

Communicating cultural heritage expertise effectively in the media

Aura Kivilaakso 2017. Suojelevat sanat. Puu-Käpylän kaavoituskiista esimerkkinä vaikuttavasta kulttuuriympäristön asiantuntijaviestinnästä. (English Summary: Protective Words. The Wooden Käpylä Planning Dispute as an Example of Influential Expert Communications Concerning Cultural Environment.) *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis* 435. Turku: Turun yliopisto. 285 pp. Diss. ISBN 978-951-29-6788-9 (print). ISBN 978-951-29-6789-6 (pdf). ISSN 0082-6995 (print). ISSN 2343-3205 (pdf).

The Wooden Käpylä garden suburb was built in the 1920s to ease up a housing shortage, from which the city of Helsinki had been suffering already from the beginning of the century. It was one of the last residential areas in Finland built entirely of wood because from the beginning of the 1930s functionalist ideals gradually replaced the more traditional wooden constructions in urban areas. The city administrators wanted the Käpylä area to adhere to a coherent form, so the planning task was given to a single architect, who planned both the buildings and their disposition in the landscape. As a result, Wooden Käpylä, the first regional building site in Finland, turned out as a vivid and varied but still a uniform neighbourhood with small gardens in the quarters standing out as core elements of the whole plan.

In her doctoral thesis, Aura Kivilaakso examines the public debate which took place in the 1960s when a redevelopment plan for new housing was drawn up for Wooden Käpylä. It was made primarily for economic reasons reflecting the new modernistic ideals becoming dominant in urban planning at the time. Following the publication of the new plan, a number of Käpylä citizens as well as architects and cultural environment experts stood up against the new plan and campaigned for preserving the area in its existing form. As a result of the debate, which went on for about ten years, Wooden Käpylä's original garden city plan and wooden buildings were protected by a legally binding conservation plan in 1971. It was also the very first time in Finland when a new plan

was withdrawn based on strong resistance from a popular movement defending a local built environment and communal values.

Using the Wooden Käpylä debate as an example of efficient expert communication with the general public, Kivilaakso focuses her study on the image of the built heritage and issues related to the conservation and values of cultural environments as they were argued and displayed in the media at the time. The underlying theoretical approach for the whole study and its research design comes from the field of critical heritage studies and relates particularly to the authorized heritage discourse introduced by Laurajane Smith. Kivilaakso claims that the authorized heritage discourse, while taking a critical stance towards institutionalized cultural heritage agents, does not recognize the importance of an experts' perspective, which may weaken the understanding of cultural heritage issues and values for example in the context of urban planning. This leads to another starting point that has directed the study, namely its focus especially on the cultural heritage evaluation process preceding the actual decision-making.

There are two primary research questions introduced in the beginning, which accordingly divide the thesis into two parts. Firstly, Kivilaakso poses a question on the main defining characteristics when cultural heritage issues and values are discussed in public. The second question, asking what today's cultural heritage experts can learn from the Wooden Käpylä case, follows from the analysis of the first one and steers the thesis more towards applied research while the author aims at giving recommendations for cultural heritage experts in sharing their knowledge and expertise more effectively with wider audiences. The research data consists of 154 articles from five different newspapers between 1960 and 1971. In addition, Kivilaakso has made three expert interviews in order to complement her analysis and to clarify the process leading to the conservation decision at the end. As a symbol of modern building conservation, Wooden Käpylä has drawn a lot of attention over the years, but in her study Kivilaakso takes a fresh and innovative ap-

proach with an extensive coverage and analysis of media texts, which have not been studied before in this context.

Kivilaakso presents 'cultural heritage', 'discourse' and 'public image' as her main conceptual tools applied in the study. She understands cultural heritage particularly as an outcome of a temporally longer or shorter cultural heritage process being formed by evaluations and discussions by the people it relates to. Expertise and expert knowledge are very much in the focus throughout the whole study, even in the main title, but for some reason Kivilaakso has decided to cover them in more detail only as late as in the fourth chapter where she talks about what can be learned from the Wooden Käpylä case. Despite this decision made by the author, I see that the question of expertise conceptually and functionally relates very clearly to the other three concepts brought up in the beginning, and is used as an analytical tool while varying discourses are discussed.

Methodologically, or what Kivilaakso prefers to call a methodological orientation, she leans on Teun A. van Dijk's and Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The thesis is multidisciplinary and Kivilaakso applies a number of theoretical perspectives to her analysis, and even if many contradictions and power relations as well as power structures are brought up in the discourses under study, the author wants to emphasize her constructive approach instead of only pointing out contradictions. This is why she has named her methodological approach or orientation a constructively critical discourse analysis. Academically, Kivilaakso situates her study in the field of critical heritage studies, drawing a parallel particularly with research focusing, on the one hand, on the relation between built environment and definitions of cultural heritage, and on the other, on studies analysing the media's role in covering and communicating issues in urban planning. Even though there are many studies covering these topics, the question of what is the role of the media in working up people's views and opinions concerning cultural heritage values has not been at the centre of attention. So this is why media studies have received quite a notable role in Kivilaakso's study.

Following the introductory part, the second chapter deals with what I would call the first level analysis of the research material, presenting what was written about the Wooden Käpylä case and who were the agents taking part in the debate in question. In the third chapter, a deeper analysis of the research data is vividly presented in the form of narratives or what could probably be called themes as well, and it rewards the reader with quite a multidimensional view of how the Käpylä case proceeded over the years and how it was discussed in the media. This part offers many of the most interesting perspectives on the topic, and it would easily have provided material for more extensive analysis even in two separate chapters. The conceptual and methodological application of discourse analysis remains a bit vague, but nevertheless the author puts forward a detailed and diverse description of what went on in the media while the dispute was going on. The fourth chapter is somewhat separate from the rest of the work since it takes the examination temporally to the present time and contextually moves from the media publicity more to the professional field of cultural heritage expertise. Having worked in cultural heritage administration, Kivilaakso has identified a need for better understanding on how to communicate and discuss cultural heritage issues with those who are not professionals in the field, and this chapter obviously aims at answering that need.

In the concluding remarks, Kivilaakso states that the most important defining factors of cultural heritage in the public discourse are the temporal and social continuity and the homeliness of the Wooden Käpylä garden city. What appeared to be of great importance as well were the economic aspects and power issues related to urban planning. Based on the research data, the main values brought up in the discussions were the historical importance and aesthetics of the neighbourhood with the use of history in the construction of local identity. The study proves quite clearly that the role of the media was crucial in the process of getting a protective plan for the Wooden Käpylä area. With its extensive presentation of media texts, it brings forward a lot of new information on the process of preserving the area. In the beginning of her thesis, Aura Kivilaakso reveals the fact that

her having worked as a cultural heritage expert evidently has influenced in many ways how this study has turned out. This is obviously the case, and it would have been interesting to hear her reflections on that in the concluding part, but she leaves that for the reader to find between the lines. Overall, the author's professional experience has led her to do this research in the first place following a recognition that better communication skills

and understanding of how issues relating to cultural heritage sites and their conservation could be made better known to wider audiences. With its division into an analytical and an applied part, this work clearly implements its author's enthusiasm for 'translating' academic knowledge and expertise also for wider audiences outside the academia.

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