

# 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 forsees 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 Ukarine

- 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

### 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 it's original place

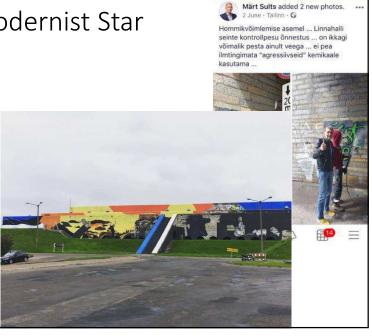


### **Unauthorized Works**

- 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