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INVENTORY OF MANORS – FUTURE OF THE PAST

The future of the past – this was the philosophical point of view used by Helmi Üprus decades ago in interpreting manorial architecture, when the first summaries were compiled on the inventories of manors.¹ The survival and preservation of cultural heritage involve topics which occasionally become clear only after a certain period of time, in hindsight, and where the future can sometimes be quite contradictory because of radical changes in society.

By the mid-1970s, the temporal distance had become sufficient to tackle the topic of manors as cultural memory in real time and place, i.e. it was possible to seek out values that had been neglected for some reason and thus forgotten. Various painful aspects related to manors had lost their edge and manor houses had become a topic of architectural history. By the last quarter of the 20th century, about three generations had passed since manorial life ended². During that time, emotions had cooled and ownership relations had changed. Manors now seemed like a distant romantic world, where our ancestors were busy as well, although mostly in the role of coachmen and cooks.

World War I and the subsequent revolutions disrupted the continuity of manorial life, both politically and economically, and caused chaos in the way of life. The newly established Republic of Estonia and the

Translated by Tiina Randviir.

¹ Helmi Üprus, "Mineviku tulevikust", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 21. & 28. I 1977.

² The term *manorial life* is used throughout the current paper as it seems to be a sufficiently wide concept to include architectural monuments, manor complexes, designed landscapes, social and economic situation, a way of thinking, a lifestyle, etc.

relevant reforms introduced a paradigmatic change. One of the most significant outcomes was the total collapse of manors as units of power, administration and economics, and as a settlement structure that covered the whole country. Radical events have always brought about the destruction of cultural property, re-evaluation of values, registering and de-registering. The attitude towards manors changed in Estonia as well, from the individual opinions of farmers to a state-level cultural policy. In a wider sense, this meant discussions of a young state seeking its national identity, including its cultural heritage, which was divided into Estonian and alien. Manors and manor architecture, which reflected the Baltic-German mentality within tsarist Russia, were on the whole alien and thus had negative connotations. Manorial architecture was not regarded as cultural heritage in art history writing in Estonia in the 1920s or 1930s, or in national heritage protection.³ A new, catastrophic change in society occurred in 1940: a new political order, repression, nationalisation and collectivisation left little room for heritage protection. Instead, monuments representing the new ideology were then regarded as culturally valuable, whereas manors were ignored.

Despite this, churches, castles and the old town of Tallinn had been systematically researched by the end of the 1960s; some historical town centres were mapped and examined. However, the overview of Estonian manor architecture was a mosaic, if not downright chaotic. There were no comprehensive data on the surviving manor houses, or the size and volume of the manor complexes. True, the list of existing architectural monuments in the 1970s contained objects from 59 manor complexes (called 'manor house with park', 'manor house' or 'outbuildings and park'), plus pubs, mills and other structures that belonged to the manor.⁴

The impetus to compile a thorough inventory of manors all over Estonia probably came from Lahemaa National Park. Restoration and adaptation of several remarkable manors there, including Palmse, Sagadi and Kolga, evoked keen interest in manor architecture. Fredi Tomps, the head of heritage protection at the time, was involved in architectural heritage in Lahemaa and it was he who invited Helmi Üprus⁵ to be the

³ See more: Kristina Jõekalda, "Eesti aja muinsuskaitse rahvuslikkus/rahvalikkus. Muinsuspedagoogika ja "võõras" arhitektuur 1918–1940", *Mälu. Eesti Kunstiakadeemia toimetised* 20 (Tallinn, 2011), 73–139.

⁴ Juhan Maiste, Ants Hein, *Eesti NSV mõisaarhitektuuri inventariseerimise koondaruanne* (Tallinn, 1980, manuscript in the archives of the Estonian Heritage Board (henceforth MKA), A-514 (S)), 127.

⁵ Juhan Maiste's e-letter 23. II 2011.

ideologue and supervisor for compiling the inventory of manor houses. In 1975, she duly started putting together principles and initial tasks.⁶ The work was commissioned by the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Architectural Monuments.

Together with Rein Zobel, Helmi Üprus had carried out comprehensive research of the Tallinn old town in the second half of the 1960s, and worked out the complex research methodology of historical urban development.⁷ Her relevant research was published in Germany, Sweden and France.⁸ Üprus was well informed about what was happening in the free world through articles, books and her colleagues abroad.⁹ In her papers, she used terms that were new at the time: 'In the 1970s, it was discovered in Europe that increasing industrialisation was threatening the countryside just as much as the town. Water, climate, soil and the animal kingdom were all destined to perish, as were the cultural landscape and rural settlements that supported everything. Thus the researchers focused on everything *m a n – m a d e*, everything that nourished the mind and spirit. Another term emerged besides natural ecology, namely *c u l t u r a l e c o l o g y*, which embraced everything that surrounded people, including past culture and memories. There is no need to emphasise the importance of architectural heritage in all this; it does this itself. Rural architecture is an extensive and diverse topic. Its role in the *q u a l i t y o f l i f e* is greatly valued, and the importance of historical rural architecture for modern man is increasingly acknowledged. We are thus talking not only about architectural heritage as a museum object (e.g. the Estonian Open-Air Museum or the Mihkli farm on Saaremaa Island), but also about architectural legacy as an active factor in today's environment'.¹⁰ The quoted ideas about industrialisation, the environment, art, heritage values and people are still topical today. Even more

⁶ Helmi Üprus, *Mõisaansamblitest ENSV-s* (Tallinn, 1975, manuscript in MKA, P-2465); Helmi Üprus, *Ettepanekud ENSV mõisaarhitektuuri süstemaatseks uurimistööks vajaliku eelarve koostamiseks* (Tallinn 1975, manuscript in MKA, P-2525).

⁷ See Lilian Hansar's article in the current publication.

⁸ Voldemar Vaga, "Helmi Üprus 1911–1978", *Kunst*, 58, 1(1981), 41; Helmi Üprus, "The Old Town of Tallinn", *Monumentum*, 8 (Leuven-Paris: ICOMOS, 1972), 71–97; Helmi Üprus, "Zur Regenerierung der Altstadt von Tallinn (Reval)", *Deutsche Kunst und Denmalpflege*, 29 (1972), 104–120; Helmi Üprus, "Die Architektur der Altstadt Tallinns und ihre Abhängigkeit von der mittelalterlichen sozialen Struktur", *Hansische Studien III* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1975), 252–264.

⁹ Üprus's personal library, for example, contained the collection of essays *Arts of the Environment*, ed. by Gyorgy Kepes (s. l.: Aidan Ellis, 1972).

¹⁰ Helmi Üprus, "Mõisaarhitektuuri uurimisest", *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 2 (1978), 8; spacing by Üprus.

– the complex nature of many problems has only now been fully perceived. This kind of vision ‘seeped’ in from free Europe during the last third of the previous century, and acquired a more specific and extensive meaning in the course of analysing manor inventory materials.

Helmi Üprus wrote about the early days of compiling the inventory: ‘Planning our research, we soon found out that the basic data were fragmentary. There was not even information about the maximum number of manors and their increase, without which any systematic research was unthinkable.’¹¹ They had to start almost from scratch, although some work had been done on the manors. The manor lands, buildings and inventory had been systematically listed, but the aim was to establish their economic side: e.g. the documents concerning the so-called reduction of the manors dating from the end of the 17th century. These materials were used by the ethnographer Gustav Ränk¹² in his study of Estonian manor houses. His work examined manor buildings and their planning during the Swedish era (17th century), in general terms and academically, but it was temporally restricted and was not associated with the surviving objects in nature. From the point of view of architecture and the history of manor houses, the Riga architect and art historian Heinz Pirang should be mentioned. He published an extensive study of Baltic manors, tackling about 150 manor houses in Estonian territory, mainly mansions.¹³ Pirang’s interest and activities were connected with the Riga Society of History and Archaeology (*Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga*). Before World War I, the Society planned to publish a bulky volume of Baltic architectural monuments. The first publication on older Baltic mansions appeared only in 1926.¹⁴ The choice of objects was influenced by the academic opinion of local aristocratic families regarding historical and art monuments, and thus only well-known manors made it onto the list. Despite the relative subjectivity which prevailed at the time, Pirang’s list nevertheless offers an overview of the Baltic-German value criteria during the first quarter of the 20th century. Although Baltic-German art history research was marginal, it still provided valuable information for later researchers.

¹¹ Üprus, “Mõisaarhitektuuri uurimisest”, 9.

¹² Gustav Ränk, *Die älteren baltischen Herrenhöfe in Estland. Eine bauhistorische Studie* (Uppsala: Norstedt, 1971).

¹³ Heinz Pirang, *Das baltische Herrenhaus I–III* (Riga: Jonck & Poliewsky, 1926–1930).

¹⁴ Pirang, *Das baltische Herrenhaus I*, 1–5.

After World War II, the first comprehensive work on individual manor houses was conducted by Helmi Üprus, Teddy Böckler and others¹⁵, working at the Scientific Restoration Workshop, founded in 1950 (later the National Restoration Board). In the 1950s and 1960s, art historians examined the well-known examples of manorial architecture, mostly representing the period of classicism. In *Eesti arhitektuuri ajalugu* [History of Estonian Architecture], published in 1965, Üprus studied 50 manor houses.¹⁶

However, this was the time when manor complexes were more extensively studied than ever before. The tasks of the nature conservationist Veljo Ranniku included determining the condition of Estonian parks. Between 1960 and 1970, he visited and photographed hundreds of manor parks, and also photographed the surviving buildings, although the latter was entirely on his own initiative.¹⁷

Helmi Üprus's task of compiling an inventory of manor houses started in 1975. First, she established the principles for the undertaking, taking into consideration temporal and specialist workforce resources. She mainly used three topographical materials and an address book from the pre-World War I period.¹⁸ Another factor to be considered was the change of administrative borders; the county list in the form of a chart was turned into a Soviet district list.¹⁹ Parallel German and Estonian place names made the work more difficult, as did finding locations on Soviet-era maps, as adequate topographical materials were not available at the time. Using this comparative method, Juhan Maiste and Lea Hein (Külm) compiled a list of 2267 manor names. They faced the task of including all

¹⁵ For example: Helmi Üprus, *Kolga lossi ajalooline õiend* (Tallinn, 1956, manuscript in MKA, P-915; Teddy Böckler, *Kolga mõisahoone ülesmõõtmistööd ja sondaazid* (Tallinn, 1957, manuscript in MKA, Ü-58).

¹⁶ *Eesti arhitektuuri ajalugu*, peatoim Harald Arman (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1965), 270–282, 354–371, 410–412.

¹⁷ The folders by districts containing text materials and photographs are kept in the National Heritage Board archives. This extensive undertaking was a result of Veljo Ranniku's personal interest and enthusiasm; his official tasks certainly did not require such a systematic approach or such a large number of objects (telephone conversation with Veljo Ranniku on 3 March 2011, notes belonging to the author).

¹⁸ Ludwig August von Mellin, *Atlas von Lief- und Ehistland oder von den beyden Guvernementen und Herzogtümern Lief- und Ehistlands und der Provinz Oesel* (Riga u. Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1799); Johann Heinrich Schmidt, *Karte von Ehistland* (Berlin: Geograph. lith. Institut von J. Sulzer, 1871); Carl Gottlieb Rücker, *Generalkarte der Russischen Ostsee Provinzen Liv-, Ehist- und Kurland* (Reval: Franz Kluge, 1883); Adolf Richters *Baltische Verkehrs- und Adressbücher 3. Estland* (Riga: Adolf Richter, 1913).

¹⁹ Juhan Maiste, Lea Külm, *Eesti NSV mõisaarhitektuur. Haapsalu...Võru rajoonides asuvate mõisate nimestik* (Tallinn, 1976, manuscripts in MKA, P-2870–P-2884).

the places dating from the second half of the 18th century to the second decade of the 20th century.²⁰ Under Üprus's supervision, the programme and inventory methodology were worked out. Her task was naturally made easier by her earlier experience in the complex research of the old town of Tallinn. She paid special attention to compiling questionnaires that would thoroughly reflect the location of the manor complexes, and tackle each of them as a whole and in separate parts, with all the details, decorative elements, styles and construction stages. The questionnaires recorded the stages of preservation and technical conditions of buildings at various stages, the owners, dates, sketched plans of the complexes and, if possible and necessary, schematic plans were compiled for the buildings. Information gathering was carried out after the example of the legendary art historian Georg Dehio, whose internationally acclaimed handbook of artistic monuments, published at the beginning of the 20th century in Germany (later reprinted), was sufficiently comprehensive and at an academically high level.²¹ The worrying factor was the uneven qualification of researchers, and therefore two different questionnaires were prepared: one more complicated (T) and one more simplified (L). The first would provide a more thorough overview, but required more time and labour costs.²² After testing in early spring of 1976 in 20 manor houses in the Harju district, a country-wide inventory was carried out according to an adapted questionnaire, as speed became the decisive factor.²³ It should be kept in mind here that, at the time, about 60 years after manor life ended, the person compiling an inventory was able to talk to former manor labourers, such as gardeners, barn-keepers and stable boys, or their children. The received recollections had to be critically reviewed, although the oral tradition was an invaluable source for diversifying and specifying the data. This is an essential factor today, over 30 years later, when no manor-era people are alive.

²⁰ Üprus, *Mineviku tulevikust*.

²¹ Helmi Üprus, *Programm ja üldprintsiihid mõisaarhitektuuri inventariseerimiseks* (Tallinn, 1976, manuscript in MKA, P-2669); Maiste, Hein, *Eesti NSV mõisaarhitektuuri inventariseerimise koondaruanne*, 10.

²² Üprus, *Programm ja üldprintsiihid mõisaarhitektuuri inventariseerimiseks*. Besides Juhan Maiste and Lea Hein, others working at the Restoration Board took part in compiling the inventory, including Ants Hein, Epp Kangilaski, Marta Männisalü, Helle Väino (Kolmer), Ene Meriste, Lembit Odres, Arvi Soonsein, Jüri Kulasalu, Anu Vaarpuu, Helmut Joonuks, Kalev Tilk, Anu Kotli and Olev Suuder; there were probably a dozen or so participants from outside as well.

²³ Juhan Maiste, „Mõisaarhitektuuri inventeerimise algus“, *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 2 (1978), 15.

Extensive fieldwork was carried out in 1976–1978; the analysis of the data, including suggestions on protection and the compiling of reports, lasted until 1980. Üprus only saw the initial results of the inventory; photographs and questionnaires were compiled in various rooms at the National Restoration Board (VRV) in Lai Street in Tallinn. ‘Üprus was constantly moved around from one room to another, where the two of us [Helmi Üprus and Juhan Maiste – O. S.] worked through the materials’.²⁴ Excellent articles by Üprus, which were published in newspapers, emphasised the historical essence of the manor complexes, which constituted *refugia* and shelters, a chance to relax in a place set within nature. The manor complexes represented both continuity and change. ‘The function of manors is especially significant. Adapting the function to suit historical architecture is paramount; we must consider architecture, but also many requirements posed by everyday life’.²⁵ It has become increasingly clear today how difficult and how important it is to find suitable usage for the manor complexes and individual buildings, in order to preserve them as they deserve.

The analysis of the inventory of manor houses was completed under the supervision of Juhan Maiste. Without burdening the reader with too many statistics, we will just mention that 54 types of buildings were studied in four stages of preservation: 578 main buildings, 341 bailiff cottages, 51 gardener cottages, 749 barns, 1282 cattle sheds, 227 stables, etc.²⁶ A number of household buildings were discovered during the compilation of the inventory. Against the background of overall European heritage conservation, these were considered to be quite important, as more modest architecture was increasingly valued along with high architecture.²⁷ Hundreds of new research objects were added to the list of industrial architecture: 303 distilleries, 32 breweries, 376 smithies, 16 watermills, 83 windmills, 143 dairies etc.

²⁴ Juhan Maiste e-letter 23 February 2011; as the Restoration Board was reorganised, rooms allocated to people changed all the time, which was called ‘deportation’.

²⁵ Üprus, “Mõisaarhitektuuri uurimisest”, 11.

²⁶ Statistical data on the inventorying of manors, see Juhan Maiste, *Eesti NSV mõisaarhitektuur. Inventariseerimise koondstatistika, hooneloend* (Tallinn, 1978, manuscript in MKA, A-192); Juhan Maiste, Olev Suuder, *ENSV mõisaarhitektuuri säilivus, ehituskunstilise väärtuse, peahoonete dateeringu, stiili, hoonestuse tehnilise seisundi, kasutamise ja valdajate koondtabelid* (Tallinn, 1980, manuscript in MKA, A-429).

²⁷ Juhan Maiste, “Tööstusotstarbelised ehitised Eesti mõisaarhitektuuris”, *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 2 (1982), 27–32.

Compiling the manor inventories provided a list of research data or distribution, assembled a reliable database within a short period of time, and ensured analysis and preservation of the database, besides registering hundreds of manor objects as cultural monuments. Inventorying as a systematic documentation of the current situation, i.e. interviews with manor-era people, photographs, plans and schemes, offered a comprehensive overview of the manor architecture in Estonia at the end of the 1970s. The existence of such a fundamental basic network has made later studies and research directions possible. The database compiled at that time enables us to examine no longer surviving objects and their elements. Precise ideas of what they were like are necessary in practical restoration, as well as in research work. These materials have also enhanced the appreciation of cultural monuments as a whole, from the Estonian Manor Schools association and tourist information to property development.

When now viewing the beginning of inventorying, with Üprus pointing out the future function of the manors, one sees that today's realities still set limits, however freely our imaginations soar. Not a single distillery will ever make spirits again, the dairies will not produce cheese or barns hold grain, at least not in any near future – a totally different life is now lived in the mansions. Manor life has acquired a different content. Despite that, many buildings maintain their historical value, e.g. the Kolga, Taagepera, Helme and Kõo mansions, and the Mooste distillery. The essential difference is between quantity and quality. Every new awakening is unlike any other.

Today historical values are acknowledged in a wider sense and different terms are used compared to the ones used decades ago. During the 1970s, before the inventorying of manors, historical buildings were regarded as monuments and they received attention only if they had something remarkable, such as first-class architecture or interiors, decorative art, unusual size or an intimate atmosphere. A wealth of systematic information on manor buildings, manor complexes and their singular solutions has provided a considerably more extensive view of the place and landscape, the settlement history and our heritage culture.

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KOKKUVÕTE: **Tagasivaade mõisate inventariseerimisele – mineviku tulevikust**

Mineviku tulevikust – sellises filosoofilises vaatenurgas mõtestas Helmi Üprus mõisaarhitektuuri teemat aastakümneid tagasi, siis, kui 1977. aastal tehti esimesi kokkuvõtteid mõisate inventariseerimisest. Ajaline distantis oli 1970. aastate keskel saanud piisavaks, et tegelda mõisate kui kultuurimälu teemaga reaalses ajas ja kohas, st et võis hakata välja otsima erinevatel põhjustel tähelepanust kõrvale jäänud ja seetõttu ununenud väärtusi. Selleks ajaks olid mitmed mõisatega seotud väärtuslikud aspektid aktuaalsuse kaotanud ning mõisahooned muutunud ka arhitektuuriajaloo objektiks.

Aastasadu kestnud mõisaelu ja sellega kaasnenud ehituskunsti traditsioonilise arengu lõpetasid Esimene maailmasõda ja sellele järgnenud epohhilised muutused. Mõis ja koos sellega mõisaarhitektuur, mis kajastas baltisaksa mentaliteeti Tsaari-Venemaa koosseisus, oli negatiivse märgiga. Kultuuriväärtuseks ei peetud mõisaarhitektuuri ei 1920.–1930. aastate Eesti Vabariigis ega ka nõukogude perioodil. Tähelepanu väärtsid vaid vähesed selle valdkonna tippteosed.

1960. aastate lõpuks oli Eestis süstemaatiliselt uuritud sakraalarhitektuuri, linnuseid, Tallinna vanalinna, kaardistatud ja uuritud ajaloolisi linnakeskusi. Helmi Üprus oli 1960. aastate teisel poolel üksikasjalikult tegelenud Tallinna vanalinnaga ja välja töötanud linna ajaloolise arengu kompleksse uurimise meetodika. Mõisate inventeerimise mastaapses, üle-eestilise aktsiooni läbiviimiseks tuli algtõuge seoses Lahemaa Rahvusparkiga: sealsete silmapaistvate mõisate restaureerimine tekitas laiemat huvi mõisaarhitektuuri vastu. Tolleaegne muinsuskaitsejuht Fredi Tomps kutsus mõisate inventariseerimise ideoloogiks ja juhiks Helmi Üpruse. 1975. aastal asus ta aluspõhimõtteid looma ja lähteülesannet välja töötama. Kõigepealt koostati ajaloolistele kaartidele ja nimekirjadele toetudes inventeeritavate mõisate koondnimistu 2267 nimega. Suurt tähelepanu pööras H. Üprus ankeedile, mis pidi võimalikult üksikasjalikult ja seotult kajastama mõisaansambli asukohta, seda kui tervikut ja hooneid eraldi koos nende detailide, dekoratiivsete elementide, stiilide ja ehitusjärgkudega. Ankeetides toodi mitmeastmeliselt välja hoonete säilivus ja tehniline seisund, omanikud, dateeringud, skitseeriti ansambli plaan. Pärast eksperimenteerimist viidi üle-eestiline inventeerimine läbi kohandatud ankeedi alusel.

Laiaulatuslik välitöö tehti aastatel 1976–1978, analüüs kuni kaitseettepanekute ja koondaruande tegemiseni kestis 1980. aastani. H. Üprus nägi vaid inventariseerimise esialgseid tulemusi, kuid tema ajakirjanduses ilmunud sisukad artiklid tõid esile mõisaansamblite ajaloolist olemust – *refugium* ehk pelgupaik, tervistu ehk looduslikus paigas puhkamisvõimalus – ja teisalt tähtsustasid aegade jooksul väljakujunenud järjepidevust ning muutusi. Eriti oluliseks pidas ta mõisate tänapäevast funktsiooni. Ajaloolisele arhitektuurile sobiva otstarbe leidmine oli üli-tähtis, selle juures tuli arvestada arhitektuuri, aga ka rohkeid elulisi nõudeid. Nüüd võime enam kui kunagi varem tõdeda, kui raske ja kui oluline on mõisaansamblitele-hoonetele sobiva kasutuse leidmine, et need väarikalt säiliks.

Mõisate inventariseerimine sisaldas endas mahuka andmebaasi loomist lühikese aja jooksul, selle analüüsi, sadade mõisaobjektide kultuurimälestiseks tunnistamisest. Inventariseerimine kui süsteemne tolle aja seisukorra dokumenteerimine andis tervikliku läbilõike mõisaarhitektuurist Eestis 1970. aastate lõpul. Sellise fundamentaalse alusvõrgustiku olemasolu on teinud võimalikuks edaspidised käsitlused ja uurimissuunad.