citizen, whom the state strives to coach and/
or if needed punish with different kind of sanctions and interventions, unfolds. (Saarinen et al 2014:606–607.) In the new strategic program of the Prime Minister Sipilä’s Government, one of the key projects for the government term is to create and improve services to be based on customer needs:

An emphasis will be placed on early support, preventive methods and effective customer-oriented service chains across administrative boundaries. Use of practical expertise and people’s involvement will be strengthened. (Government Programme 2015:21.)

This key project is not strictly directed towards the cultural sector, but instead it is presented under the headline of “wellbeing and health”. However, it showcases a tendency to utilize participatory methods as a means to bring citizens and their local knowledges directly into the policy process (Fischer 2003:214).

A TYPOLOGY OF CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL POLICY

Through the analysis of the Finnish cultural policy documents, vide supra, this article has thus far argued that cultural participation is one of the key issues on the cultural policy agenda. It has further been argued that cultural participation is understood and defined in different ways, which nevertheless exist in tandem across the analyzed documents. It has also been argued that the approach to cultural participation is influenced by the society’s current state of affairs and that cultural policy discourses do not exist in isolation from the major current debates (Sokka & Kangas 2007:187). Thus, the ethos by contemporary cultural policies of promoting cultural participation seems to coincide with the rhetoric of deliberative processes of the society.

To conclude the analysis, a typology of cultural participation in cultural policy is presented. The typology aims to identify the main elements that construct the idea of ‘cultural participation’ in Finnish cultural policy. In order to fully grasp the multi-faceted discourses of cultural participation, the different components of the typology are presented in relation to, on the one hand, the narrow vs. broad definition of culture, and, on the other hand, the distinction between individual and society. The components of the typology are understood as central discursive themes in the construction and understanding of culture participation in Finnish cultural policy. It is suggested that the typology can be used to describe and understand the idea of cultural participation in public policies not only in Finland but also in other Nordic and European countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>Right to participate</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The typology (table 1) presents two dimensions according to which the four components of the typology are placed. First dimension (expert vs. citizen) focuses on the definitions of culture, which in turn has an impact on what kind of cultural participation is perceived as legitimate. That is to say that the cultural policy which refers to professional practices, valuing expertise in contrast to amateur activities, follows the narrow conceptualization of culture as arts (expert), whereas on the other end of the spectrum, cultural policy, which refers to amateur activities refers to a broad conceptualization of culture as that of (the daily life of) citizens and to civil society activities. The broad concept of culture can be understood as a representation of all the important factors, which constitute the experience of living (Bennett 1999:67).

Correspondingly, the second dimension of the typology describes the distinction between individual and society. This dimension indicates the object of transformation suggested by the public policy. Public policy stresses the transformation of either individuals or societal structures. By doing so, the need for a transformation of the existing state of affairs, i.e. the political nature of ‘cultural participation’, becomes visible. Even though the typology has some limitations – such as its ability to encompass all the possible meanings of cultural participation as well as to take into account national variations – it provides an analytical framework to examine the main discursive elements, comprising the idea of cultural participation as it has been constructed by the contemporary cultural policies. The four components of the typology are ‘reception’, ‘right to participate’, ‘engagement’ and ‘inclusion’.

Reception refers to an idea where a person is mainly seen as a ‘visitor’, who is well suited to or ‘adapted’ to use and take advantage of the available cultural services. This concept dates back to the idea of the redistribution and democratization of culture. As a discursive theme, reception is depended on the elite expert and canonical culture. It emphasizes the need for some transformation of the structures of society (Stevenson et al 2015:12). Right to participate, in turn, adopts a different approach when stressing the rights to participate in culture. Cultural rights in this context are seen as part of the basic human rights. This component can be perceived to have a connection to the ideal of culture democracy, which stresses cultural diversity as well as opportunities to maintain and develop one’s own culture and identity.

When examining the individual vs. societal dimension, the emphasis is put on the structures and legislations of the society. Engagement can be understood as an interaction between individuals and culture institutions, exemplified by the concept of audience development. Audience development encompasses means to, for example, tap into the pool of potential or ‘lapsed’ audiences who are basically interested in the arts, to remove tangible and intangible barriers to attendance as well as to in different ways enrich the arts experience of the already existing audiences (Kawashima 2006:57). Here, the legitimacy relies again upon the expert, but the object of transformation is instead suggested to be the individual, whose behavior should be altered towards a more active role.
The fourth section is inclusion, a discursive theme, which mainly focuses on those seen as excluded from society. Compared to engagement, inclusion is concerned with excluded people with little regards to whether they consume the arts or not (Kawashima 2006:58). The practices of enhancing cultural participation here seem to offer widespread constructive social engagement with participants communicating, co-creating and mutually supporting one another. The invitation to engage is extensive and equitable. (Harvie 2013:1–2.) In this case, the rhetoric of inclusion seems to highlight the responsibility of society in preventing citizens from becoming excluded, when in fact the responsibility in the end still lies on the individual. The outcome here is that those choosing not to partake in ‘legitimate’ culture are represented in need of inclusion through the facilitation of a behavioral shift (Stevenson 2013:81).

CONCLUSION

The aim of the article has been to critically investigate the concept of cultural participation by examining what meanings and dimensions it is given and how it is politically enacted as part of Finnish cultural policy. Through an analysis of the key policy documents of Finnish public cultural policy, this article has argued that cultural participation has become one of the main issues in the national cultural policy agenda. Understanding cultural participation as an idea that has been actively constructed in cultural policy documents, the article provides a framework for analyzing how the agenda is put into play in contemporary Finnish cultural policy. The framework is presented as a typology that describes four different discursive themes of the cultural policy of participation and their implications. The four components of the typology are ‘reception’, ‘right to participate’, ‘engagement’, and ‘inclusion’ to each designate a complex of meanings and effects.

The typology demonstrates at one and the same time the continuity of cultural policies across historical periods and its contemporary characteristics with an emphasis on the social-political vocabulary. The typology also demonstrates that notwithstanding the fact that ‘inclusive’ participation policies highlight social cohesion and communality, the responsibility of the individual has been emphasized. Decreasing the responsibility of the state and increasing the responsibility, activeness and the freedom of choice of citizens are wider trends in contemporary Finland as in other late modern societies under the dominance of the competitive state-form. The former ‘welfare’ belief in the key role of societal structures as producers of citizens’ welfare and the responsibility of society has been put away to promote the responsibility of the individual citizen (Saarinen et al 2014). The deliberative, democratic goal of involving citizens to become part of the decision making processes paradoxically seem to coincide with the latest ethos of cultural policies to promote cultural participation.
REFERENCES


OMC (2012). A report on policies and good practices in the public arts and in cultural institutions to promote better access to and wider participation in culture. Open Method of Coordination (OMC), Working group of EU member state’s experts on better access to and wider participation in culture, European Union.
