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## TOWARDS A GROWING INTEREST IN THE URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY MODERN TOWNS IN FINLAND

## Abstract

Research in historical periods has always had a strong tradition in Finnish archaeology. Past studies and archaeological fieldwork have mostly focused on medieval times; however, in the past 20 years, investigations of early modern towns (1520–1721 AD) have taken place more often in Finland and have changed the tide. Most archaeological excavations in Finland are currently carried out owing to infrastructure and construction projects and can therefore be regarded as contract archaeology. First, this article aims to examine and provide an overview of past research in Finnish urban archaeology focused on early modern towns. Second, current research trends are discussed with an emphasis on the possibilities offered by multidisciplinary approaches. Recent research conducted in Turku serves as a case study to illustrate these developments. The article concludes by touching upon the persistent challenges faced by research, primarily stemming from the contractual nature of most archaeological investigations.

Keywords: early modern period, towns, historical archaeology, urban archaeology

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of the archaeological record of towns in Finland is currently obtained by contract archaeology,<sup>1</sup> commonly because of construction projects. In addition, rescue or research excavations are also conducted, the latter usually by universities or funded projects such as community archaeology projects.<sup>2</sup> The Finnish law of the Antiquities Act (295/1963)<sup>3</sup> requires contract archaeological excavations to be conducted before such land use. According to the Antiquities Act, ‘Ancient monuments are protected by the law as memories of previous settlements and the history of Finland’ (295/1963)<sup>4</sup>. The law does not define the term ‘ancient’ by providing precise years. In

the case of early modern towns, the *Guide for Archaeological Cultural Heritage* (2022) suggests that protected towns were founded mainly before the 18th century. In those towns, cultural layers until the 19th century are protected in areas built up to the end of the Great Northern War (1700–1721 AD) (Guide for Archaeological Cultural Heritage 2022). Therefore, any infrastructure or construction work occurring in such towns must be preceded by archaeological work. The Finnish Heritage Agency (hereafter FHA)<sup>5</sup> is also the authority that gives permits for investigations; thus, it plays a key role in Finnish archaeology.

Following the same quality requirements stated in the *Quality instructions on archaeological fieldwork* prescribed by the FHA

is necessary for all types of excavations (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020a). Contract archaeology is based on competitive tendering, and there is a need to excavate: the site is going to be destroyed, and therefore, it must be investigated. However, a research plan and scientific research questions are necessary for all destructive investigations (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020a: 14). There have been several observations of potential problems in contract archaeology. For example, Liisa Seppänen (2018: 30–31) pointed out that choosing the responsible party based solely on the lowest offer may result in the chosen company not being the one with the most experience with the investigated site. Typically, archaeologists specialize in specific periods or methods during their studies; however, in contract archaeology, they may need to excavate any given period.

Land use and timetable problems are seen in urban archaeology and contract archaeology in general. Marianna Niukkanen (2008: 32) says that one frequent problem in urban archaeology is the rich find material and thick layers in urban contexts. Moreover, according to Marika Hyttinen, Titta Kallio-Seppä, and Teija Oikarinen (2008: 27), carrying out watching briefs is sometimes seen as a burden on timetables and costs at construction sites. In these cases, archaeology has only been perceived as slowing down construction projects, and not as an important part of the process of extending our knowledge of the human past.

Another significant point is the acquisition of as much research data as possible. *The guidelines for Quality instructions on archaeological fieldwork* by the FHA require that reports be submitted after excavations, but no further studies or publishing are necessary (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020a). According to Niukkanen (2004: 33), the aim is to inform people about excavations through newspapers, presentations, and scientific articles. On the other hand, Markus Hiekkänen (1999: 89) and Niukkanen (2008: 34) stated that few studies have been published on urban archaeology for the public.<sup>6</sup> From 2010s onwards, the number of articles has been growing; however, in many cases, excavation reports have been the only sources to familiarize oneself with the investigations. Nevertheless, if publishing results is not part of and funded along with other parts of the excavation, such as preliminary work and post-excavation work, it might not happen, even

though it would benefit both academics and wider audiences interested in archaeology.

From the European perspective, the foundations of systematic contract archaeological excavations were established in the 1992 Valletta Convention (Eur. Cult. Conv. 1992). In 2000, the Council of Europe established guidelines for urban archaeology (Council of Europe 2000). The *Code of Good Practice* guidelines have been modified to better suit Finnish circumstances by Niukkanen (2004: 44–45). There is a will to change the lack of research and publications in the field of urban archaeology; however, further actions are still needed.

This article aims to provide an overview of past archaeological research on early modern towns (Fig. 1)<sup>7</sup> and the changes seen in Finnish urban and historical archaeology. Analysis is based on data gathered from publications, doctoral theses, and information about investigations available in the FHA database. The current trends in research are discussed with an emphasis on the possibilities offered by multidisciplinary approaches. Recent urban archaeological excavations and research conducted in Turku serves as a case study to illustrate these developments. The paper concludes by touching upon the persistent challenges faced by current research, primarily stemming from the contractual nature of most archaeological excavations in Finland. It also raises questions about potential mitigation strategies for these challenges.

## THE PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN FINLAND

Practitioners of archaeological work in Finland include for example the FHA, Metsähallitus, private archaeology companies, museums, independent researchers, research groups, and universities (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020a: 11). All these practitioners can conduct archaeological fieldwork. Obtaining research permission from the FHA is conditioned by the presence of a researcher with a degree in archaeology and sufficient fieldwork experience (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020a: 11).

Niukkanen (2004: 27) stated that in Turku, the primary practitioner of archaeological fieldwork in the early 2000s was the Turku

Museum Center. This setting has changed since the beginning of the 2020s, with over 15 active practitioners in the field of commercial archaeology in Finland, and excavations have been increasingly conducted by private companies. Some towns have contracts with certain companies, which means that a specific commercial archaeological practitioner will be responsible for all archaeological investigations

in that town. Thus, archaeology is not only a scientific discipline that investigates the past, but also a capitalistic competitive business.<sup>8</sup>

A new Museum Act (314/2019) came into effect in Finland in 2020. According to the modified law, museums with national responsibility and museums with regional responsibility are replacing the old system consisting of regional museums and regional

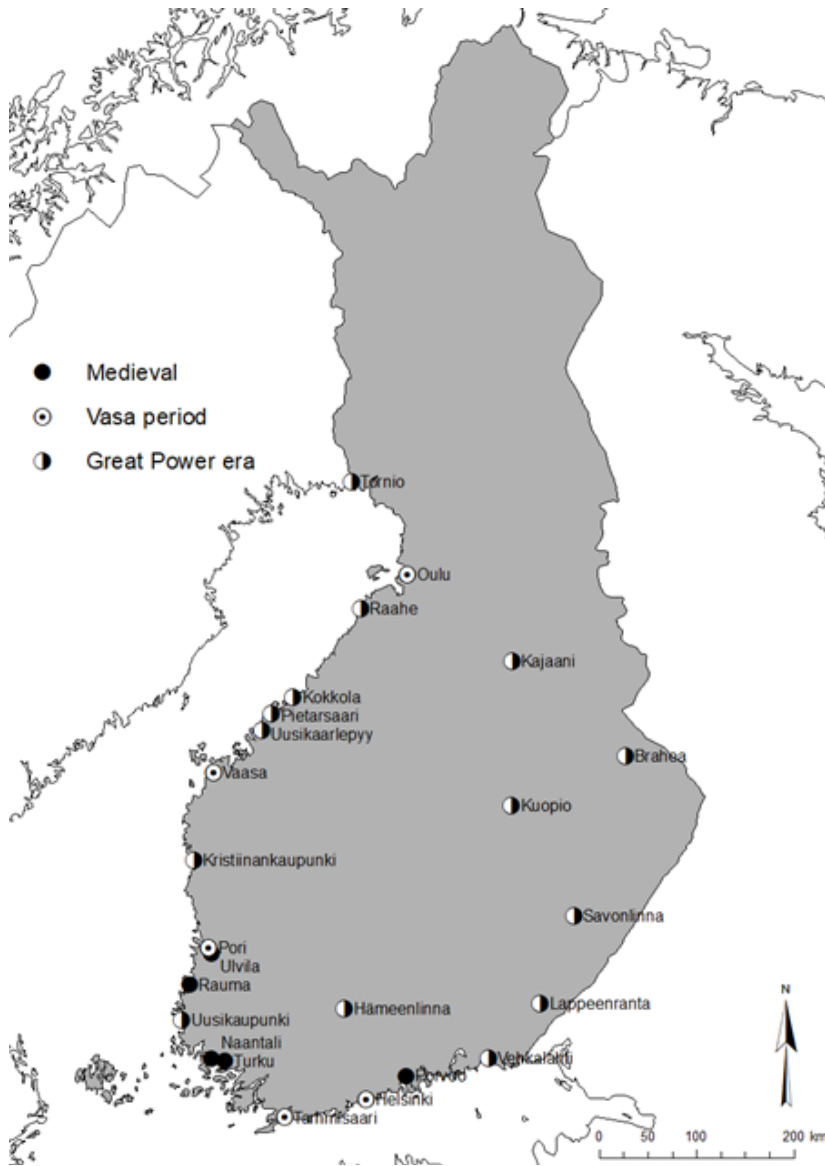


Figure 1. Finnish towns that were founded between 1150-1721 AD. Towns outside Finland's current borders are excluded from this map

art museums (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020b). Finland now has 32 museums with regional responsibility and 17 museums with national responsibility. The law outlines three tasks for regional museums that are included: promoting regional museum operations, carrying out cultural environment work, and implementing regional art museum tasks (314/2019, 7§). At the national level, the FHA continues to be the main authority. Nevertheless, according to the FHA, with new regional museums arising in the future, expertise will grow due to the new experts, and funding from the government will increase (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020b). The future will show whether this affects the urban archaeology of early modern towns.

All three universities with archaeology majors can organize teaching excavations and survey courses. These are not typically conducted in urban areas, although it is possible. According to Kallio (2005: 13–14), the Department of History and the Archaeological Laboratory of the University of Oulu were the responsible parties for nine different field projects in the urban area of Oulu between 1986 and 2004. There have also been research projects on urban archaeology in the discipline of archaeology at the University of Turku, even though urban excavations were not organized by the university itself (see e.g., Taavitsainen 2003: 16–18).

## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY MODERN TOWNS IN FINLAND – AN OVERVIEW

Finland has no specific professorship in historical or urban archaeology. Archaeology is only considered as a general subject. The lack of teaching in historical archaeology in Finland was noticed by Knut Drake already in 1993 (1993: 365–366). According to Drake (1993), some researchers had already worked with medieval archaeology in Finland in the early 1990s and had maintained the hope that a chair of medieval archaeology would be created. The number of archaeologists and students studying topics in historical archaeology has been steadily increasing since then, however, a dedicated chair of historical archaeology is still missing. Nonetheless, archaeology professors in Finland no longer specialize solely in prehistoric times,

as was the case until the early 1990s (Drake 1993: 365). Even without a professorship, nowadays historical archaeology has an established position in Finnish universities.

To understand the current situation and future of Finnish urban archaeology of early modern towns, this paper will first examine previous research. Because archaeology is a destructive discipline, when it produces new fieldwork data, it is important to understand the current circumstances when information from excavations is gathered. This paper first presents research on medieval towns and then research on towns from the later historical period. In total, six towns were founded in Finland during medieval times, and later, during the period up to the Great Northern War (1700–1721), this number increased. However, the archaeological activity in these towns varies significantly.

Finland was part of Sweden from the Middle Ages until 1809, after which it was part of the Russian Empire as the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland until it became independent in 1917. The six medieval towns in Finland were: Turku, Viipuri, Porvoo, Ulvila, Rauma, and Naantali. The founding of Turku has been extensively discussed by researchers and recent studies have suggested that the town was founded in the early 14th century (Savolainen et al. 2021; see also Seppänen 2019). Turku is the oldest town in Finland and was the most important town in the eastern part of the Swedish Kingdom in the medieval period.

Two urban archaeology survey projects aimed at researching the medieval and early modern towns of Finland were conducted in the 1980s and early 2000s. The first was the Swedish project ‘The Medieval Town: Implications of early urbanization for modern planning’ (in Swedish *Den tidiga urbanserigsprocessens konsekvenser för nutida planering, Medeltidsstaden*), which started in 1976 (Andersson 1976). Four medieval towns (Porvoo, Rauma, Turku, and Naantali) in Finland were included in the archaeological survey and published in the series *Keskiajan kaupungit*. The project was conducted by the FHA and the Turku Museum Center<sup>9</sup> (Hiekkanen 1981; 1983; Pihlman & Kostet 1986; Hiekkanen 1988). The Town Museum of Helsinki also carried out a survey on the Old Town of Helsinki in the late 1980s (Heikkinen 1989). In addition,

the town of Vaasa in Ostrobothnia was surveyed by the Museum of Ostrobothnia and the results were published in 1987 (Spooft 1987).

Starting in 2000, the FHA conducted surveys of towns founded before 1721 (Mökkönen 2007). In these surveys, the focus was on the parts of the towns that were older than the Great Northern War, and old maps of the towns, together with GIS, were used to identify those parts of each town (Mökkönen 2007: 52–53). Between 2008 and 2009, the FHA supplemented earlier surveys that needed to be updated, and in 2015, the town of Uusikaarlepyy was also surveyed (Kallio-Seppä 2007; Hakanpää 2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2009; Pesonen 2015). In both cases, The Medieval Town Project and later surveys of towns founded between 1617 and 1721, the aim was to clarify future land use, investigate the archaeological potential of the areas, and respond to administrative needs.

Figures 2 and 3, based on the Project Register (*hankereksteri*) database of *Kulttuuriympäristön palveluikkuna (Kyppi)* created by the FHA, show investigations of towns in Finland conducted between 1970 and 2022.<sup>10</sup> Investigations of

churches, castles, and fortress areas were not included in this study. The database is not entirely accurate because it does not contain all excavations, trial excavations, watching briefs, or surveys that have been conducted in Finland. Already in 2008, Niukkanen noticed that there were problems in using this database. However, no other database is available to access this information, and even though incomplete, it still provides an overview of archaeological activities in Finnish towns.<sup>11</sup>

As shown in Figure 2, Turku stands out in the context of archaeological activity in Finnish towns. Even so, a survey conducted in the 1980s in Turku has not yet been updated. Figure 2 shows that there have been more watching briefs and trial excavations compared to excavations in the cases of Turku, Porvoo, Rauma, and Oulu. In the three last-mentioned towns, the watching briefs clearly outnumber other investigations. According to Niukkanen (2008: 32), between 1980 and 2007, the most investigated towns were Turku, Oulu, Helsinki, Porvoo, Rauma, Kokkola, and Tornio. Figure 2 shows that this is still true, over 15 years later. Of all the early

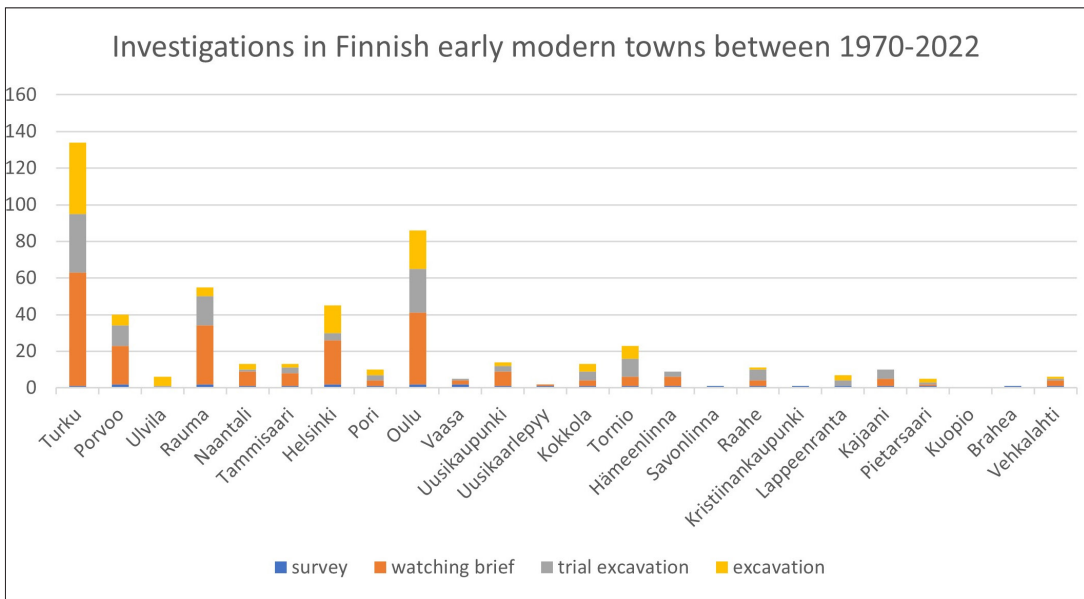


Figure 2. Archaeological activity in early modern towns, based on the FHA project register.

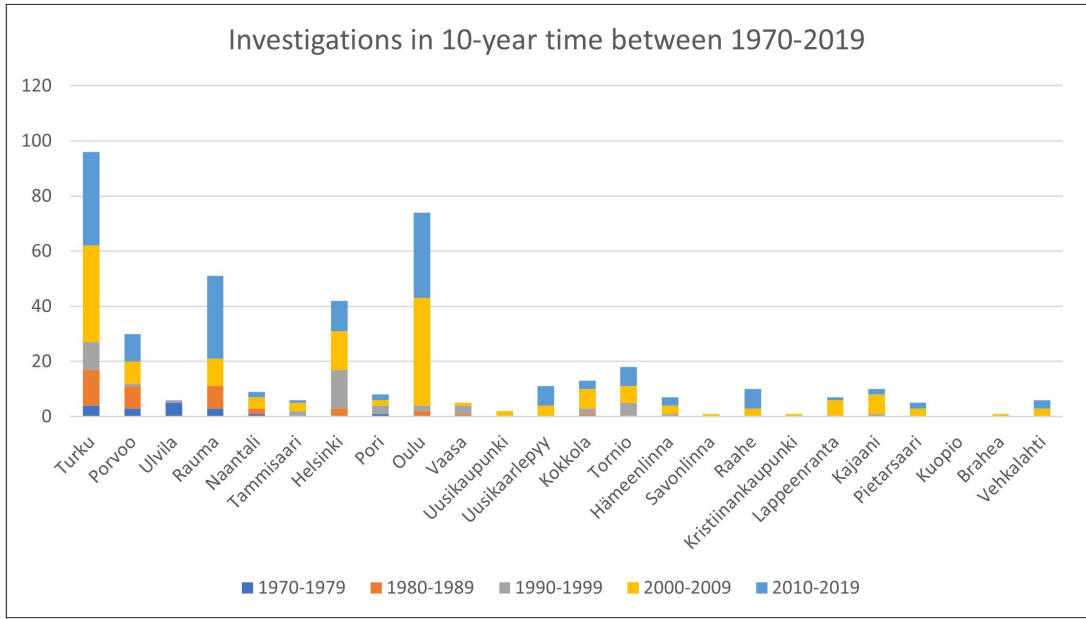


Figure 3. Archaeological activity in early modern towns, based on the FHA project register.

modern towns, Kuopio is the only one in which no archaeological investigations have been conducted. In Savonlinna, Kristiinankaupunki, and Brahea (Liekka) only surveys have been conducted.

In Figure 3, archaeological investigations, including surveys, watching briefs, trial excavations, and excavations, are counted based on the FHA project register per 10-year period from 1970 to 2019. The number of investigations has been growing since the beginning of the 2000s. However, the graph shows that in Helsinki, more investigations were conducted between 1990 and 1999 than between 2010 and 2019.

The following sections provide a summary of the overall information on excavations and research conducted in early modern towns in Finland.

*Turku*

In Turku, the earliest observations of urban archaeology and its findings were made already in the 19th century. One notable example from the middle 20th century is Niilo

Valonen’s interest in the town layers of Turku (Valonen 1958). Subsequently, the number of archaeological investigations increased, but the standards of documentation varied. The *Lake Mätäjärvi* project (in Finnish *Turun Mätäjärvi*) was the first archaeological project to be guided by predefined research questions, although it was conducted because of land use. The first trial excavations took place in 1975, and later continued with larger excavations due to land development in 1982 (Pihlman 1989: 8). The *Lake Mätäjärvi* project was the first multidisciplinary historical archaeology project in Finland, combining archaeology, history, and different analyses such as palaeolimnology, palynology, macrofossils, osteology, and <sup>14</sup>C dating (Pihlman 1989: 8–9).

The so-called Julin’s plot area in Turku has been investigated on several occasions (see e.g., Gardberg 1966; Laaksonen 1984; Kykyri 1985). In Julin’s plot excavations, the remains of the House of the Holy Spirit, the Church of the Holy Spirit, and numerous burials were found (Gardberg 1966; Kykyri 1985). Archaeological activity in the 1980s in Turku included for example excavations in the Old Great Square

(in Finnish *Suurtori*) between 1986 and 1987 and in 1989 (see e.g., Pihlman 2002; for stone buildings see also Uotila 2002; 2003).

The Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova Museum in Turku is located at the so-called Rettig Palace in the Convent Quarter of the medieval town. In 1991, archaeological research in this area became a topic of interest during the construction of a new museum. The museum's area was excavated between 1992 and 1995, and cellars of six different buildings and other building structures were found (see e.g., Sartes 2003; Jokela & Lehto-Vahtera 2012: 35). Some of these structures have been preserved in the museum. Kari Uotila has studied the architectural remains in the area using building archaeology methods and developing modern technology (Uotila 2003; 2007a; 2007b; 2009; 2011). In 2005 the area was excavated again (Uotila & Saari 2006). Moreover, historical sources such as fire insurance policies have been studied in this area (see e.g., Savolainen 2011). The Aboa Vetus Museum is still the only museum in Finland built at an archaeological site.

Another project that led to publications was the Åbo Akademi plot excavation, which took place in 1998. The site is located near the medieval cathedral in Turku. The focus was on the medieval period (see e.g., Pihlman et al. 2004; Seppänen 2012). The excavations caused debates at the time, regarding the methods and resources of urban archaeology in Finland. The project was criticized for unscientific and unethical methods, caused by a lack of funding for archaeological investigations (Haggrén & Lavento 1999; Haggrén et al. 1999a; Haggrén et al. 1999b; Pihlman 1999; Taavitsainen 2003: 16–18; Seppänen 2015b: 4–5). In 2012, Seppänen completed a doctoral thesis based on materials from Åbo Akademi plot excavations and pointed out some of the issues that the employed excavation methods may have caused for further research (Seppänen 2012: 75–82).

In 2000 and 2001, the Rettiginrinne area was excavated due to construction works (Saloranta & Seppänen 2002). Both medieval and early modern layers were investigated (Saloranta & Seppänen 2002). Between 2003 and 2005, the plot of Turku City Main Library was excavated because of a construction project (Tuovinen et al. 2004; Tuovinen et al. 2006).

The first planned urban archaeology project in which there was no pressure from construction or land use in Turku was the 'Early Phases of Turku' project (in Finnish *Varhainen Turku*), conducted between 2005 and 2007. The primary goal of the project was to determine when the town was founded (Talamo-Kemiläinen 2010: 7). In the 'Early Phases of Turku' project, public information and guided tours at the excavation site played a significant role (Majantie 2010). Moreover, schoolchildren and volunteers had the opportunity to participate in fieldwork with archaeologists (Majantie 2010: 147–148).

Part of the area of the Cathedral School (in Swedish *Katedralskolan i Åbo*), which is an upper secondary school in the Old Great Square, was excavated in 2008 (Saloranta & Sipilä 2009). Investigations in the area continued in 2014 with a building survey of the basements (Uotila et al. 2015). Trial excavations were conducted in 2017, and the gymnasium inside the school was excavated in 2018 (Uotila et al. 2018; Uotila & Vidgren 2019). The 2018 excavations followed a public information program, including a temporary pop-up museum inside the gymnasium, where archaeologists held guided tours and the public could see the actual excavated area and remains of the basements, as well as some of the finds (Uotila et al. 2018: 7).

Although most excavations in urban areas are conducted by contract archaeology, the Aboa Vetus Museum organizes small-scale seasonal community archaeological excavations in the museum yard (Aalto 2020). According to Ilari Aalto (2020), people had positive experiences when participating in these excavations between 2017 and 2019. It is more common for community excavations to occur at rural sites, but as Aalto (2020: 147) states, urban areas can offer some benefits, such as accessibility. The same interest was notable in the *Early Phases of Turku* project since volunteers needed to be selected from hundreds who were interested in participating (Majantie 2010: 148). In community archaeological excavations, attendees typically pay participation fees. These types of excavations could be used to fund further research, analysis, and publication of excavated areas.

Not all investigations conducted in Turku have been documented above; only a selection was included based on available information. While

numerous excavations were conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, the absence of written reports poses a notable challenge for research. Along with the excavations mentioned in this paper, several other archaeological fieldwork projects have been conducted.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as Figure 2 shows, watching briefs has been the most common type of investigation in Turku.

### *Other towns founded in the medieval period*

The other medieval towns of Finland have not been as extensively researched as the town of Turku (Fig 2). Niukkanen (2004: 27) stated that some of the reasons behind this include other towns having a lower level of construction activity and a lack of positions for archaeologists. Viipuri (or Vyborg) and Ulvila were not part of the *Medieval Town* project. Given that Viipuri has been part of Russia since 1944 it has been left out of this paper, because acts established by Finnish law are not recognized there, even though archaeological research in Viipuri has notable reference material when investigating medieval and early modern town life in Finland (about the survey of Viipuri see Suhonen 2005; urban archaeology of Viipuri see Saksa et al. 2002; Belsky et al. 2003; Saksa 2009). Ulvila lost its town status to Pori in the 1550s, but the medieval town area has been located and partly excavated (Pihlman 1984).

The remaining medieval towns, Porvoo, Rauma, and Naantali, were excavated only through contract archaeology. In the early 2000s, along with contract archaeological excavations in Naantali, a larger investigation into the history and archaeology of the town was published in a volume (Uotila et al. 2003). The focus of this study was on the medieval Bridgettines Monastery, but it also included the development of the town (Uotila et al. 2003). In 1966, the market square in Rauma was excavated, and the next larger excavations in Rauma were conducted in Kalatori in 2009 and 2010 (Kärki & Koivunen 1966; Koivisto 2010; 2011). Other archaeological investigations, mainly trial excavations and watching briefs, as well as excavations in 2017, have been conducted in the Old Town of Rauma (see e.g., Uotila & Lehto 2017). In Porvoo, only small parts of the medieval town have been

excavated. In 2019, the area next to the town hall in Porvoo was excavated, and layers dating back to at least 1600–1800 were identified based on the find materials (Koskinen 2019).

### *Helsinki*

Finland's current capital, Helsinki, was founded by King Gustav Vasa in 1550 in the Old Town of Helsinki (in Finnish *Vanhakaupunki*). However, in 1640, it was transferred to its current location, closer to the sea, in current Vironniemi. The reason for founding the new town was that, based on its location, it could compete for trade with the town of Tallinn. Already in 1930–1931, Nils Cleve carried out excavations in which Helsinki's first church was discovered (Heikkinen 1994a: 35-51). The district of the Old Town of Helsinki was excavated several times between 1989 and 1993 as part of the Helsinki City Museum project, conducted between 1987 and 1996 (Kallio et al. 1994). This project aimed to study the origin and development of the town of Helsinki (Heikkinen 1994b: 121). In the late 1990s, the Old Town of Helsinki was excavated once again. Investigations in Annala began with a watching brief in 1996 and continued in 1997 (Heikkinen 2002a). In 1999, another excavation was conducted in Kellomäki (Heikkinen 2002b). Although these excavations resulted in few publications, they were the first large multidisciplinary excavations to research a town founded during the Vasa period.

In Vironniemi Helsinki, built in 1640, excavations were first conducted in the Government Palace (in Finnish *Valtioneuvoston linna*) starting in 1993. In 1999, the FHA excavated in Snellmanninkatu 4–6 (Niukkanen 2002: 13). The publication of the Snellmanninkatu excavations contains information about excavated layers, finds, macrofossiles, osteological analysis, and dendrochronological results (Niukkanen 2002). Moreover, written sources were used to identify the residents of the excavated plots (Niukkanen 2002). The excavation was performed for construction purposes, but the publication still included more scientific analyses and information about excavated sites than the mandatory excavation reports.



In the 2010s, several contract archaeological excavations and watching briefs were conducted in Helsinki. Senaatintori square was excavated in 2012 and again in 2020–2021 owing to construction work. The square is located near the Sederholm house, which is currently the oldest stone building in Helsinki, dating back to 1757. (Hämäläinen 2013; Lehto 2021; 2022.) Two smaller excavations conducted recently were the Mariankatu excavation inside the second oldest stone building in Helsinki and investigations at Hallituskatu 11 (Lagerstedt & Roiha 2020; Koskinen 2021).<sup>13</sup>

### *Oulu and Tornio*

Other towns founded in the early modern period and where archaeological research projects have taken place include Oulu and Tornio in Northern Finland. Oulu was founded in 1605 and Tornio 16 years later. Investigations in these towns have been carried out by contract archaeology.

During 1986–1987, the urban excavations in NMKY's plot in Oulu were the largest urban archaeological excavations in Finland at the time (Mäkivuoti 2005: 85). They marked a changing point in the urban archaeology of Oulu, since before them, archaeological data from the town was minor (Mäkivuoti 2005: 86). Another area that has been investigated several times in Oulu is the Oulu Lyseo Upper Secondary School (see e.g., Mikkola 2015; 2017; Helamaa 2016; 2020; 2022a; Helamaa & Tokoi 2020; Paukkonen & Uotila 2022).

Three doctoral theses have been written about the town of Oulu. In the 2010s, Kallio-Seppä's study about the development of public space in early modern Oulu combined archaeological data and contemporary sources, especially cartographic data from the 17th century to the early 19th century (Kallio-Seppä 2013). Tiina Kuokkanen (2016) studied findings from excavations in Oulu together with probate inventories, focusing on small clothing-related items from the early modern period. The latest historical archaeological doctoral thesis on the town was Hyttinen's (2021) research on the Pikisaari pitch mill.

Archaeological research on the town of Tornio has been at the vanguard in Finland.

Four doctoral theses have been written on the topics of urban archaeology, the development of town, and archaeological materials, such as animal bones and macrofossils (Ylimaunu 2007; Puputti 2010; Nurmi 2011; Tranberg 2018). In Tornio, urban archaeology is similar to early modern town excavations elsewhere in Finland and consists of small coincidental separately excavated areas (Ylimaunu 2007: 17; for recent excavations in Tornio see e.g., Helamaa 2022b). Timo Ylimaunu's investigation of Tornio is an example of research that takes advantage of material gathered from contract archaeology. This was the first doctoral thesis to research Finland's early modern period.

Moreover, research has focused on material culture (see e.g., Herva & Nurmi 2009) and historical maps (Herva & Ylimaunu 2010). Anthropological archaeology approaches in research on the town of Tornio have also shown multidisciplinary possibilities for historical archaeology (Herva & Ylimaunu 2009; Herva 2010).

### *From medieval to early modern era*

The above chapter presented the main archaeological research on early modern towns in Finland. However, many excavations and watching briefs other than those mentioned here have been conducted (see Fig. 2 and 3). The connection between most of these past archaeological projects is that the focus has been more on the medieval period than on the early modern parts of towns if the towns were founded during medieval times. As previously stated, this has been a common trend in many projects in Finnish urban archaeology. Even if excavated areas may have had layers from the early modern era, these observations were not systematically published along with the analysis of the medieval materials from the site. Niukkanen (2008: 31–32) stated that statistics on urban archaeology in Finland show an increase in excavations in post-medieval towns, however, the activity in medieval towns was still more notable. Georg Haggrén (2023: 81) recently noted that the situation for the early modern period is better in newer towns since the early modern layers are the oldest layers in them.

## CURRENT TRENDS IN THE URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY OF FINNISH EARLY MODERN TOWNS

In the 1970s, Finland followed Sweden's model of conducting extensive survey projects in medieval towns. Subsequently, the FHA expanded these surveys. Interest in the archaeology of the early modern period in Finland seems to have been less developed than that of medieval archaeology. Archaeology has been seen only as a prehistoric research field for a long time, and even medieval archaeology has not been taken for granted. In the beginning, historical archaeology mainly focused on structures, buildings, and remains of buildings, especially castles, and churches (see e.g., Hiekkänen 1999; Kykyri 1999: 33; Taavitsainen 1999; Haggrén 2011).<sup>14</sup>

Studies in Oulu and Tornio in Northern Finland have dominated this field, and in the case of Tornio, four doctoral theses were written based on this material. However, based on the FHA project register (Fig 2; Fig 3), Tornio is not even among the top five sites where archaeological projects were conducted, but the data are still used in research. These studies have demonstrated that a wide range of approaches to material culture and consumption (Herva & Ylimaunu 2006; 2012; Herva & Nurmi 2009; Nurmi 2011), buildings (Herva 2010), organic materials (Puputti 2010; Tranberg 2018), and anthropological archaeology, to research for example folk beliefs (Herva & Ylimaunu 2009), can be used in Finnish urban archaeology. In addition, research approaches to the early modern town of Tornio show that with critical research questions, it is possible to accomplish diverse outcomes even with limited resources.

Written sources are rare for the medieval period in Finland and archaeology plays a significant role when investigating medieval times. However, historical sources grew exponentially in the early modern era, and thus, early modern archaeology needs to adopt these sources as part of its research. The multidisciplinary nature of such historical archaeology was noticed years ago (see e.g., Andrén 1997; Haggrén 1998).

Collaboration between disciplines investigating the past, archaeology, and history has been a widely discussed topic in the Finnish

research community by both archaeologists and historians (see e.g., Taavitsainen 2005; Haggrén 2011; 2015c; Haggrén & Tuovinen 2011; Savolainen 2011; Seppänen 2015a; Tahkokallio 2016). In 1999, Haggrén (1999: 56, 58) noted that archaeology and history were rarely used in conjunction as sources in doctoral theses in archaeology. Since then, the situation has changed, and in 2010s and early 2020s there are already several doctoral theses and research articles done on the topic of early modern archaeology in Finland (see e.g., Herva 2010; Puputti 2010; Nurmi 2011; Herva et al. 2012; Kallio-Seppä 2013; Kuokkanen 2016; Tranberg 2018; Hyttinen 2021; see also Heinonen 2021 for medieval and early modern villages).

The main difference between history and archaeology is the source materials used. Historians primarily use documents created for administrative or personal purposes, which typically offer precise information. Conversely, in archaeology, the remains left by past human societies, such as ceramics, metal objects, or animal bones, serve as the primary sources. Unlike historical documents, these were not intentionally created to convey information but are discovered by archaeologists. These sources might provide various views of the past, and thus need to be looked at as completing each other's perspective rather than as different answers to the same question. One example is the micro-archaeological approach to studying plot owners and their occupations (see e.g., Pihlman & Savolainen 2019).

In some cases, the research questions may define the sources used.<sup>15</sup> Historians may not consider archaeological materials on their topics. As Haggrén (1998: 102–103) pointed out, they might only use artifacts as pictures in their studies because research can be based only on written sources, and the whole benefit of multidisciplinary studies is not accomplished. Archaeologists must be acquainted with historical maps of their areas already in the preliminary excavation work. In contract archaeology, maps might be the only contemporary source to use, but Finnish urban archaeology offers many examples of how other historical sources are used along with archaeology. Those sources could be, for example, probate inventories, fire insurance policies, and parish registers.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of methods, single-context recording is a matter of course in historical archaeology in the 21st century (see e.g., Kykyri 1999; Saloranta 2003; Lipponen 2005: 18–19). This was not the case before, as past excavation reports and research have shown (see e.g., Kykyri 1985: 21; Mäkivuoti 2005: 86). Stratigraphic methods have been used in Finnish archaeology since the 1980s. For example, excavations of the ‘Lake Mätäjärvi’ project in the 1980s and the Åbo Akademi plot in the 1990s were accomplished using single-context recording (Pihlman 1989: 66–73; Suhonen 1999). Utilizing the stratigraphic method instead of excavating in 5 or 10 cm layers, as is typical for prehistoric sites, demonstrates a specialization of historical archaeology and a will to improve the methods that are used.

The most common archaeological activity in urban areas is watching briefs or trial excavations (Fig. 2); thus, usually only a small part of the context is simultaneously visible. For example,

Kallio-Seppä (2013: 158–159) pointed out the challenges that might arise when variably documented data from urban areas watching briefs are used in research. Kuokkanen (2016: 42) mentions the difficulties in urban archaeological research due to the different documentation methods utilized in the Oulu town area. In the future, materials will most likely be gathered from contract-based watching briefs and excavations like so far.

#### THE TOWN OF TURKU EXCAVATIONS AS A CASE STUDY TO ILLUSTRATE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

The largest urban archaeological excavations in Finland thus far began in 2018 in the Turku Market Square (Uotila et al. 2021) (Fig. 4). The reason behind these excavations was the construction of a parking lot under the market



Figure 4. South quarter of the Turku Market Square excavation area in July 2018. Photo A. Tolvi/Muuritutkimus Oy.

square area. The total excavated area in the Turku Market Square was approximately 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> (Uotila et al. 2021).

In these excavations, it was possible to investigate over 20 town plots that had been sealed under stone paving for over 180 years in a single project, many of which were simultaneously uncovered (Uotila et al. 2021). Town plots dated from the 17th century to the year of the Great Fire of Turku in 1827. Between 2018 and 2021 over 2 800 kg and 44 600 number of finds were collected. (Uotila et al. 2021: 23, 26.)

All documentation was carried out with a total station and in a 3D format based on modern laser scanning technology (Uotila et al. 2021: 10). This made it possible to observe the situation in the field using 3D models, even though the parking lot was in use. Moreover, a single archaeological company worked on this project and oversaw all the documentation during the excavations. Following such unified practices could help solve the problem of documentation accuracies.

Turku Market Square is a relevant example because of its large potential for micro-archaeology in the early modern urban context. Haggrén (1998) already noted this in the 1990s; however, more could be done to try to connect historical written sources from the 18th and 19th centuries with archaeological materials. This excavation provides interesting case study possibilities for further research to valorize materials coming from larger excavated areas. By bringing together archaeological materials and written sources, such as probate inventories, it is possible to create a micro-historical and archaeological overview of inhabitants and their everyday lives in the early modern town area.

Turku was already the most investigated early modern town in Finland, and the excavation of the Market Square area opens new possibilities to compare different town parts. Some of the future research questions could be: Does the Market Square area inhabited in the middle of the 17th century differ from the already inhabited areas of medieval times? Is archaeological evidence about the socioeconomic status of a household from this area showing a similar standard of living as historical written sources?

## CONCLUSIONS

Overall, past excavation reports and research on early modern towns in Finland show that before the 1980s, urban archaeology and towns were neither systemically investigated nor the subject of much research. Even when historical archaeology later began to be a growing specialization, the early modern era was less investigated than the medieval period. However, investigations in the early modern era increased in the 2000s. The surveys conducted by the FHA indicated an interest in early modern towns and their development. This helped acknowledge the need to protect the archaeological record of such towns, and excavations conducted due to this law also created archaeological data for further research. The benefits were mainly administrative, but it showed the potential for such research. In the 2000s and the 2010s, several doctoral theses focused on early modern towns were written.

In early modern towns, excavations conducted without the need for construction are rare. Excluding the 1990s and the early 2000s projects in the Old Town of Helsinki, the *Early Phases of Turku* project, and later community archaeology for the Aboa Vetus Museum, there have not been any investigations other than contract-based in town areas. The areas where contract archaeology occurs are not always the most informative. In early modern urban archaeology, the excavated surface seldom covers an entire town plot; therefore, it can be difficult to obtain a clear overall view of an area or the definition of structures. Simultaneously, every excavation destroys the site, and the destructive aspects of archaeology must be considered. Data is gathered from contract archaeological activities. This creates challenges for research, because the quality of the data differs and can be difficult to combine. However, owing to modern documentation methods, it is possible to combine the data from different excavated areas. The modern technology used in documentation can provide further possibilities to analyze data after excavation is completed, but it can also create differences between practitioners because not everyone uses the same methods or equipment.

Tornio stands out regarding the urban archaeology of early modern towns. Although excavations have been conducted by contract archaeology, this is the most studied town. These studies show that research can obtain valuable data from contract archaeology. In the future, similar studies could be conducted in other towns, in which even more investigations have been conducted. Moreover, with critical research questions and different approaches to data from contract archaeological excavations, it is possible to accomplish diverse outcomes, even with these limited resources. Figures 2 and 3 show that in the 2000s, most of the material for research on urban archaeology came mostly from watching briefs; thus, the data for future research is, in many cases, going to be from small separately excavated areas.

In some cases, studies based on contract archaeology excavations of urban sites and surveys have been published. Publications about such excavations not only benefit other researchers, but also all audiences interested in archaeology. Without publications, information about excavations is available only on the FHA websites. Individual reports are not always easy to find and not all are added to the database. Other potential issues could be finishing the available funding in the middle of fieldwork or having several years of delay in post-excavation work, such as cataloguing the finds and writing reports. Unfinished post-excavation work prevents scholars and students from working with the material, even if they have the ambition and funding to do so.

Although some large archaeological survey projects have taken place in towns, generally as part of infrastructure or construction projects, such contract archaeology has not always been followed up with further analysis. The town of Turku is discussed as a recent example of what possibilities there can be, as basic information has already been published (Uotila et al. 2021), and more research is ongoing in the coming years.<sup>17</sup> As Niukkanen (2008: 33) pointed out, this reflects how research and publishing should be conducted immediately after excavations take place - or it might not happen at all. However, this raises more questions than answers. If there is no funding for further research, and practitioners in the field need to excavate site after site, when,

and even more importantly, with whose money are these analyses, research, and publishing to be conducted?

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term contract archaeology is used for the Finnish term *tilaustutkimus*. Contract archaeology means that archaeologists conduct an archaeological excavation of an archaeological site before construction starts. The term research excavation is used for the Finnish term *tutkimuskaivaus* when archaeological site is excavated only for scientific reasons and not because of land use or construction.

<sup>2</sup> Rescue excavation is used for the Finnish term *pelastuskaivaus*, which means that an archaeological site was found during construction activity and was not known beforehand. Rescue excavations in Finland are rarer than contract archaeological excavations.

<sup>3</sup> The law, which is already 60 years old since it was first decreed in 1963, is now being updated. Information on this process can be found on the website of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

<sup>4</sup> In Finnish *Kiinteät muinaisjäännökset ovat rauhoitettuja muistoina Suomen aikaisemmasta asutuksesta ja historiasta*.

<sup>5</sup> Previously known in English as the National Board of Antiquities (NBA), but in this article, the current name, the Finnish Heritage Agency (FHA), is used.

<sup>6</sup> For information and archaeology see also Majantie (2010)

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, the term early modern town is used for post-medieval towns founded in the Vasa period (1520–1617) or the Great Power era (1617–1721). The definition of medieval is not discussed in this paper, but it uses the commonly accepted time limit for the medieval period in Finland, from 1150 to 1520. Medieval towns: Turku, Ulvila (deserted), Porvoo, Viipuri (today in Russia), Rauma and Naantali. Vasa period towns: Tammissaari, Helsinki, Pori, Oulu, and Vaasa. The Great Power era towns: Uusikaupunki, Käkisalme (today in Russia), Taipale (deserted and today in Russia), Kokkola, Uuskaarlepyy, Tornio, Salmi (deserted and

today in Russia), Sortavala (today in Russia), Hämeenlinna, Savonlinna, Lappeenranta, Raahe, Kristiinankaupunki, Kajaani, Brahea/Liekka (deserted), Kuopio, Pietarsaari, Vehkalahti/Hamina and Kurkijoki (deserted and today in Russia). Between the years 1722–1800, three more towns (Loviisa, Tampere, and Kaskinen) were founded.

<sup>8</sup> Commercial archaeology and competitive tendering are topics that have been discussed in Finland since the 2010s (see e.g., Haggrén 2015a; 2015b; Arkeologiayritykset ARKY ry 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Until 2009 known as the Turku Provincial Museum, this article will use the current name of the Turku Museum Center.

<sup>10</sup> The information used in the figure was gathered from Kyyppi using the following four criteria: search criteria: theme = towns, type of research = excavation; search criteria: theme = towns, type of research = survey; search criteria: theme = towns, type of research = trial excavation; search criteria: theme = towns, type of research = watching brief.

<sup>11</sup> Some of the reports can be found on the FHA asiat page (<https://asiat.museovirasto.fi/home>).

<sup>12</sup> All excavations in the town area of Turku before 1984 are listed in the report *Medieval Towns 3: Turku* (Pihlman & Kostet 1986; see also Seppänen 2012: 8–16; Niukkanen 2004: 26–27).

<sup>13</sup> Regarding excavations in Helsinki before 2004, see Niukkanen (2004: 29).

<sup>14</sup> For example, a historian, Reinhold Hausen, oversaw archaeological excavations at Kuusisto bishop's castle in the 1880s (see Hausen 1881; 1883).

<sup>15</sup> For example, historian Panu Savolainen stated in his doctoral thesis about public and private spaces in Turku 1740–1810 that he did not use archaeological material as a reference since he was focusing mainly on later decades than archaeological research (Savolainen 2017: 32).

<sup>16</sup> For Turku, see Tuovinen 2010; Uotila et al. 2021; For Tornio, see Herva & Ylimaunu 2010; 2006; Ylimaunu 2007; Herva et al. 2012; For Oulu, see Kallio-Seppä 2013; Kuokkanen 2016; and especially fire insurance policies used together with archaeology, see Kovalainen 2005; For Lahti, see Poutiainen & Uotila 1999; Seppänen & Takala 2022.

<sup>17</sup> In Uotila et al. 2021, the possibility of following publications on the excavations in the Turku market square is mentioned. A wide range of ongoing research was presented in a seminar about research on excavations (*Uuden Torin kantilla – Kauppatorin arkeologisia tutkimuksia 2018–2022*) held in the castle of Turku on 21 January 2023.