



MUINSUSKAITSEAMET

# Darker Side of Heritage Management

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## The Brighter Side

- **Heritage is** ultimately a **cultural practice**, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of **values and understandings** (Smith 2006)
- **Heritage is** metacultural (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). As metaculture, heritage is **culture speaking about culture** and revealing the continuities and discontinuities in the social, political, economic and other **processes** and reconfigured space and time that create and represent it (Silverman 2015)
- **Heritage is the most exciting field of work!**

## Deal with it!

- History is about **change** and historical change can mean that some **heritage disappears**. Destruction and loss are not the opposite of heritage but ... **part of its very substance** (Holtorf 2006)
- [...] **not all** facets of cultural life can or should necessarily be formally **designated as heritage**. (subcultural graffiti). (Merrill 2014)
- Destruction and spolia have been common practices since Roman times (Mol et al 2018)
- In **complicated diversity** do not look for similarity, but **commitment** (Appiah 2019)
- In many ways we are dealing with **subculture** (detectorists, illegal antiquities trade, „I-know-what’s-best-for-me-contractors“)

## Our Mission

- The Mission of NHB is **to take care for the preservation and development** of more valuable part of Estonian heritage
- The number of cases in which the state protected heritage is destroyed or damaged in Estonia is **very low**.
- Still every year we see cases where either **vandalism, criminal activity or utter ignorance** put highly valued heritage at risk:
  - Illegal cross border sales of cultural objects,
  - Dark archaeology and sale of archaeological findings
  - Theft of art pieces
  - Unauthorized works on monuments

## Archaeological Finds

- By law all archaeological finds belong to the state
- Using metal detectors is legal. The Heritage Conservation Act foresees licences (search device permit) to those who have gone through **training**, the NHB shall be **notified** in advance of the use of the device and search **report** is required to be submitted after the search. Landowners permission is also a prerequisite.
- Handing over the finds is **rewarded**
- Ca 120 find collections with over 1000 items are annually delivered

## Archaeological Finds - Problems

- Not all finds reach the NHB – e-bay and osta.ee monitoring is necessary
- The notification is **not immediate**
- Sites are not preserved in an **unaltered** condition – the context is lost
- Self-taught conservation and cleaning techniques
- Organised criminal networks – people causing most damage (digging), do not even know what they are doing

But:

- The new law allows better oversight
- The courts have also understood the risk of evasion of scientific evidence
- Regulating is better than prohibiting

## Viking Sword from Ukraine

- Dec 2015 at the border the Tax and Customs Board found a sword-like object on the back seat of a truck entering Estonia from Russia
- Well-preserved Viking Age sword from the 11<sup>th</sup> century
- Ukrainian archaeologist Mr. Levada, who monitors Russian language news about archaeology, noticed the story in the media.
- Mr. Levada recognized it as a find that had been presented on the internet forum of Ukrainian detectorists. According to the forum, the sword was dug up by a detectorist in the Volyn oblast in Western-Ukraine.
- The sword was handed over to representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture at the Ukrainian cultural center in Tallinn on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- It was returned on the basis of the UNESCO 1970 convention.



Photo: Siim Lõvi / Estonian Public Broadcasting

## Theft of Artworks

- The peak was in the 1990's
- Mostly icons and other church-ware were targeted
- The result was huge number of movable monuments (currently ca 13500, 80% ecclesiastical)
- Private collections and antiquities trade are not regulated and very little knowledge (high level of non-local origin items)
- Cross-border trade is regulated, fixed nomenclature of valued items
- Good co-operation with the Tax and Customs Board
- Database of stolen/missing items (644) also available in English:  
[https://register.muinas.ee/public.php?menuID=en\\_stolenmonument&page=9&nocache=1354746558&lang=en](https://register.muinas.ee/public.php?menuID=en_stolenmonument&page=9&nocache=1354746558&lang=en)

## Moses on his Way Home

- St Michael's Church in Tallinn (Rootsi-Mihkli kirik)
- Christian Ackermann's Moses statue (pulpit base figure) from 1707
- The church was turned into gym in 1949
- The statue was stored and moved to Märjamaa church in 1971, but never erected
- In 1983 stored in the Art Museum, but 1987 stolen
- In 1990 the congregation was re-established and the church restored
- In 2014 brought to the Art Museum for expertise
- Returned to its original place



## Unauthorized Works

- **Maintenance and repair** of monuments does not require any permits
- **Restoration, conservation and building** works can be conducted only permit based
- The new Heritage Conservation Act liberalised the works
- It is not the problem of lack of knowledge but attitude – deliberate damage
- Post-factum oversight
- Ca 1400 permits > ca 40 „bad cases“ > 2 court cases a year

## Linnahall – Post-modernist Star

- Built for 1980 Olympics
- Architects R. Karp and R. Altmäe
- Out of use since 2010
- **Vandalized by beautyfication** in 2017
- Graffiti removed in 2018
- State Prosecutors Office still investigates



## Conclusions

- Control is an illusion
- It is not what we protect, but **what we value!**
- Self-regulation works if **acting/being legal is made easy**
- People are naturally inclined to cultural activities/interests, but they **need stewards** and interpreters