Integrating cultural heritage into sustainable planning: The concept of cultural environment and cultural environment programs in Finland

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The concept of cultural environment was taken into active use in Finnish cultural heritage and environmental administration in the 1990s. In this context, it is used as a general umbrella term which includes build heritage, cultural landscape and archaeological sites. Primarily, the objective has been to strengthen the co-operation between heritage agents, various administrative sectors and other stakeholders’ in order to enhance integration of cultural heritage into development and planning practices and thus ensure preservation and sustainable use of the heritage.

In Finland, cultural environment programs have functioned as a strategic tool in attempts to strengthen the co-operation between different parties and to integrate heritage assets and values to sustainable planning. Cultural environment programs have been prepared both for regional and municipal level. This paper will discuss, how the concept of cultural environment is used and understood in the cultural environment programs prepared in different parts of Finland and if and how the idea of sustainability is addressed in these programs.

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