



## Controversies in Cultural Heritage Work

Traditional wooden architecture at Olonets Karelian villages in change

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### Abstract

In the Olonets Karelian villages the gray nature shape round log buildings are visual representations of the local culture. This local heritage is fading, since the villages are already deserted, abandoned, rotten or partly demolished or replaced with the new. However, the acute issue is how to reconcile the use of contemporary materials and solutions to this existing context. The appreciation of the villages as cultural heritage, the utility of buildings for contemporary living purposes and the attractiveness of the villages as heritage tourism destinations seem to increase the motivation to preserve the villages. In addition, cultural heritage is part of the local identity that may be exploited as a resource, for example, the young people in their efforts to build a common future. But the preservation of the cultural heritage sites are highly expert-intensive and expert-led processes which are often lacking dialog with the local residents. The knowledge gained in the Kinerma cultural heritage work indicates that it is worth aiming protection or preservation approved also by the locals, despite of the controversies, since it seems to assure the continuity of authentic living in the cultural heritage site (Niskasaari 2009).

The cultural heritage studies deal usually with two types of controversial situations. Firstly, the external-internal viewpoint causes a conflict when local heritage is being intervened by the outsiders, such as the external experts (Smith 2006, 300; Graham and Howard 2008, 3). Secondly, the diversity of interpretations causes conflicts when the meaning of the cultural heritage site is not agreed between the experts and the local residents (Graham et al. 2000, 24; Graham and Howard 2008, 13). However, of my knowledge, the cultural heritage studies have not dealt with the acute issue of how to reconcile the use of new building materials and solutions available and the protection or preservation work in dialog with the local residents. Unfortunately, often the expenditure issues rule over the preserving attitude if the own local heritage is not valued enough. This third issue dealing with the use of controversial materials is discussed in this article through the analysis of recent changes in the Olonets Karelian villages. The practice-oriented question setting is based on the experience gained in the cultural heritage work carried out in the Olonets Karelian Kinerma Village (Niskasaari 2014) and lately in the ongoing project Home of Karelian Language at the Vedlozero Communal Centre.

*Key words: authenticity, controversy, dialogue, dissonance, identity, heritage, Karelia, Olonets Karelian villages, traditional wooden architecture*

### Introduction

The cultural heritage work carried out in the Olonets Karelian Kinerma Village by the Friends of Kinerma Association began fifteen years ago. During the first trip to Kinerma, the village turned out to be retaining its original appearance and remaining intact. At the same time, the local heritage was fading and the deterioration of houses was ongoing. Since the initial trip to Kinerma Village the studies of its traditional wooden architecture, repairing its buildings and developing the heritage tourism continued with small steps. (Niskasaari 2014.) During this cultural heritage work, controversial situations could not be avoided. Firstly, when local heritage was intervened by outsiders and secondly, when the

meaning of cultural heritage site was not agreed between the experts and the local residents (Niskasaari 2009, 96-97). The third current controversial issue related to repairing houses in the Karelian villages is the use of new materials and solutions available. This challenge is emerging when the new buildings are being built to traditional Karelian villages or the traditional Karelian houses are being repaired for second home purposes by the local inhabitants or citizens from neighboring towns or municipalities.

### ***The Kinerma Village***

Inhabited by the Livvik Karelians, Kinerma Village of the Pryazha District, Republic of Karelia is today an interesting tourist destination of traditional Karelian landscape and wooden architecture. Supposing authenticity is accepted as a core substance to heritage, it can be found within "heritage gem cities" or places. According to Ashworth and Tunbridge heritage gem cities are usually small, cities in which the historical past has survived intact with little or no change (Ashworth-Tunbridge 2000, 155). After many repairs and changes, Kinerma is still a place where it is possible to experience manifold impressions about the authentic Karelian village, a place to return with pleasure after visiting the other settlements. In the centre of the Kinerma Village is a chapel of the Virgin of Smolensk surrounded by an old cemetery hidden under spruce trees and enclosed by a stone fence. The traditional wooden Karelian dwelling houses, all together 17 of them, are scattered around end facades facing to the chapel. The oldest houses were built in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kinerma is a village of wells, since it is located on an open landscape ridge where the wells are the only water supply for the locals. The access to the nearest lake Vedlozero is through a one and half kilometers long path across the forest. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Kinerma had 22 Karelian houses and earlier there might have been even more. There were also many chimneyless saunas, i.e. smoke saunas, and barns in the village. Today, the remaining houses in Kinerma Village have been repaired, a new chimneyless sauna has been built as well as one new dwelling house, but without traditional premises of cattle and utensils. These old and new round log buildings in Kinerma Village are visual representations of reliance to ones' own local culture.

### ***The study of the Karelian building heritage at the Olonets Karelian villages in recent years and the heritage work to save these villages for future generations***

In Finland the initiative to save Kinerma emerged due to the dwellers of the village. Their descendants live in Petrozavodsk and some of them immigrated to Finland. The most active people in the beginning and onwards were the sisters Nadezhda Kalmykova and Olga Gokkoeva with their families. During the year 1998 their initiative resulted to co-operation with Art Committee of Oulu Province and Department of Architecture, University of Oulu. The Laboratory of Architectural History chose Kinerma's traditional wooden architecture as the target for building inventories to study the local building heritage. During the field courses the students of architecture documented all the buildings of Kinerma by measuring, drawing and photographing them. In addition to this, the bachelor students of culture and arts (crafts and design) from Oulu Pikisaari School had several field courses in Kinerma. These activities during the initial stages formed the main part of the project. Later on began the project *Olonia Houses* including the more detailed planning for protecting the Kinerma Village, which was compiled together with the Russian authorities, local administration and the villagers. In accordance with the plan, renovation of the buildings was started supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation. The village tourism was started as a strategy to bring income to the villagers, first funded by Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Finnish-Russian activities together with the co-operation between the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for the benefit of Kinerma have been continuous and developed steadily in the process of aiming to preserve architectural heritage and to develop heritage or rural tourism. As objectives of the project *Olonia Houses* were emerging more challenging a new ideological NGO community, the Friends of Kinerma was organized in 2001, in the City of Oulu, Finland. Activities and co-operation continued on two projects, the *Restoration of Historical Village of Kinerma* and the *Elicited Waters of Kinerma* (Kinerma 2014).

One significant project, the *Better Life for Karelian Villages*, for upgrading housing in traditional Karelian wooden villages was implemented during 2011-2013 (Kinerma 2014). The project started when it received funding from the EU Cross Border Program. The plenty of challenges was faced when organizing construction works of the project in the Russian country side: the nearest hardware store to buy the building materials was far away and there was also lack of skilled fulltime builders and carpenters. However, despite of these challenges a traditional well, a reserve well, outdoor biotoilets, waste water treatment and laundry room at the Livvik Karelian Culture Centre were built. In addition the roofs of six houses in the Kinerma Village were repaired. The educational video was made in co-operation with the TV and Radio Company Karelia. This project managed to demonstrate new environmentally friendly technologies for upgrading housing in the Karelian villages. The use of new technologies will allow local people and owners of the historical houses to preserve their buildings and at the same time to enhance their living conditions. Production of an educational video based on the works done in the framework of the project will allow the many to become familiar with the new technologies through the Internet. Conversance with the past and the present of the Kinerma Village and inspiration of reviving it, have turned into many different activities during the recent years. The people involved in preserving and developing the village shared a mutual goal of preserving and further developing the traditional wooden architecture, their own language and the local traditional culture of Olonets Livvik Karelians. The project *Home of Karelian Language* was launched during the year 2012 (HKL, Karjalan kielen kodi). A new center will be established in Vedlozero, where all activities will take place in Karelia (Karjalan kielen kodi 2014). Local people have become active and their desire to work on preserving traditional culture got stronger. All this has been awakening the interest to the Karelian language and local ethnical culture also among the youth.

In early 2000s, a local ethnical cultural centre for *Olonets Livvik Karelians* was established. It holds a permanent exhibition *Kinerma Live* and accommodation for heritage tourism is available there. People of Kinerma have always taken a good care of the old chapel. The most valuable icon is called Hodegitria, or the icon of the Virgin of Smolensk. It was painted in 16<sup>th</sup> century. The local lore says the icon worked wonders, for instance it could cure blindness. For quite long, the icon was kept in the chapel, but in 1979 it was taken to Petrozavodsk for restoration. At present, the wonderworking icon of Kinerma is part of the exhibition of the Fine Art Museum of the Republic of Karelia in Petrozavodsk. The exhibition *Kinerma Live*, from 2006, is the first attempt to interpret and represent historical and cultural environment of Kinerma. The exhibition was arranged in co-operation with the Friends of Kinerma Association and University of Oulu, Department of Architecture, Laboratory of Art and Design (Herneoja 2007). The exhibition is located to a *sarai* space in a traditional wooden house at Kinerma Village. The manuscript of the exhibition is based upon Russian archive materials that mention Kinerma Village. Family albums of the villagers were also valuable materials of exhibition because they contained a great many photos of village life, houses and their inhabitants. Findings of the research of the village's traditional wooden architecture have also been used. There are still people in the village who speak Livvic dialect of the Karelian language. Their recorded stories are a part of the exhibition. The exhibition has strengthened both local heritage tourism and identity in Kinerma and its surrounding communities in Olonets region. Studying and representing authentic tangible and intangible elements of local past in Kinerma has been an essential part and basis of the protecting the village. (Niskasaari 2009, 98.)

## **Defining the Practice-oriented Approach and the Conceptual Ground**

The practice-oriented question setting in this article is based on the experience gained in the cultural heritage work carried out in the Olonets Karelian Kinerma Village and Vedlozero communal centre. It is discussed through the analysis of my early studies of University of Oulu, Department of Architecture and activities of the Friends of Kinerma Association together with the local and governmental authorities, inhabitants and Karelian Heritage Foundation (Niskasaari 2009). During the last three years, changes in the Olonets Karelian villages have been

documented in the Italian, Russian and Finnish research project, EU Marie Curie Actions People, called *Wooden Architecture, Traditional Karelian Timber Architecture and Landscape*. However, this article concentrates on controversies in culture heritage work. My question setting in this article is following: *What are the controversies in the level of house, village and landscape when repairing an old house or building new one with new materials and solutions?* When external-internal viewpoint cause conflict, if local heritage is being intervened by outsiders such as external experts, then questions behind analysis are: *How to protect or preserve cultural heritage sites as living culture? How to reconcile the ongoing change and the protection and preservation work in dialog with the local residents?*

The main emphasis of the case studies in this article is on opening the discussion of the controversial use of new materials through the case study of the *Home of Karelian Language* which was newly built and located in the Vedlozero communal centre. The former case studies of the smoke sauna and Vokulov's house are forming a point of reference dealing with controversial situations between the experts and the locals in the Olonets Karelian villages. In the forthcoming articles I will concentrate on the more thorough analysis of changes of the use of new material in the Olonets Karelian villages through the documented material gathered during last three years in the Italian, Russian and Finnish research project, EU Marie Curie Actions People, *Wooden Architecture, Traditional Karelian Timber Architecture and Landscape*.

When studying the changes in Karelian villages, we can find a lot of interesting visual materials and interviews in Finnish archives. Collection of visual material retained in Finnish archives regarding Karelian architectural heritage is rich and not thoroughly studied or capitalized. The Finnish archives of wartime photos has a great many images of the Olonets Karelian villages from 1941-1944s. These photos were taken by photographers of the propaganda troops (so called TK-photos) operating under the Finnish General Headquarters. There exists 37 TK-photos from Kinerma (SA -kuva 2014). Many photographs of the Kinerma Village and other traditional Karelian villages are also available in photo archives of the Finnish National Board of Antiquities (NBA) (NBA 2014). In this article the focus is not in the comparisons between old and new, but in the material controversies which are visible today. Anyway, I have used images obtained from archives in analyzing the changes of the Karelian villages. They help to understand the characteristic historic features of the villagescape and provide guidelines for adapting new developments in historic settings. Photos and drawings are also used as comparative material for laser-scanned new documentation.

The key concept in this article is *controversy*, where the concepts *heritage*, *authenticity* and *dissonance* define and give context to it. The concept *dissonance* is affiliated to the term *controversy*, which I prefer use in this article. According to Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) *dissonance* refers to discordance or lack of agreement and consistency as to meaning of heritage. It is more theoretical concept and refers to the political controversies between locals and outsiders, owners and uses of heritage. I have studied these contents in my former case studies. The concept of *heritage* is related in contemporary cultural and economic geography as that part of the past which we select in the past for contemporary purposes, the ways in which contemporary society uses the past as a social, political or economic resource. Heritage is capable of being interpreted differently within any one culture at any one time, as well as between cultures through time. (Graham et al. 2000.) Heritage fulfils often several inherently opposing uses and carries conflicting meanings simultaneously. It is worth stating that most of heritage, most of the time, and for most people is harmoniously experienced, non-dissonant and essential enrichment of their lives (Graham et al. 2000 pp. 24-26). In international preservation of the building heritage, the definition of *authenticity* has evolved from emphasizing genuineness and originality toward accepting the layers of history and taking cultural diversity into consideration. The definition of authenticity is undergoing a process of change towards communication and socio-culturally sustainable activity. UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) are the most well know examples of preserving cultural heritage fulfilling the stated

criteria of authenticity and Outstanding Universal Value (Jokilehto 2008). The selection and the preservation of the sites are highly expert-intensive and externally lead processes that are often lacking dialog with the local residents. The chosen sites become world famous tourist destinations, often places of mass tourism where the local residents as employees of the tourist destination may start to perform the authentic way of living that in fact turns to be staged and non-authentic (McCannel 1976; Timothy and Boyd 2003, 237). In the document of 16<sup>th</sup> ICOMOS General Assembly, The Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place (Quebec Declaration 2008), was adopted the principles and recommendations to preserve the spirit of place through the safeguarding of tangible, such as buildings and material issues, and intangible heritage, such as local habits, skills and traditions, which are regarded as an innovative and efficient manner to ensure sustainable and social development through the world. According to the Quebec declaration, the spirit of place is a process, continuously reconstructed, in response to the needs of change and continuity of communities and communication is the best tool for keeping the spirit of place alive. (Niskasaari 2009.) When local culture is being intervened by outsiders, for instance external experts, *dissonances* may occur. In this article I concentrate on the wooden architecture and the use of new materials with practical question setting, and for that reason I prefer to use the more practice-oriented concept or term *controversy*.

## Tracing the Reasons for Controversies

### Case Study: The Home of Karelian Language

In the earlier case studies *Renovation of the smoke sauna of the Kuznetsov's house* and *Renovation of the Vokulov's house as the centre of the Livvik culture* the controversies between the experts and the locals have been dealing with both the understanding of each other's preferences and practices and the use of new materials. The sauna of the Kuznetsov's house was in everyday use, but because its' traditional floor plan and archaic roof structure Petrozavodsk State University had been suggesting the sauna to be protected as a monument of building art and the exterior to be preserved (Orfinski et al. 1991). Old wood material was protected, damages were repaired and only the most decayed logs were changed. The foundation of the old sauna was changed by raising the bottom logs clearly off the ground to protect them from decaying and the roof was made of grooved board which was traditional roofing solution, though not any more used in Karelian villages. There was no disagreement between the experts and the locals during the process of implementing these changes. However, next time visiting the Kinerma village the old sauna grooved board roof was changed to synthetic profiled minerit sheets, because the roof was leaking. The villagers had spaded sand to cover the bottom log layers, because the thought that warmth escaped. In the designers' negotiations, the inhabitants of Kinnermäki and local carpenters were silent parties. Local activity came out when something new was constructed. In the case of *The Home of the Karelian Languages* (HKL) the controversies were material, mainly because it was a new building. Today, in Karelian villages a lot of new building materials and solutions are available. Anyway, HKL was built rather practical way, the solutions were simple, timber framed structure covered with wooden boards and other materials were few. Expenditure issues were important in HKL, but they did not rule over the attitude to value the local heritage. The chair of the association of HKL was representing the voice of the local activists and she was aware of the importance of to try to work in a carefully controlled manner and build something suitable for this cultural heritage site.

### **Controversies in the project *The Home of Karelian Language***

The project Home of Karelian Language (HKL, in Finnish language Karjalan kielen kodi, KKK) started at Pryazha district of the Republic of Karelia on year 2012 by the Association HKL, which main mission is to protect and to evolve Karelian language. The practical aim is to arrange all kinds of course activities starting from cooking and baking to courses dealing with everyday computing or indoor sports where only Karelian language is spoken. The Municipality of Pryazha district donated to the Association HKL for these activities a wooden building from the year 1948 and its site located at the municipal center of Vedlozero, that used to be the municipal office building and last it was

functioning as a kindergarten. The building would have been suitable at its size and location in the centre on a top of a hill near by the lake was fine, but it has been without use for long time and because of the water damages it was in fairly poor condition. The first idea was to preserve the building and renovate it for the use of the Home of Karelian Language. But the foundation of the building was done out of natural shape stones which had started to unravel. The structure of the bearing outer walls turned out to be weak, because they were piled out of logs without proper corner joints and the wooden material was in many places damaged because of the leaking roof. The renovation of this size would have been too much to be done by volunteers and probably there were also lack of skills and eagerness for preservation.

The bearing structure was revealed behind the wall material both inside and outside by the activists of the Association of Home of Karelian Language (HKL). All the usable material and pieces of structure were reclaimed and stored to a barn just built for that purpose. And because of the poor condition of the structure together with the weak base, the Association of HKL decided on the spring 2013 to tear down the whole building and rebuilt the similar size and shape building to the same site and place where were the old building was. The new building was to be built as a timber framed structure with separate insulation covered with wooden boards for financial reasons, because the reclaimed, still usable logs of the outer walls were just enough for the new structural frame. Though the new structural solution was typical in Finland, but also fitted better to the more contemporary municipality centre of Vedlozero that natural shape log house and the design commission of the new building was given to Russian architects. The architects of the Friends of Kinerma Association were the consulting experts commenting the sketches of Russian architects. In the first sketches the spaces were fairly low and divided into separate rooms and the staircase to the upper floor was located to the hallway. The reason why Finnish architects ended up proposing that the staircase would be located to the semi-warm veranda was to keep the main spaces as spacious as possible and to keep the two floors as separate fire compartments. The activities of the building required fairly high and flexible spaces that could be used for bigger gatherings or divide into smaller units. The other reason was the chosen heating solution, heating the fireplaces with wood that needed a lot of oxygen and good ventilation. The mediator between the Russian and Finnish architects interactive discussion was the chair of the Association of HKL and also an active member of the Friends of Kinerma Association since its beginning. She was not only messenger or Russian-language interpreter, but she represented the local Karelian activists will according to her own judgment and she understood the professional attitudes of Finnish and Russian architects and the cultural differences. Under her direction with diplomacy disagreements did not escalate into a matter of prestige. Russian architects were eager to propose spatial plan consisting of fairly small spaces, new challenging solutions such as roof windows and controversial materials such as "shingle" bitumen roof and facade surface material was supposed to be log-paneling and vertical boarding. According to Olga Gokkoeva the aim of Finnish architects, in this case, was on more practical and in long run more lasting solutions to be realized with local resources instead of experimental solutions.

In the design and building project of The Home of Karelian Language (HKL) there was a continuous dialogue between architects and engineer, where Olga Gokkoeva, the chair of the Association of HKL was representing the voice of the local activists. From the beginning of the project occurred challenges that could be applicable also for other similar design and building projects at neighboring villages and municipalities. For example high quality and lasting wooden frame windows and doors were not available on market, but only plastic or metal frame windows. The other example is that the glulam material is not used in small scale building such as in window or door frames, even it would be useful in making lasting building components. And hardware stores offer for layman builders as a roof material bright coloured tile roof imitations made out of profiled metal plates, or the other optional material offered is the small-piece roofing felt. The suitable building material to be adapted to existing Karelian villages or municipalities should be simple and lasting material that would be white, gray or black of their colour in addition to the subtle effect colours. The

bigger wholesale hardware stores have these kinds of materials available for professional use, but they are not available for layman in local smaller retail hardware stores. The insulated wooden frame structure does not belong to the local building tradition in Karelia, but the wall structure is often been done out of bricks using brickwork or out of logs just piling up them on top of each other without any proper corner joints like in the traditional log houses. Often the knowledge and skills of making the concrete foundation for building is varying and for that reason the result is often not lasting. Fortunately, because the builders of the Home of Karelian Language were a group of skilled carpenters and the leader of this group was engineer of his original profession, so he had the skills to make the needed calculations for the wooden structures. Further, also Finnish architects were evaluating the design solution based on their practical experience and suggested changes or additional structures if needed.

After completing the structure of the building the discussion of material controversies moved on to the surface material. In the building permission drawings the roof material was defined "shingle" bitumen roof, the facade surface material was supposed to be log-paneling and upper parts of the outer walls vertical boarding. In the building permission phase the interactive communication process between Finnish and Russian architects did not exist because of the tight schedule and for the reason that Olga Gokkoeva had the knowledge that in Russia the implementation phase fairly big changes may occur and because the control in construction site is not very strict. In the process of tendering the contractors for wooden facade of the building was discovered that high quality or even proper timber was not available in the local sawmill at Vedlozero, but it was to be ordered from Moscow. The local retail hardware stores supply metal roofing sheets, closely resembling the wave-profiled minerit plates, that has been widely used in Karelian villages since the wooden roofing material were abandoned. The Finnish architects were more favorable for simple and more clear solutions that Russian architects in their final design. Finnish architects suggested for facades vertical boarding with lathing and grooved gray metal roofing sheets. The chair of the Association and Finnish architects have proposed in the spirit of the old gray wooden Karelian villages that the vertical boarding with lathing will remain unpainted and will naturally in time being turn gray or will be painted gray if it looks like the boarding needs later a protective layer. Though, the colourful materials are very popular in contemporary Russian building habit and this phenomenon is present all over in Karelia, but in the Vedlozero case the bright colours would emphasize too much the HKL building in this small scale municipality centre surrounded by the one family houses. In the Karelian villages and municipalities the buildings are being renovated and extended by using the material easily available and with the existing skills. The gray figure of the Home of the Karelian Languages on the top of a little hill in the Vedlozero municipality centre has raised a lot of discussion among the citizens. It seems like the gray coloured roof is starting to be accepted, because the locals have been interested in of the availability of the gray material. The still bright wood coloured unpainted facades of the building are waiting for the gray patina and the debate to begin. The various construction phases of the Home of Karelian Languages described above have been published on the Internet website (<http://www.karjalankielenkodi.net>) through which the experiences of the project and the gained knowledge of it will be widely spread.

At the moment the contradictory use of building material is uncontrolled on Karelian villages and municipality centres. The various skills needed for building processes and the practical knowledge of material management are lacking, since tradition to them have been broken. The traditional habit of constructing the houses out of natural shape round logs is considered only seldom. In contemporary municipality centres that would be oddity representing the past. Though, in open-air museums and in still existing traditional villages preserved as living communities, like in the village of Kinerma, natural shape round log buildings, even big complex log structures are being renovated and restored. In Kinerma, in addition of shoeing the log houses and together with other reparations, a one-family house and couple saunas have been built out of

natural shape round logs. Usually that is not possible for ordinary layman living in villages and municipality centres. The Russian state owns all the woods and there do not exist any private woods were to cut the needed building material. For that reason availability of natural shape round log -material is poor, the price of the material is fairly high for the locals and/or the carpenter skills are rare or totally lacking. Finally the main emphasis on choosing the building material is the cost of it.

One could ask, why the Home of Karelian Languages was not made out of the traditional natural shape round logs, instead of testing contemporary timber frame building method, of which does not exist any tradition. One justification could be the adaptability, because at the municipality centre of Vedlozero, in the surroundings of the HKL building, the houses are contemporary mainly dating back to 1950's and consequently the nearby environment is lacking the traditional gray log houses. The other reason is that even the enthusiasm among few local carpenters has been aroused for constructing buildings of this size out of natural round shape logs there is still lack of suitable skills. Predominantly, the HKL-building is not a regular residential building, but fairly big public building, a place for public gatherings, arranging courses and cultural events, a space where the contemporary technical building service is needed. The contemporary building character reflects its' function, since the aim is not to go back to the past, but look forward and create the future based on the Karelian language and cultural heritage. The question is about cherishing and elaborating the living culture, where the aim is not "to sing and dance the culture to the grave wearing the traditional national costumes" as Martti Penttonen, the HKL activist has crystallized the idea. And finally, the aim in the future, when the activities fully start, is to establish renovation courses where locals could learn traditional and contemporary building technics, in Karelian language of course.

## **Understanding the Ground for Controversies**

The question could be stated that is the World Heritage Status (WHS) the best way of protecting or preserving cultural heritage sites as living culture? The knowledge gained in the Kinnerma cultural heritage work indicates that it is worth aiming protection or preservation approved also by the locals, despite tangible and intangible controversies, because it seems to assure the authentic living to continue in the cultural heritage site.

Right from the start there were challenges, even problems in the Home of Karelian Language project that could easily be generalized to the contemporary way of building in Karelian villages and municipality centres. The contemporary building methods cause contradictory situations for everyday layman builders, since professional knowledge, designing skills or proper building materials are not available. The new materials or novel solutions enter to the market before testing carefully their feasibility and durability in practice. There is a growing need in Russia for communicative experts in the field of building and construction, need for more efficient regulatory supervision and updating the current regulations of contemporary requirements. Though, the case studies demonstrate the importance of understanding the meaning of material contradictions in the process of expert-local stakeholder-dialogue. Through genuine dialogue it is possible to achieve mutual understanding, when openly confronting the controversies of cultural heritage. The contradictions of the cultural heritage work, the polyphonic dialogue, meaning the various premises and viewpoints of the stakeholders involved, ought to be seen as resource that should not be repressed by the expert authorities. The new openings may emerge through sincere dialogue, which is a sign of a living culture. In the process of building it is easy for local stakeholders to take a stand, since the outcome is concrete and visible. Regardless of the achieved mutual understanding between the experts and local stakeholders, in practice the outcome of a building process, the actual artifact, the building and how it appears is highly dependent of the materials available.



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