

## FINLAND – HERITAGE @ RISK!

Monuments and sites in Finland are protected by law. There is specific legislation for monuments, with ancient monuments being automatically protected. For the built environment a special, individual decision is needed to have the building protected. However, in the case of the protection of the built environment or big areas such as cultural landscapes, the Planning and Building Act is more generally used.

Finland has:

- 14,000 registered ancient monuments protected automatically by law
- 10,000 registered archaeological sites from historic times (ruins, parts of fortifications etc)
- 1700 sites and buildings protected after a special decision
- 800 churches (built before 1917)
- the number of sites, buildings and cultural landscapes protected by the Planning and Building Act is not known

At a national level, the National Board of Antiquities is the state conservation office. Twenty County Museums and many other museums around the country work at the local level. The National Board of Antiquities, the museums, the Environment Centres and planners co-operate on questions concerning the protection of cultural heritage.

Around 20 million FIM is allocated to grants by the Government to private owners for restoration.

Finland is a sparsely populated country and most people live in southern Finland around the capital, Helsinki. There are only a few cities with a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants. The population is increasing around Helsinki and some other cities, and decreasing in most other areas. The country, as well as the rest of Scandinavia, has been inhabited since the last Ice Age, and in historic times, the country was mainly an agricultural area. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forestry in the form of pulp and paper production was the other resource for both the agricultural population and townspeople.

Changes to the economic structure and infrastructure are the major threats to the built environment in Finland.

The main threatened structures are:

### Farmsteads and agricultural landscapes

The change to agricultural policies has brought many farmsteads into decay. It also caused a change to open agricultural landscapes. Even fields that are several hundreds of years old, are planted with forests. Abandoned animal production has caused the decay of cow sheds and barns that are no longer in use. Especially in Ostrobothnian, the open landscape with hundreds of barns has been seen as a national landscape, but it is disappearing quickly. Many of the main buildings of farms are also empty, and most of them, surrounded by several outbuildings, are too big to be maintained simply as private summer houses.

In most of Finland there were no big villages; instead farms stood alone surrounded by their own fields and forests. When the fields are no longer cultivated, the typical cultural landscape

will totally disappear. The natural environment, the forests, is taking over. Where there have been villages, they too are disappearing, or in cases where they survive, they will lose their original cultural historic value because of new infrastructure, new roads, and buildings which do not take the existing environment into account. The old narrow roads get new paths for pedestrians and bicycles, and the space needed is taken from neighbouring plots. Fences and gates, gardens and even buildings have to give way. During recent years, new, big “hyper-markets” outside the cities have been a new problem for agricultural areas.

Most farm buildings have been timbered wooden buildings, and this whole type of construction is disappearing from farms. The technique has a 1000 year-old tradition in our Nordic area.

### Small towns and wooden areas in other towns

The typical Finnish town has been small and built of wood. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century traditional building techniques still dominated in our towns. The majority of the buildings were timbered. The bigger cities had, apart from the very central city area, large areas and suburbs built in wood. After World War II techniques rapidly changed. Today most buildings in the country have been built after 1975, and buildings in towns are even younger. At the moment there are still wooden buildings in the small towns, but the current economic situation is not the best for their protection. The small towns often have old-fashioned industries, but after modernisation the factories do not need as many employed people as they did formerly. The situation is problematic for service and trade as well. The towns lose their inhabitants year by year, and many of the politicians in these towns react in panic and try to create a new image for the town, for “modern, dynamic and commercial” sounds better than a little town with old buildings. In fact most of the small towns have no future as economically viable areas. New buildings in the centre or big markets on the outskirts make the situation even worse for the existing system.

### Industrial heritage

Finland was industrialised very late. Most factories were first established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most industry was based on forestry, but there were also metal, machine, glass, textile and leather industries. Industries located both in towns and near water transport in the countryside constructed many other buildings besides those necessary for production. There was often a whole community with separate living quarters for different groups of workers, schools, parks, tennis- and ice hockey courts etc. Today the old large factory buildings are mostly redundant. The housing areas are no longer used by the employees, even if the production of the factory is continuing.

Industrial heritage also includes railroads, and most of the old station buildings are no longer in use.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing areas

Housing estates built shortly before and after World War II are changing at a rapid rate. Houses are given additions and façades in new materials. In Finland especially, there are large areas of very typical self-built one-family houses of wood from that time. The areas are popular today, so the buildings are not disappearing but losing their original features. The value of this kind of area was their harmony, but now it can be difficult to see it any longer. The areas are often protected by planning, but that is not enough to protect the originality of the buildings. Blocks of flats in suburbs also often are given new types of windows or new materials on their façades.

## Religious buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century and cemeteries

There are a lot of small buildings which have been built by religious groups. The buildings have heritage values but they are not protected. When people move away from the countryside or from small towns or when there are no churchgoers any more, the buildings are often without use and maintenance. Some churches from the 19<sup>th</sup> century are also losing their original values when they are rebuilt by the parish as multi-purpose centres.

The Church wants to work effectively and economically and old cemeteries and old grave monuments are threatened because no-one is paying for their care and old grave sites have to be reused. Cemeteries are not protected, and their cultural historic value is not clear to the majority of those who make economic decisions in parishes.

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## FRANCE – HERITAGE @ RISK!

In France, there are several coexisting listing levels for built heritage:

- Buildings listed in the “Inventaire des Richesses Artistiques de la France” (Inventory of Art Treasures in France) are for the most part rural constructions and small urban buildings of an age which ranges from the Middle Ages to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the authenticity of which is extensively preserved.
- Buildings protected as urban sites, safeguarded areas, “Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural Urbain et Paysages” (Protected Zones of Architectural Heritage and Landscapes) and the conservation of which is recognised as desirable or obligatory.
- Buildings located in visible surroundings of a listed historic monument.
- Listed historic monuments or those which are on the additional inventory as individual and specific types.

Concerning the last three categories, an assembly of regulating and legal documents ensures their conservation conditions under the auspices of the Monument Conservation Office. Concerning the first category, these buildings are not protected by any institution and are therefore exposed to the risk of decay.

The Monument Conservation Office tries to ensure the conservation of heritage. But conservation depends in most cases on the owners which are mostly the local municipalities (63%), private owners (28%) and to a small extent the State (6%).

Neglect which is not always benevolent, is a major factor for a default by the inheritors of heritage. But it should be indicated that the clumsiness of numerous public management programmes leads – sometimes unconsciously – to the destruction of old buildings or sites: urbanisation is a particularly fierce player.

Natural factors should also not be neglected, for example the storm of 26 December 1999, which raged and caused irreparable damage to parks and gardens.

Of course, problems from pollution must be stated, which leads to the destruction of heritage fabric.

The lack of qualified craftsmen, the lack of identical or at least appropriate materials; research of a high standard concerning the operations, where chemistry and top methods put aside traditional measures – which should be revived – often result in tremendously high costs which the parties involved cannot cope with.

The public entity (State, local councils) is attempting heritage operations which are carried out as incentives:

- Financial assistance (subvention, tax reduction...) up to very increased fees,
- Technical assistance (in undertaking the project, specialist architects, laboratories, companies),
- Interventions by authorities (office work)
- The acquisition of a building by a council is very rare in France.

The conceived dispositions which have been put into action have demonstrated a positive result world-wide, and one can say that the totality of heritage places in France is on average in a tolerable state of conservation.

However, the following matters are causing serious concerns:

- Vernacular heritage has been seriously affected by the constant exit to the city and the ageing of the inhabitants of small