
Cultural Heritage Built through Stories

Karhunen, Eeva 2014. Porin Kuudennen osan tarinoista rakennettu kulttuuriperintö. (English Summary: Narrating Cultural Heritage in the Sixth District of Pori.) *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis C* 379. Turku: Turun yliopisto. 302 pp. Diss III. ISBN 978-951-29-5697-5 (print). ISBN 978-951-29-5698-2 (electronic). ISSN 0082-6995. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-29-5698-2>.

Home and hometown are concepts that bring forth a great deal of meaning and emotions for each and every one of us. Homes are places for engaging in daily life and activities. Hometowns are often viewed sentimentally in a world where people migrate more now than ever before. Therefore, it is important to stop and think more closely about the concepts and what they mean to us. With time and age, we seem to appreciate both

home and hometown more and more as part of our identity. Nostalgia for times gone by and anticipation of what the future may bring are also present in Eeva Karhunen's study of the cultural heritage constructed through stories of the Sixth District in the Finnish town of Pori (Porin Kuudennen osan tarinoista rakennettu kulttuuriperintö).

Karhunen's book is a good read for anyone interested in questions concerning home and hometown. In this book, which is also Karhunen's doctoral dissertation, attention is given to the interaction between officials and inhabitants in the process of urban planning. The study is anchored in the Sixth District in the town of Pori. The district is one of the largest nineteenth-century wooden house districts in Finland and has been classified as one of Finland's most significant cultural sites due to how well the homes have been preserved.

In 2012, 405 buildings in the Sixth District were listed as protected objects. This meant that the buildings were guaranteed preservation for future generations via planning. Meanwhile, Karhunen's study shows that the preservation of the district was done from very different perspectives. The officials dealing with the preservation efforts based their appreciation of the district on explicit, official knowledge. The inhabitants, on the other hand, value their neighbourhood based on immaterial values such as the sense of community spirit and the intangible heritage transferred from generation to generation. The inhabitant's experiences are encapsulated by the concepts of home and hometown, which are built around and reflect collective stories about the buildings. As Karhunen puts it, this interpretation both challenges and completes the knowledge of the officials.

Karhunen's research material consists of official documents, reports and historical data as well as the inhabitants' personal experiences and memories of the Sixth District. The variety of research material enables the researcher to study the district from multiple perspectives, giving the study a solid context and a platform for scientific discussion. This dissertation not only sheds light on the process of giving meaning and value to

an old wooden town environment. It also raises questions about who gets to decide what is valuable in an old wooden house environment and what is not. It also sheds light on questions of why homes and hometowns are meaningful and valuable for us and in what way.

The content of the book is divided into seven main chapters, including a fairly long introduction, contextual chapters with historical data, theoretical and methodological chapters, and an analysis of the research questions. At the end, Karhunen briefly summarises the findings and outcomes of her study and topic of research.

Karhunen's study highlights the complexity of the legislation and the different types of enactments that help ensure the preservation of old environments. Karhunen describes the legislation policy concerning the old town districts and shows how intertwined the legislation and different kinds of practices around them can be. She demonstrates that the web of actors playing a role in the preservation is vast and that the uses of the old urban sites are numerous. She also discusses the role and importance of the plans, projects and people involved in these preservation processes.

The chapters are impressive in their scope. They offer readers a thorough insight into the problems and questions concerning the preservation of old environments. I was impressed to learn how many people and factors are involved in the processes. Still, in the end, old environments like the Sixth District in Pori are in practice in the hands of the inhabitants, who add their own flavour and twist to the dilemma of preservation — how to preserve and, most of all, why.

I was also impressed by the theoretical discussions and applications to the inhabitants' experiences and contextual knowledge about the Sixth District. Karhunen applies a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach to her material of the stories told by inhabitants and to the wider connections attached to the environment. The study emphasises the birth, inheritance and evolution of local cultural heritage. It also includes interesting discussions about the key concepts, such as cultural heritage, preservation, oral history, memory and locality as well as hermeneutics and

phenomenology. These concepts are well worth continuous discussion and re-evaluation at a time when their content and importance are undergoing a transformation.

The concepts are also in focus in the negotiations between the different parties involved in the preservation processes as well as in the current use of the Sixth District. From page 139 onwards, Karhunen explains and discusses the intense interaction between the different actors during the years when the preservation plan came about. No one wanted to preserve old buildings during the modernisation period in the 1950s and 1960s, but later on environments with old building stock became more and more important for both town inhabitants and the decision makers. This process of becoming cultural heritage is discussed as a political and socioeconomic issue, but also as a personal and private issue dealing with roots and personal heritage.

One of the important questions discussed in the study is the question of why it is important to preserve old environments. This discussion takes place from page 142 onwards, providing the dissertation with a valuable addition. The stories shared by the old and contemporary inhabitants of the Sixth District are presented fairly late in the dissertation. I would have preferred to hear their voices much earlier in contrast to the official discussion. At the same, I understand the chronological layout of the content in the book. Nevertheless, the personal insights and memories attached to the Sixth district give a broader and more complete background to the individual voices presented and analysed from page 173 onwards.

The 50 pages dealing with the memories and experiences of the inhabitants are the most interesting part of the dissertation from both an ethnological and personal standpoint. They give a valuable addition to the view of the experts and to the general discussion of life in the neighbourhood. With the help of personal viewpoints and memories, we are given the chance to dig deeper into the life of the inhabitants of the Sixth District. The whole environment is filled with different kinds of stories, revealing the back stage of the environment for those of us used to only seeing the front stage.

Therefore, the study conducted by Eeva Karhunen is a welcome and important addition to ethnological studies done in the past decades. Karhunen's study reflects the interest that ethnologists and cultural scientists have in trends, processes of change and continuity in society and among individuals. It is timely and part of an ongoing discussion in which old environments are compared to new environments and the values that play a role in our actions regarding such environments are shifting. Therefore, an English summary of the study and its outcomes would have been necessary and would have opened up the questions, which are a global topic of discussion, to a larger audience.

Karhunen's study not only gives new insights into the Sixth District and its existence in Pori, but broadens our understanding of a built environment with multiple meanings and connotations in relation to immaterial and material values.

Sanna Lillbroända-Annala