CITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD:
QUESTIONS OF CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DESIGN

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The vacillating sources of authority – The case of the Old Town in Turku, Finland

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• Abstract (300 words):
Urban heritage is depended on authority which gives it significance and effectiveness, and heritage in itself is a form of authoritative power, creating urban communities while also emerging from them. However, in the early 21st century, the modern foundations of authority are eroding. Globalization and neo-liberalism corrode the national state, but also the academic scholarship, urban planning and heritage management have become challenged institutions. The sources of authority have become increasingly multi-temporal and diffuse, and they are attributed differently in different urban communities: For some, museums and heritage professionals continue to have primary importance while in other quarters, they do not hold similar power. A case in point is the urban environment, a highly contested space, created through conflicting forces and interests, and urban heritage in particular exemplifies a major shift in the sources of authority. In our interdisciplinary project, we examine the construction and effects of heritage in the Old Town of Turku, the earliest town in Finland founded in the Middle Ages. By using a plethora of materials – local histories, archaeological and architectural discourse, photographs of urban scenes, and interviews and records created by professionals and local residents – we examine how the Old Town as become seen as
heritage and invested by authority. We trace these diverse heritage processes both from top down and bottom up. What is the status of urban heritage for the different actors in the cityscape, and what kind of urban futures these different views conceive? With this question heritage becomes a lens through which the interconnected problems of urban space are seen as an expression of the wavering of authorities.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Visa Immonen is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Turku, Finland. He worked as an assistant professor of cultural heritage studies at the University of Helsinki in 2016–2017 and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Getty Research Institute in 2015–2016. His research focuses on medieval material culture, but he is also interested in heritage issues, and the use of digital media in heritage work.