



Helsinki, Finland

(Source: Ahanen, Eetu, 2016, City of Helsinki, <https://materialbank.myhelsinki.fi/images?query=kauppatori&sort=relevance&openMediaId=1149>)

URB 691 – URB 497

Syllabus is subject to change

Syllabus –

Comparative urban sustainability

Summer 2022

International Field School, Simon Fraser University

This international field school, “Comparative urban sustainability” consists of learning periods in Canada and Finland. First, preliminary sessions will be held at Simon Fraser University over the course of 4 weeks, followed by a field school in the Helsinki region of Finland for 2 weeks. The Canadian portion of the course consists of

classroom meetings in Vancouver. Students will also do readings and group work to prepare them for the time in the field. In Finland, the field school will consist of multiple site visits, tours, and class meetings, including visiting guests and museum/art gallery visits. This field school draws on ongoing research cooperation between academics in the Nordic countries and at SFU, as well as on the learning outcomes of a sustainability workshop organized in cooperation with Nordic experts in Spring 2020 (supported by a Teaching and Learning Development Grant Project, G0309), and two virtual field schools at SFU in summer 2020 and 2021.

The Nordic countries are often referred to as having “best practices” in the realm of urban sustainability, and this course offers an opportunity for the students to experience sustainability achievements, practices, and ongoing challenges. Helsinki is well-known among urban studies scholars as a site of innovative urban planning ideas and education. The overarching learning objective of this field school is to advance an understanding of urban sustainability beyond a familiar context. Students will be offered the opportunity to reflect on their own cultural backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge while contributing to a constructive and interactive intercultural learning experience.

COURSE TIME AND LOCATION

- Preliminary sessions in the Vancouver region in May (4 meeting times)
- Followed by a field school in the Helsinki region from August 1-12, 2022 (**dates subject to change**)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This field school in the Helsinki Region in Finland focuses on comparative *urban sustainability*. Nordic countries are often referred to in relation to “best practices” in the realm of urban sustainability. This circumstance often leads to Nordic terms, policies, and practices being adopted globally. However, while a great amount of literature focuses on Nordic urban sustainability practices and outcomes, this field school offers a “real life” opportunity to go beyond the textbook and explore those understandings on the ground. In this field school, you will experience how sustainability practices reside in the linguistic and cultural context of their origin. By bringing together native speakers and experts on such practices, you will get to experience the differences that culture and history make to sustainability understandings and outcomes, and place them in comparison with the Vancouver region.

The overarching learning objective of this field school is to advance the understanding of sustainability beyond your familiar knowledge and context. We will ask: what can we learn from new places and languages, and how can these learnings enrich our understanding of urban sustainability? Helsinki is known as a site of innovative urban planning education and ideas. Sustainability is a significant part of planning and policymaking at multiple scales in the Helsinki region, and offers a unique and interesting comparison to the Vancouver region, where sustainability is also a widely-discussed concept.

This field school includes visiting guests, site visits, and interactions between locals and visitors, exploring specific themes in urban sustainability. Guests for this field school include academics and practicing professionals who work on such sustainability themes. Site visits will include planning departments, neighbouring cities, university campuses, an eco-urban neighbourhood, community gardens, and new master-planned developments, among others. You will have a chance to interact in university settings and in other institutional visits to libraries and museums. Led by local experts, you will have the opportunity to experience the city using public transportation (tram, metro, bus, ferry) and by walking.

The field school will encourage you to think beyond your local context, individual ideas, and cultural biases around sustainability. Through interdisciplinary discussions, we will make advanced comparisons between places and concepts, and engage with global issues in an active and practical manner. Your observations of different sites will push us to think more critically about sustainability and challenge often taken-for-granted

understandings. These experiences are meant to aid you in your academic and professional life far beyond the field course.

As this is an international field school, learning will largely happen as we travel. Before we travel together, we will have preparatory class sessions in Vancouver where we will prepare for our learning experience abroad. In these sessions, we will go over some of the differences we can expect to encounter in Finland. Course readings will help contextualize the places we will visit during the field school. During the field trip we will learn through new places, people, languages and a wider cultural context.

Our field school program is tailored to compare and contrast mutual understandings of urban sustainability, and we will learn through discussions and field visits. We will engage with local experts in a variety of ways throughout the field school, including site visits and tours, lectures, campus tours, reflections and social and cultural activities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To gain a background understanding of urban trends and history in the Nordic region and Finland in particular, including from experts and locals.
- To develop and articulate an understanding of urban sustainability and urban sustainable development in international urban policy practice, development and social and cultural trends.
- To advance the understanding of sustainability as a set of values, ideas, and practices situated within particular urban contexts, including contexts that are outside of students' cultural familiarity.
- To develop competency in applying a comparative and critical framework for thinking about cities, socioeconomic and cultural conditions in terms of processes and outcomes of sustainable development.
- To experience a new city, reflect on your experience, and share these reflections with others in written and oral forms in a foreign setting.
- To encounter specific urban projects, policies, and settings in Helsinki that are on the forefront of urban sustainability action and to relate these encounters to other experiences and encounters.
- Through encounter and interaction with locals in Helsinki, to develop skills of intercultural respect, communication, and diplomacy as a visiting international student.

CREDITS

- Graduate student course designed for 6 credits, undergraduates 9 credits.

FOUR PREPARATORY SESSIONS

Preparatory session #1 – Introduction to Helsinki region

Learning objective: Students will be able to describe the historical and geographical context of Helsinki within Finland, and Finland's position within Northern Europe.

Readings for this session:

Hannikainen, M. (2016). *Helsinki - a compact green city*: <https://www.kvartti.fi/en/articles/helsinki-compact-green-city>

Helsinki's present state and development 2019:

https://www.hel.fi/hel2/tietokeskus/julkaisut/pdf/19_08_27_Helsinkis_presentstate_and_development_2019.pdf

In the first preparatory session we will take a closer look at the Helsinki region. We will go through the syllabus and outline the structure and purpose of the international field school. More practical and detailed guidance for travel will be provided in the last preparatory session "Getting ready to travel".

This session is meant to provide an orientation that will prepare students to benefit from their time in the field. We will outline key historical moments in regards to urban development and provide context for understanding urban sustainability in the Helsinki region. We will briefly review the development of Finland as part of the kingdom of Sweden, Tsarist Russia as an autonomous Grand Duchy, and an independent republic since 1917. We will consider the location of Helsinki in southern Finland and outline differences between the region and other parts of the country such as the North. We will briefly consider Northern Finland in relation to the Indigenous Sami people, who also live in Norway, Sweden, and North-Eastern Russia. In this session, we will examine how ruling powers influenced planning in the city, and demonstrate how these historical foundations shape how urban development is being planned and practiced. We will pay specific attention to the recent urbanization and growth of the Helsinki region. By reviewing selected examples from the urban history of the Helsinki region, this session will give insight into how different historical moments have shaped social, political and economic aspects, and how these aspects play into the future development of the Helsinki region.

As part of this session, students will form teams, and each team will be assigned a specific topic that they will work with as part of their field school experience (see Sustainability perspectives later in this document). Students will set goals for their groups in preparation for a presentation they will give to class on the last session in Vancouver (#4). Groups will be introduced to some preliminary materials and readings on their key topic, to be made available through Canvas.

As part of this session, we will watch a documentary on Helsinki (Waterfront cities in the World), to be followed by a discussion of student impressions of the Helsinki region based on the assigned readings, lecture and documentary content.

Documentary: <https://www.knowledge.ca/program/waterfront-cities-world> (Helsinki)

As homework, you will choose one of the following sources as your starting point to get an introduction to Finnish cultural and artistic expressions. You will write a short reflection on stereotypes of Finns and Finland and amass evidence that 1) these stereotypes do exist; and 2) that they are not unique to Finns and Finland. This reflection will form a part of your participation grade, and will be approximately 500 words, to be posted on Canvas.

- Kaurismäki, Aki. *The man without a Past*. 2002

or

- Browse and find information on the works, artists and collections of the Ateneum Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma and the Sinebrychoff Art Museum.
< <http://kokoelmat.fng.fi/app?lang=en> > and/or contemporary comics on Finns/Finland:
< <http://finnishnightmares.blogspot.com/> >

Preparatory session #2 – Introduction to urban sustainable development

Learning objective: This session will contextualize and discuss “sustainable development” as an international development, planning, and policy concept, and as an ideology with global uptake, but with locally differentiated meanings. This session will allow students to discuss the cultural meaning of Finnish history related to sustainable development, and how these create local specific needs, opportunities, and contradictions.

Readings for this session:

Dessein, J., Soini, K., Fairclough, G. and Horlings, L. (2015). *Culture in, for and as sustainable development: Conclusions from the COST Action IS1007 Investigating Cultural Sustainability*. University of Jyväskylä. <<http://www.culturalsustainability.eu/conclusions.pdf>>

Du Pisani, J. A. (2006). *Sustainable development–historical roots of the concept*. *Environmental Sciences*, 3(2), 83-96.

Girault, C. (2017). *Between naturalness and urbanity, how are protected areas integrated into cities? The case of Helsinki (Finland)*. *Articulo-Journal of Urban Research*, (16).

Holden, M., Airas, A. and Larsen, M. (2019). *Social sustainability in eco-urban neighbourhoods*. In M.R.Shirazi and R.Keivani (eds) *Urban Social Sustainability: Theory, policy and practice*. London: Routledge, 149-170.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) was one of the first to introduce the concept of *sustainable development* in international dialogue (Holden, 2012: 527). Different countries have since committed to various sustainable development goals. For example, in 2015 various countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in 2016, the Paris Agreement on climate change entered into force, speaking to the need to limit the rise of global temperatures (see United Nations, Sustainable development goals, 2019).

Within this global context of sustainable development, the Nordic countries are often referred to in a positive way. For example, according to the Economist, the successes of Nordic countries are often recognized in the form of international rankings from “*economic competitiveness to social health to happiness*” (The Economist, 2013b). These international rankings also inform sustainable development and sustainability as a planning idea. Sustainability is also a planning and policy concept across multiple scales, and an ideology with global uptake but locally differentiated meaning. While helping to develop an understanding of the historical roots of the concept, this session will work as an orientation to the overarching theme of urban sustainability, leading us to interpret theory and discourse of sustainable development internationally, and allowing us to consider how these could differ based on context.

Preparatory session #3 – Planning urban sustainability

Learning objective: To advance the understanding of the differences between Canadian and Finnish planning systems, land ownership and management.

Readings for this session:

Rannila, P. (2018). *Relationality of the law: On the legal collisions in the Finnish planning and land use practices*. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.

Ministry of Environment (2013). *Booklet on everyman’s right in Finland* (pdf). (Available on Canvas).

OPTIONAL:

Lombardo, N. & Wideman, T. (2018) Recentering land use, City, 22:5-6, 856-866.

Hall, T. (2003). Planning and urban growth in Nordic Countries, Routledge, 2003. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=182033> (*Chapter 3 Urban planning in Finland*).

This session introduces some key differences between Canadian and Finnish urban planning practices. Planning is closely tied to land use practices, property, and law, and this preparatory session will help contextualize urban sustainability planning in the Nordic context. Comparisons between the Canadian and Finnish urban planning contexts are not straightforward. For example, differences in land ownership practices between Helsinki and Vancouver affect planning in multiple ways.

In this session, guest lecturer Dr. Trevor Wideman (University of Toronto), whose expertise is in urban planning, property, and law, will compare some of the key planning differences between Finland and Canada. The session will introduce and discuss 1) differences between historical aspects of planning practice in these countries; 2) land ownership, consultation, and participation; and 3) scales of planning jurisdiction (i.e., municipal, regional). Through examples, this session will advance understandings about how land use differences might influence approaches to urban planning topics.

Preparatory session #4 – Getting ready to travel

In this final preparatory session, we will prepare for group presentations in the field (“Sustainability Perspectives” presentations). During the field school in Finland we will delve into different aspects of urban sustainability more deeply, but we will explore these varying themes with each group already prior to travel. Each group will present during travel and these presentations will help orient the class during the learning experience abroad. More info will be made available on Canvas.

“Sustainability Perspectives” themes:

Sustainability in coastal environments

Ongoing sustainability efforts in the city and port

Everyday Nordic sustainability

Sustainable neighbourhoods

Nordic cultures

READINGS:

Posted on Canvas.

UNDERGRADUATE EVALUATION:

Sustainability perspectives (team work)	20
Position Paper (individual work)	20
Photo essay (individual work)	30
Blog (individual work)	10
Participation	20
(active participation 10%, attendance 5%, session 1 reflection 5%)	
<hr/>	
100%	

GRADUATE EVALUATION:

Sustainability perspectives (team work)	20
Readings and Discussion Facilitation (individual work)	20
Photo essay (individual work)	30
Blog (individual work)	10
Participation	20
(active participation 10%, attendance 5%, session 1 reflection 5%)	
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100%	

Sustainability perspectives (team work)

This assignment is twofold, and it contains:

- 1) A presentation to the class in Finland, and
- 2) A short written summary of the presentation (to be returned right after the presentation).

You will be divided into groups based on different topics/themes in urban sustainability. Each group will present on one theme. Each group will do some preliminary research in Canada, familiarizing themselves with their assigned topic and with some case examples. Each team will introduce the topic in Finland based on their research to give some idea to the entire group about this aspect of sustainability. The 15-minute theme presentation will give a brief answer to the following questions:

- How does this theme help advance sustainability in cities?
- What are the cases/concepts that are related to this theme in this field school?
- How is this aspect of sustainability different/similar in Helsinki and Vancouver based on your preliminary work on the topic?

Your group is expected to use 5 academic and 5 non-academic references and introduce 1-3 case examples in this oral presentation. Presentations will be planned in the classroom in Canada (session #4) prior to travel to Finland. Each group will produce a 5 page summary of their presentation (double-spaced, 12-pt font, 2.54 cm margins). Groups are expected to submit a copy of their summary to Canvas right after the verbal presentation in Finland. These summaries will be shared with the class for further consideration and discussion as we travel and learn to see sustainability somewhat differently.

Readings and Discussion Facilitation (graduate students only)

Graduate students will be asked to do additional readings (listed below) and individually prepare to lead one discussion in the field while in the Helsinki region (timing TBD). Graduate students will choose a theme in consultation with the instructor to work with (e.g., smart cities, master-planned waterfronts). Students will write

250 word reflections on each reading, summarising key points, and will prepare a few discussion questions to guide the class's experience related to their theme during travel.

Students will draft summaries and questions prior to travel, and receive feedback and guidance for facilitating these discussions in the field. As part of leading the discussion, grad students will prepare local travel tips for the site in question, will introduce some examples from the readings and will ask prepared questions as a conversation starter.

Readings include:

- 1) Centner, R. (2021). A very Nordic set of concerns? Visionary circumspection & theoretical conversations with the rest of the world. *Nordic Journal of Urban Studies*, 19-41.
- 2) Cavicchia, R. (2021). Are Green, dense cities more inclusive? Densification and housing accessibility in Oslo. *Local Environment*, 1-17.
- 3) Haase, D., Kabisch, S., Haase, A., Andersson, E., Banzhaf, E., Baró, F., ... & Krellenberg, K. (2017). Greening cities–To be socially inclusive? About the alleged paradox of society and ecology in cities. *Habitat International*, 64, 41-48.
- 4) Ameel, L. (2016). A Bildungsroman for a waterfront development: Literary genre and the planning narratives of Jätkäsaari, Helsinki. *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 169-187.
- 5) Glasmeier, A., & Christopherson, S. (2015). Thinking about smart cities. *Cambridge Journal Of Regions, Economy And Society*, 8(1), 3-12.
- 6) Andersen, B., & Røe, P. G. (2017). The social context and politics of large scale urban architecture: Investigating the design of Barcode, Oslo. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 24(3), 304-317.
- 7) Climate-smart Helsinki: Towards more sustainable city planning.
<https://www.hel.fi/hel2/ksv/julkaisut/esitteet/esite-2017-4-en.pdf>

Position Paper (10% of the grade for undergraduate students, graduate students will not do this task)

This paper will provide students with an opportunity to do an initial exploration of their course theme. Each undergraduate student will write a 750 word paper that contains three key elements: 1) an Introduction, which describes the theme to be discussed; 2) a body that argues the student's position on that issue using references; and 3) a conclusion that restates the key points and outlines further topics to be explored in relation to the theme.

For this paper, students are expected to use 3 academic sources and 3 non-academic sources. The bibliography is not included in the word count, and the paper should be double-spaced, 12-pt font, 2.54 cm margins. In regards to photos, they should be included as an appendix, which will not be included in the page count. The paper should be submitted to Canvas prior travel to Finland.

Photo essay

During the field school, students are expected to keep a diary of their learning on urban sustainability. Questions that will guide the journaling will be, for example; What did I see/experience that stands out? How does it link to urban sustainability, readings in the course, or talks and chats during the course? How is it different from/similar to the Canadian context?

After the trip students will be expected to return to their written journal and reflect on what they wrote during travel by highlighting 3-5 photos from the trip and connecting them with their writing into a photo essay. Students may directly quote from journal entries or reflect further on what you wrote during the field school. Photos are meant to guide your writing on urban sustainability and will illustrate your **key learning outcomes from the field school**. Photos can be students' own, but do not necessarily have to be. Photos can illustrate moments that help students reflect on their time in Finland, and guide their thinking and organizing of their final photo essay. This essay should be 10 pages in length (or 2500 words; bibliography not included), double-spaced, 12-pt font, 2.54 cm margins. Photos must be included as an appendix, which will not be included in the page count. The essay should be submitted to the Canvas site after travel. More guidance will be given on Canvas.

Blog

In this field school, students will also publish one blog post during travel. This post should be around 500 words, and preferably it should include one or two photos. The blog post can be on any subject related to the field school but should focus on an urban sustainability theme. Keep in mind the aspects that make a blog post engaging and readable, such as a beginning-middle-and-end structure, a personal tone, providing examples and illustration through images and hotlinks, short sentences and paragraphs, and including a few questions for further consideration (students do not have to be expressing a fully formed conclusion in a blog post, but can also raise questions).

Participation

Because this is a field school, expectations around participation, as well as the grading, are different than what students may have encountered before. Participation in this field school requires patience and flexibility (schedules and things may change “on the fly”), curiosity to learn new things, carefulness, awareness and respect for others, and punctuality, among other things. We will all make the field school experience successful based on our active participation and dedication to learning together. Furthermore, the written reflection on stereotypes (session #1) forms 5% of the participation grade, meaning that most of the grade is based on active attendance in preliminary sessions and in the field.

Selected readings and materials (reading list will expand):

Helsinki living:

Lilius, J. (2019). ‘Mentally, we’re rather country people’ – planssplainning the quest for urbanity in Helsinki, Finland. *International Planning Studies*, 1-11.

Helsinki, Historical Perspectives:

https://www.kvartti.fi/sites/default/files/files/issue/16_06_27_quarterly2_2016_web.pdf

Promotional video on Helsinki: <https://monocle.com/film/affairs/most-liveable-city-helsinki/>

Kolbe, L. (2006) An Eastern or a Western Capital City? The Spirit of Helsinki, *International Review of Sociology*, 16:2, 329-346.

Lilius, J. (2014) Is There Room for Families in the Inner City? Life-Stage Blenders Challenging Planning, *Housing Studies*, 29:6, 843-861

Partanen, A. “*The Nordic Theory of Everything*”. HarperCollins Publishers, New York.

Helsinki facts and figures (2018):

https://www.hel.fi/hel2/tietokeskus/julkaisut/pdf/18_12_11_tasku18_en_net.pdf

Housing in Helsinki etc.: Lönnqvist (2015):

https://www.hel.fi/hel2/Tietokeskus/julkaisut/pdf/16_02_04_Tutkimuksia_5_2015_Lonnqvist.pdf

Living and studying in Helsinki:

<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/admissions/for-international-students/what-makes-helsinki-such-a-great-city-to-live-and-study-in>

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/may/15/why-finlands-cities-are-havens-for-library-lovers-oodi-helsinki>

The Master's Programme in Urban Studies and Planning:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AbFCqvnYNE>

“How can we ensure our cities are still green in the future?”:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=jKUA54yldIg

Selected readings about Helsinki Region: https://urbanacademy.fi/usp/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/09/USPpublication_ALL.pdf

Port City Helsinki:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3O95nud1cY>

Approaches to sustainability in the Nordic countries:

Aro, R. (2017) Living standards and changing expectations. Investigating domestic necessity and environmental sustainability in an affluent society. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 581. PhD Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Blok, A. (2012) Greening cosmopolitan urbanism? On the transnational mobility of low-carbon formats in Northern European and East Asian cities. *Environment and Planning A* 44(1): 2327–43.

Faehnle, M., Bäcklund, P., & Tyrväinen, L. (2011). Looking for the role of nature experiences in planning and decision making: a perspective from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 7(1), 45-55.

Fjellheim, E. M. (2020). Through our stories we resist. In Breidlid, A., & Krøvel, R. (Eds.). *Indigenous Knowledges and the Sustainable Development Agenda* (1st ed.). 207-226. Routledge.

Housing First in Finland. <https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland>

The Economist (2013). Welfare more for less. A generous welfare state that does not cost the earth, 2 February.

The Economist (2013). The Nordic countries. The next supermodel. Politicians from both right and left could learn from the Nordic countries, 2 February.

Kuokkanen, A., & Yazar, M. (2018). Cities in Sustainability Transitions: Comparing Helsinki and Istanbul. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1421.

Ridanpää, J., & Pasanen, A. (2009). From the Bronx to the Wilderness: Inari-Sami Rap, Language Revitalisation and Contested Ethnic Stereotypes. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 9(2), 213-230.

Social sustainability and eco-urban neighbourhood literature:

Hakaste H, Jalkanen R, Korpivaara, A, Rinne H and Siiskonen M (2005) Eco-Viikki. Aims, implementations and results. City of Helsinki, Ministry of the Environment. Available at: http://tempus.volgattech.net/presentations/eco-viikki_en.pdf (report)

Holden M, Li C and Molina A (2015) The emergence and spread of ecourban neighbourhoods around the world. *Sustainability* (7): 11418-11437.

Holden M (2012) Urban Policy Engagement with Social Sustainability in Metro Vancouver. *Urban Studies* 49(3):527-42.

Mattern, S. (2018). Maintenance and Care. Places.
< <https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/?cn-reloaded=1> >

Rapoport E (2015) Globalising sustainable urbanism: the role of international masterplanners. *Area* 47: 110-115.

Shirazi R and Keivani R (2017) Critical reflections on the theory and practice of social sustainability in the built environment – a meta-analysis. *Local Environment* 22(12): 1526-1545.

Shirazi R and Keivani R (2019). *Urban Social Sustainability: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Routledge, New York.