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## **Local history and urban planning in interwar Viipuri, Finland**

This paper examines the relationship between local urban culture and urban planning in the city of Viipuri in the 1920s and the 1930s (nowadays Vyborg, Russia). The modernisation of Finnish towns from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards caused various pressures to the existing town structures. The establishment of municipal planning organisation, development of municipal engineering and the renewal of building stock were, on one hand, a threat to the existing town structure, and on the other hand, they added to the historical consciousness and called for an active relationship to local heritage. Viipuri, one of the oldest towns in Finland, is of special interest in this respect; discoveries of remains of mediaeval building strata were frequent when digging for the foundations of new buildings or drainage and water pipes. The modernisation of Viipuri's ports and the reconsideration of the function of old fortifications in the interwar period provide cases where the past met the present demands of modern urban planning.

Changes in the everyday urban environment aroused a lively interest in the local past and in the documentation of the disappearing city both among the inhabitants of Viipuri and local authorities. Historical novels with Viipuri as their stage of events were popular; local press reported frequently on archaeological excavations; local radio broadcast programmes on the history of the town; tourism put the local history to use; public events were organised around themes of local heritage; mediaeval buildings were restored; historical associations were established and museum activity became enlivened. Events, such as the Viipuri Week of 1936, presented local mediaeval history alongside the modern Viipuri of factories and modernised ports and thus brought past and present together.

It was not only the civic pride and community spirit that the interest in the local past served but also the newly independent nation and its need for history and common Finnish heritage. What makes Viipuri even more interesting was the fact that it was the most multicultural city in Finland; the paper examines also the relationship of urban planning and the interest in local history with the diversified Finnish, Swedish, Russian and German urban culture in Viipuri. Relating the active interest in local history in the Finnish town to similar developments elsewhere in Europe is a further challenge.

Keywords: local history, urban planning, heritage