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A BROAD MUSEUM OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION TO THE HELSINKI METROPOLITAN AREA – INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT

SUMMARY

The University of Helsinki, Aalto University, the City of Helsinki and the Finnish Museum of Technology appointed a joint Investigator to study the possibilities of establishing a broad Museum of Science, Technology and Innovation in the capital region. Professor Per-Edvin Persson was appointed Investigator and the work was done in the period 1.9. – 31.12.2013.

The Investigator was in contact with over 80 persons in 50 organisations, representing museums, universities, public bodies, industry and foundations. 45 meetings were held. He familiarized himself with current Finnish museum studies, written material from the museums involved and the websites of the aforementioned organisations.

The primary problems of the Finnish museum scene are the predominance of small units and the high proportion of fixed costs (79 %). In 2012, the average visitor number to Finnish museums was 34 000, the mean budget 1.4 M€, and the average work force 12.6 full time equivalents.

In the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, there is a core group of 14 museums that are open continuously, that receive public subsidies and that relate at least to some extent to science and technology. For the purpose of this study, the three city museums were excluded. In addition, there is a group of 19 other museums or projects related to the subject of this study, but who are either open for limited hours, in storage or closed. This group includes a few company and government department museums, as well.

In 2012, the total visitor number to the museums of the core group was 940 750, the total expenses 37.2 M€, the total work force 428 full time equivalents, and the total exhibition space 25 899 m². The economic impact of this group in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area amounts to 46.5 M€ according to a very recent Finnish study. However, half of the museums in the core group indicate a preference to stay outside a broad co-operation effort, mainly due to their current financing structures. All of them are willing to consider project-based co-operation.

In the opinion of the Investigator, the other half of the museums in the core group might be interested in a broad co-operation. In 2012, the total visitor number of this group was 293 908, total expenses 12.1 M€, total staff 139 full time equivalents and their total exhibition space exceeded 12 000 m². In addition to the seven museums, three projects might be interested in participating.

Among the universities of the region, the University of Helsinki maintains its collections and its cultural heritage through its museums (Helsinki University Museum, Finnish Museum of Natural History). The collections of Aalto University are documented only in part. The Investigator recommends that the cataloging and care of these collections should be given priority.

The Investigator proposes four alternatives to establish a broad Museum of Science and Technology in the region. The least extensive alternative, "Two universities and two museums in co-operation", will mainly secure the maintenance of the Aalto University collections, strengthen the co-operation

between the Helsinki University Museum and the Finnish Museum of Technology, and address the exhibition needs of the two universities.

There are two alternatives for a museum centre. A museum centre means that several museums are housed in the same building. In this way, synergy effects can be found in the utilization of the premises and in customer service. In the smaller museum centre alternative, "Science, technology and industrial arts", four or five museums would participate, and in the greater alternative, "The history of Finnish know-how", the largest possible group would be part, possibly even ten museums or organisations.

The fourth alternative also concerns the largest possible co-operative group. It is based on the idea to join functions instead of premises. The exhibition centre thus founded, "The museum of creativity", would produce its exhibitions as a production company while using the expertise of the participating museums. The museums would delegate their exhibition activities to the company. As a tourism company, it would generate sufficient income to produce highly experiential exhibitions.

The Investigator made a preliminary mapping of possible sites for the museum or exhibition centres in the region. For a new building four possible sites were found in Helsinki (the site of the Natural History Museum, Hakaniemi, Suvilahti-Nihti and Koivusaari). Depending on the size of the centre, 7 to 15 000 m² space is needed, resulting in an approximate construction cost of 21 to 45 M€. In the museum centre alternatives, the current facility budgets of the participating museums would probably cover the rental costs.

Three old buildings in Helsinki and three in Otaniemi were identified as possible to renovate for a museum or exhibition centre. With the exception of the office wing of the Central Railway Station, the buildings in Helsinki are owned by the City and those in Otaniemi by Aalto University.

There is a cautiously positive attitude towards a broad science and technology museum among potential partners and stakeholders.

A broad museum of science and technology can only be established by voluntary action. In the road map forward the Investigator proposes that the four organisations ordering the study should first define their own view on the proposals. If there is a wish to continue with one of the broader alternatives, they should be submitted for approval to potential partners. If there is sufficient interest, a project should be established. This can be done during 2014. The planning stage takes 2 – 3 years and the implementation at least 3 – 5, possibly 7 years. In this case a broad museum of science and technology could become reality in the years 2020 – 2023.