The railway landscape and more-than-human heritage

– an Essay

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary Finnish inventories and discussion on cultural heritage and heritage environments, it has become somewhat commonplace to distinguish three discrete, yet interrelated aspects: Architectural history, history itself and the value of the landscape. Within these three different aspects of heritage values listed above, the landscape-related one are apparently the most vaguely elaborated, and generally accepted and satisfactory criteria have not been developed so far.

In this essay I will be focusing on landscape-related heritage values as a category, that has the potential to transcend the nature-culture dichotomy, thus also paving the way for a new understanding of "culture" in cultural heritage studies.

I will employ the concept "more-than-human", notably proposed by David Abram in 1996, simply as a substitute for "nature". In the mainstream environmental philosophy of the recent decades, the latter has been seen as increasingly problematic, as it appears to imply humanity as being separate from the rest of nature (and historically has been used exactly for the purpose of such demarcation).

These recent post-humanist critiques, questioning the culture-nature dichotomy, have also echoed through heritage discourses during the recent years. Especially inspired by the concept of ruderal heritage developed by the human geographer Caitlin DeSilvey, heritage is here understood as products of human – non-human relations, past and present, that are manifested in the landscape.

I will ask, how the more-than-human heritage becomes visible in the Finnish railway landscapes, through selected case examples presented through photographic material. This photographic material has been mostly produced during the ongoing heritage inventories of the Finnish railway network carried at the Finnish Railway Museum, while also accompanied by examples produced in relation to my arts-based doctoral research project, still undergoing in the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Finland.

Firstly, I will discuss the relation between heritage and landscape, and then move on towards heritage dimensions of the (Finnish) railway landscape. I will begin by noting the difference between landscape as a panoramic view from the train, and the railway as tangible heritage environment, or landscape. It is claimed that these two are interlinked, and the connection is made visible through Wolfgang Schivelbush's notion of 'foreground', as well as that of 'proximity', proposed by Finnish geographer J.G. Granö already in the early 20th century.

The emergent qualities in the proximity of railway, especially vegetation in the railway embankment and its surroundings, are seen as important contributors of landscape heritage values – both as the foreground of the passenger's view, and as material and living "objects" or properties in the railway environment as a heritage landscape. I will discuss their connections, before finally taking on examples of more-than-human heritage in some more limited, distinctive heritage "sites" related to the railway, such as abandoned alignments and railway guard's cottage sites. These may not be relevant to the passenger experience of landscapes, but they still offer an insightful, parallel perspective to the more-than human heritage in railway landscapes.

My methodological orientation also emphasizes the importance of the visual and photographic medium. Photographs are not innocent "windows" to the reality of things, although under certain conditions they may enable the sensory, material world to speak for itself, through its own forms. The assertive, argumentative power of photographs, however, seems dependent on the visual qualities of the photographs themselves.

This essay emphasizes the connection between heritage and landscape. My main argument in this essay is that heritage in general, but especially that of the railway, involves a strong more-than-human dimension, which suggests looking at heritage in new ways, to make sense of the historical relations between human and non-human worlds, while also embracing change, emergence and resulting temporal depth, that is constantly being produced by temporal processes and non-human agencies, at work in the landscape. This kind of dynamic understanding of heritage also opens towards a utopian, future-oriented view; that of an increasing awareness of coexistence between human and nonhuman worlds.

The structure of this essay is the following: before discussing empirical cases, I will set the ground by discussing the landscape dimension of railway heritage, by briefly addressing the landscape in the railway journey experience, and how railway landscape has

Image 1. Travel memory, view from the railway embankment. Eastern Finland, photo Mikko Itälahti 2016.

been addressed in Finnish heritage discourse thus far, moving then on to recent critiques of anthropocentric heritage understandings, that also seem to underline the fundamental connectedness of heritage and landscape. Then I will discuss the concepts of landscape and the related notion of proximity or foreground, as that is the spatial range where material qualities of the railway environment and the panoramic view from the moving train are interlinked. Then, through a set of empirical cases, I finally turn towards the railway as heritage landscape, as well as to a few heritage 'sites' related to the railway – the typical heritage approach – and discuss the more-than human aspects and processes like vegetation and ruination for their landscape-related heritage values.

INTRODUCTION: VIEW FROM THE TRAIN

I still remember that train journey somewhere in Eastern Finland. Looking down from the window of a train carriage, running on a high embankment, I was mesmerized by the view of the passing forest interior. Large, dark spruces towered just at the root of the high embankment, among them rocks covered by thick, soft carpets of moss. Occasionally the railway crossed a dark-watered creek. The train ran so slowly it was possible to get a clear view of all this. Yet still, we were on a journey taking us hundreds of kilometers just in a matter of hours, and all this beauty was almost an illusionary view between the towns of Oulu and Joensuu. I remember being fascinated by the peculiar spatial experience, that, for a lack of better words, could be described as tensioned polarity between the train interior and the outside, which, albeit separated by just a touching distance from each other, so distinctively belonged to very different spatial realms. It was like sitting on a front seat watching a theatre play or a movie; yet, the experience involved a very acute sense of realness, a testimony to the existence of a world out there, much larger than any individual, independent of their will and more surprising than their wildest imaginations. If I was left out there standing by that tree, how could I make it home from here?

The metaphor of the railway journey as theatre, movie or even a concert, dates already to the early days of railroads. In his classic, The Railway Journey, Wolfgang Schivelbusch writes how, through the advent of railways, visual culture as a whole was transformed by a new way of apprehending the landscape, he calls *panoramic vision*.[1)] In this mode of seeing, the train rendered the world as a spectacular, kaleidoscopic collection of visions and impressions, detached from their original spatial realms.[2)] In a very similar tone, the author Juhani Aho published fiercely enthusiastic accounts on his train journeys in newspapers[3)] and short novels in the 19th century Finland.[4)] Much more recently, Finnish movie director and historian Peter von Bagh[5)] has been writing on the historical, mutual bond of the railway and cinema, and especially on the railway journey as a cinematic experience.

As has been reminded by the classic work of Schivelbusch, as well as John Wylie,[6)] among others, (see also Henrik Ranby's article in this volume!) landscape in a modern sense, for us, is born from movement, and the railway has had a profound influence on popular ideas of landscape. Clearly a significant part of the cultural heritage of the railway has been the unique way the landscape can be apprehended by the train passenger.

Thus, my main argument in this essay is that heritage in general, but perhaps especially that of the railway, involves a strong landscape dimension. The (railway) landscape not only beckons questions on the past, present and future human – environment relations, but also, like in the example above, seems to suggest that the processual, dynamic change over the course of decades, the work of more-than-human agencies like vegetation, may have a very impactful, yet often overlooked role in creating the heritage landscapes of the railway, although these new meanings are still to be explored.

RAILWAY LANDSCAPE IN FINNISH CULTURAL HERITAGE DISCOURSE (OR THE LACK OF)

In 1999 Banverket, The Swedish authority for the railway network, commissioned an essay collection *Spår I landskapet – Hur järnvägen format stad och land*.[7)] Many of the writings included in the collection take the view from the train as a significant part of the railway heritage.

In Finnish cultural history, the aesthetic and spatial experience of the railway landscape has been powerfully described by, and

recorded in the work of pictorial arts, popular music, and fine arts literature.[8] Alongside the historical and contemporary writers mentioned above, a very comprehensive picture on how the railway has resonated in the popular culture of the 19th and 20th century Finland has drawn together by Matti Rinne.[9] Some researchers have written on how the movement facilitates landscape experience, including in relation to the railways.[10] However, the actual landscape along the railway, especially outside the station areas, has received very little attention from heritage researchhers and practices: this applies both to the landscape as view from the train, as well as to the railway as a material heritage landscape.

In the broader context of Finnish cultural Heritage and landscape inventories, a threefold understanding of the heritage, apparently suggested in 1989 by the Finnish Heritage Agency, has become somewhat commonplace during the last decades. In this framework, cultural heritage environments are understood as comprising of building historical or architectural, historical, as well as *landscape values*.[11] More recently, for example, the 'historical stratigraphy' of, or the layers of history inherent to, heritage sites have been receiving attention.

It seems obvious that of the above-mentioned heritage dimensions, the landscape-related one has been most vaguely elaborated. The value of landscapes have typically been seen exclusively in connection with built environments regarded as possessing otherwise valuable heritage; in Finnish railway heritage discourses, the railway station buildings[12] with their adjacent parks and residential areas[13] were for a long time the only railway environments regarded as having heritage values. In 1998 a national agreement for preservation of historical station areas was reached, including station park areas.[14] Going a bit further, the building heritage inventory in the Länsi-Uusimaa (*Västra Nyland*) province noted in 1993, that railways in general possess values related to "industrial romanticism".[15] Yet the heritage perspective has been quite solely focused on built environments, and therefore has not been in a position to recognize heritage potential in trackside landscapes that mostly spans the spaces between station areas.

Challenges to the inventory practices posed by recent research in critical heritage, stressing the mutual bonds between heritage and landscape, contextuality, dynamism and becomingness, are still largely to be met. The ongoing cultural heritage inventory of the Finnish railway network, for its part, aims to address this, yet the practice is still based on evaluation criteria and a framework which emphasizes worth building historical values.[16]

ANTHROPOCENTRIC HERITAGE, (RAILWAY) LANDSCAPE AND THE RECENT POST-HUMANIST CRITIQUE

In this essay I maintain that landscape could be a category that transcends the longstanding culture – nature dichotomy, and that the deep connection between heritage and landscape suggests that this actually is the case for heritage, too. This way of thinking has been encouraged by a few recent turns in culture and landscape studies, that need to be briefly summarized.

For at least the last couple of centuries, and at least in the industrialized West, humans have been seen as the most important, if not the only "actors" contributing to the production of "cultural heritage". These anthropocentric presuppositions, for long taken for granted and still built in the authorized heritage discourses, have been forcefully challenged during the last ten or so years within the field of critical heritage studies.[17)]

The question on the continued relevance of the dichotomic categories of nature and culture seems especially to surface when considering landscape-related heritage values. The ongoing turn, that could be called *post-humanist,* is of course connected to increasing awareness on how climate and biodiversity crises are fundamentally rooted to the enlightenment worldview of human primacy and western atomism; and a realization that studying human culture without acknowledging our fundamental dependency on the non-human world has been, and would be, contributing to worsening the ecological crisis.[18)]

Recent academic work on critical heritage and landscape, in connection with the now commonplace labels of posthumanism, new materialism and non-representational theory, has emphasized connections between heritage and landscape; somewhat in contrast to traditional approaches of heritage *as* object preservation, while also questioning the taken-for-granted dualisms of material-immaterial, culture-nature, and indeed, destruction, preservation. Heritage and landscape have been approached with a greater sensibility towards more-than-human powers and agencies shaping temporally deep landscapes. Cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey has been arguing, in a way that seems especially relevant regarding to the landscape dimension of heritage, for a more dynamic understanding of heritage, which would mean a shift towards understanding heritage sites not so much as "specimens", somehow preserved thin slices of time, but rather as a processual, constantly emerging landscape-bound dynamic process.[19)] Understood this way, the memory is renewed, rather than erased, through forces like ruination and plant reclamation.[20)] Through the perspectives of *ruderal heritage and curated decay,* as presented by DeSilvey, heritage could be seen not only – or so much – as testimonials of historical events, societies, beliefs and politics, but as an active process, making sense of the historically changing and evolving interrelations of human and nonhuman worlds *in the present,* while also acknowledging the active role of species other than humans.[21)]

This shift seems to point towards the revitalized relevance of landscape values. Heritage would become appreciated and apprehended through aesthetically inclined openness towards the sensuous surfaces and the "own-voice" of the material and non-human objects and sites in their contemporaneity.[22)] This, of course, is not to say that traditional, historically focused and conservationist approaches to heritage should be abolished altogether, but a change in perspective would potentially expand the scope of "heritage" and call for new practices of stewardship.

The questions related to definitions and ontologies of landscape – roughly revolving around debates on whether the landscape is 'just' an image or 'a way of seeing', or indeed a physical area – have been the subject of a vast body of work over the years, which is impossible to adequately summarize here. My understanding of the concept *landscap*e, however, owes a lot to the recent post-humanist and new materialist thinking. To sum up, posthumanism has been used as a general label to describe an emerging train of thought, especially in environmental philosophy, that sees traditional humanities as limited and even problematic precisely because of its inherent anthropocentrism. New materialism, on the other hand, is a related stance that criticizes the traditional idealism of humanities, which, broadly speaking, stresses the human mind and cultural creations like language as the most fundamental layers of reality. New materialism, on the contrary, places the emphasis on material objects, conditions and webs of interaction. The "new" in new materialism is used suggest how the view is seen as having revitalized relevance in an era of ecological multi-crisis, after several

decades when idealism all but dominated the intellectual climate of cultural studies in the West.

The developments have also led to the restoration of sensuous experience as a "legitimate" – if perhaps just one possible – way to apprehend the material or more-than-human world.[23] Inspired by these trains of thought, by landscape I simply mean here the sensuous experience of the environment. This is not to deny the cultural underpinnings of landscape vision, yet however, I maintain that landscape is a way to apprehend, and an encounter with, the more-than-human world. As an experience it derives its power from a sense of realness, from the certainty that the subject truly experiences a connection with the more-than-human world much larger that exists independently of themselves, in infinite richness, across vast spatial and temporal scales.

In the very heart of the experience of landscape lies an experience of temporality. However, as David Harvey has warned, this might perhaps too easily overemphasize the thin slice of "here and now" (the typical focus of non-representative and phenomenological accounts), when the subject's experience is brought to the fore of the investigation.[24] He has argued in favor of *heritage sensibility* as a new kind of understanding, a bridging ontology, that could fruitfully connect the perspectives of heritage and landscape studies – the affective power of the present experience, with the temporal depth through understanding of change, provided by heritage studies.[25] For the purposes of this essay, his idea could emphasize links between landscape as an impression or experience, and as a physical environment; also between tangible and intangible heritage.

For example, the landscape as a view from the train is certainly an important part of the cultural heritage in the Nordic countries and other industrialized parts of the world. Yet, while the experience as such perhaps is something we could term as "immaterial heritage", there is a connection between the intangible and tangible; the more-than human agencies and temporal layers, especially vegetation, in the proximity of the railway not only contribute to the cinematic power of the railway journey, but also to the sense of temporal depth in the heritage landscape of the railway.

RAILWAY LANDSCAPES: PROXIMITY

While the culture-historical accounts of landscape experiences during the railway journey have likened the experience to cinema or panorama, the view of the railway in the landscape, as a physical feature, might appear entirely different. However, the qualities of the railway as a landscape feature and of the landscape as a view from the train are connected, and even considering the passenger's view from the train, these connections can be highlighted when devoting a closer look (sic!) at the spatial range of the proximity.

The railway passenger's landscape experience is shaped by various material prerequisites – speed, but also the view from a carriage window, at a perpendicular angle to the train's direction (see image 2). Also, the railway embankment itself orchestrates the experience of land as a landscape, through filling the recessions of the physical terrain with high embankments and lowering the hills by rock cuttings and tunnels. The railway infrastructure contributes to the sense of effortless, almost incorporeal movement through the environment. Especially passages on higher embankments might evoke a feeling of flying.[26] Yet still, as importantly noted by Ludvig Rasmusson, a very important aspect, that contributes to the power of this experience, is the fact that the passenger typically cannot see much of the railway infrastructure in their view.[27] As a contrast, the passenger in the car on a motorway is always surrounded by "road landscape" that forms the foreground of their view.

This observation brings us to the interesting notion of the foreground. Schivelbusch indeed emphasizes that, to gain access to the wonders of panoramic seeing, early passengers had to learn to give up trying to perceive the foreground details, but instead to focus on general impressions of more distant objects.[28] He adds that this, according to him, marked a significant departure from the experience of the premodern travel, noting that landscape's *foreground* was "the range in which most of the experience of preindustrial travel was located".[29] He also goes on to argue that losing of the foreground was traumatic and perhaps contributed to the popularity of photography; through which the intimate foreground details, lost in reality, could be retrieved: "The intensive experience of the sensuous world, terminated by the industrial revolution, undergoes a resurrection in the new institution of photography".[30]

Image 2. Helsinki – Oulu,
photo Mikko Itälahti June 2015.

Schivelbusch's notion of the foreground resonates powerfully with the idea developed by Finnish geographer J.G. Granö in quite a different context. In his seminal work, first published in 1929 in German under the name *Reine Geographie* (a year later in Finnish as *Puhdas maantiede* and in English only in 1997 as Pure Geography).[31] Granö also makes a very interesting distinction between the closest environment he calls *proximity* and the more outlying *landscape*. Granö writes that "proximity is a close, intimate world we always inhabit and the context in which we perceive our geographical object with all our senses". He goes on further to add that "[t]his arena of our lives and activities is surrounded by the distant environment, or landscape, nothing more than a field of vision more or less tinged with blue by the air".[32] Furthermore, according to Granö, a multisensory experience of proximity clearly surrounds us up to the distance of approximately 20 meters, and is separated from the proper landscape by a fuzzy transition zone.[33]

Granö's ideas have enjoyed a revived interest in the recent few decades, and they certainly possess some important merits. Yet his definition of landscape as the distant view or environment still is just one possibility. Another, probably older, meaning of landscape is "terrain".[34] Sure, sensual experiences of the proximate and the distant environments are qualitatively different; the closest surrounding is central to the subject's experience of the environment, producing sensations of actuality, of truly 'being there'. Yet (Granö withstanding) we are always in some kind of proximity, that gives context and sense of life to all kinds of landscapes.

How then, is the railway passenger's experience of proximity? I have discussed the concept of proximity in relation to the landscape experience and the railway journey in greater length elsewhere.[35] Yet it actually seems that Schivelbusch, and some early accounts, like a Juhani Aho's vivid description in the novel *Rautatie* [Railway],[36] are better read as descriptions of the cultural shock that the railway journey caused in the first place, not so much as universally valid descriptions of the passenger's condition. I am arguing that even in my travel memory above, it was the qualities of the most proximate landscape outside the coach, and its accurate sensations, that made the journey experience so powerful. Although the train was a special train running at a limited speed, that speed, based on historical evidence discussed by Schivelbusch, as well as more recently by Rebecca Solnit, would probably still have been dazzling to many of the 19th-century travelers, at least on their first railway journeys.[37] We are capable of adapting, even learning. As a testimony to this, Lisa Warsen & Stina Sjöström remarks how refreshing it may be to suddenly notice some small yellow flowers (coltsfoot) growing next to the railway, even from the Swedish X2000 train on the full speed.[38] Yet, especially on the trains running at more casual speed like museum trains, the precision we, the citizens of the age of speed, are today capable in apprehending the close proximity of the railway is remarkable.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN HERITAGE IN THE RAILWAY LANDSCAPE: EXAMPLES FROM FINLAND

As proximity or foreground, the concrete railway environment plays an important role in shaping the visual landscape experience of the railway passenger. I will now turn to discuss the railway as material heritage environment, in the context of Finnish railway landscapes. These case examples are represented by photographs, mostly produced during the ongoing heritage inventories of the Finnish railway network, commissioned from the Finnish Railway Museum by the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency. Some of the images, like in the introduction chapter (image 1), are produced in relation to my yet unfinished doctoral dissertation underway at the Aalto University school of Arts, Design and Architecture, Finland.

For case examples, I have selected photographs that exemplify the various dimensions of more-than-human heritage phenomena in the Finnish railway landscapes.

Photographs, as has been thoroughly discussed in the fields of photographic research and history of photography, are not innocent windows to the reality out there; yet their affective power seems to stem from the specific way how they may enable for the sensory, material world to draw itself visible, using its own "voice" and forms. Still, the affective qualities, and thus the assertive or argumentative power of photographs is dependent on the visual qualities of the photographs themselves, such as their composition. Thus, the selection of cases is essentially about the selection of

photographs that seem aesthetically powerful in their expression of more-than-human qualities in heritage landscapes. The photography-based visual method is thus highly qualitative and naturally inclined to draw attention to the singular and unique; yet, the analytical concern for validity of the choices and their relevance to the general heritage dimensions in the Finnish railway landscape is considered part of the research practice. Through selected case examples of photographic material, I will ask, how the more-than-human perspective becomes intertwined with heritage in the Finnish railway landscapes.

The image 2 shows a view from the South – North mainline from Helsinki (Helsingfors) to Tampere (Tammerfors). The section between Helsinki and Hämeenlinna (Tavastehus) was opened in 1862 as the very first railway in Finland and continued further north to Tampere in 1876. For the railway passenger, the open, yet variable agricultural landscapes in the provinces of Kanta-Häme and Pirkanmaa form a panoramic experience that has been witnessed by numerous previous generations of train passengers. Regardless of this obvious cultural significance, this, as well as other comparable travel landscapes too, still lack an official recognition as railway heritage.

The actual stretch of agricultural land seen in image 2, however, belongs to a selection of nationally valuable cultural landscapes, curated by the Finnish ministry of environment, as an area called *Sääksmäen ja Tarttilan kulttuurimaisemat.* The official description of the landscape heritage values in the area, given by the ministry, however, does not mention the railway at all.[39)] However,the railway passengers are undoubtedly a significant "audience" to enjoy the landscape views offered by the area. Moreover, it could be argued that the matured presence of the busy mainline, today an electrified double track still retaining its original, one-and-a-half century old alignment, creates a very remarkable layer of cultural landscape; in connection with the surrounding agricultural landscape with prehistorical continuities, this unity could be interpreted as an interesting hybrid of agricultural, industrial and more-than human heritage, with a strong sense of the vital present and historical continuation also in place.

This kind of static, evaluative view "on the site" is typical to standard heritage inventories and professional practices. Yet, as pointed in the discussion on the importance of proximity, or foreground, for the railway passengers' landscape view, the appearance of the railway as a physical feature forms also a point where these different perspectives may fruitfully intertwine (see image 3).

The discussion above pointed towards the importance of this close range, even for the railway passenger. Sometimes, like in the case I began this essay with (the proximate forest interior experienced from the train), the proximity could lie in the very core of the landscape experience even for the railway passenger. Still more often perhaps, all too easily neglected is the role of the proximity in connecting the passenger with the view of a larger area, or the "landscape proper" in the traditional sense, through a (more or less) fuzzy transitional zone. Yet still, the physical qualities of this rail-

Image 4. An industrial branch in Sipoo, that was experimentally left without chemical herbicide for about ten months. Olavi Karasjoki / VR, 6.8.1968. Finnish Railway Museum collections, VR1:10653.

way proximity remain important, as they contribute to the sensation of "immediacy" and actuality, and in its most cinematic height, the sensation of almost incorporeal, dance-like movement through landscape. All this implies that the railway, as a physical feature, becomes seamlessly integrated into the fabric of (heritage) landscape via the visual appearance of the more-than-human matter, and its qualities emerging from the constant temporal change and from the state of becomingness.

The being of the railway as a temporally deep heritage landscape results from the historical design and materials, as well as from various emergent outcomes of its long-standing coexistence and interaction with its surroundings. Purely as a topographic feature, the railway interacts with its surroundings, including hydrological circumstances, nutrient flows, exposition, and microclimate. The railway embankments might pose barriers for the movements of animals and community development.

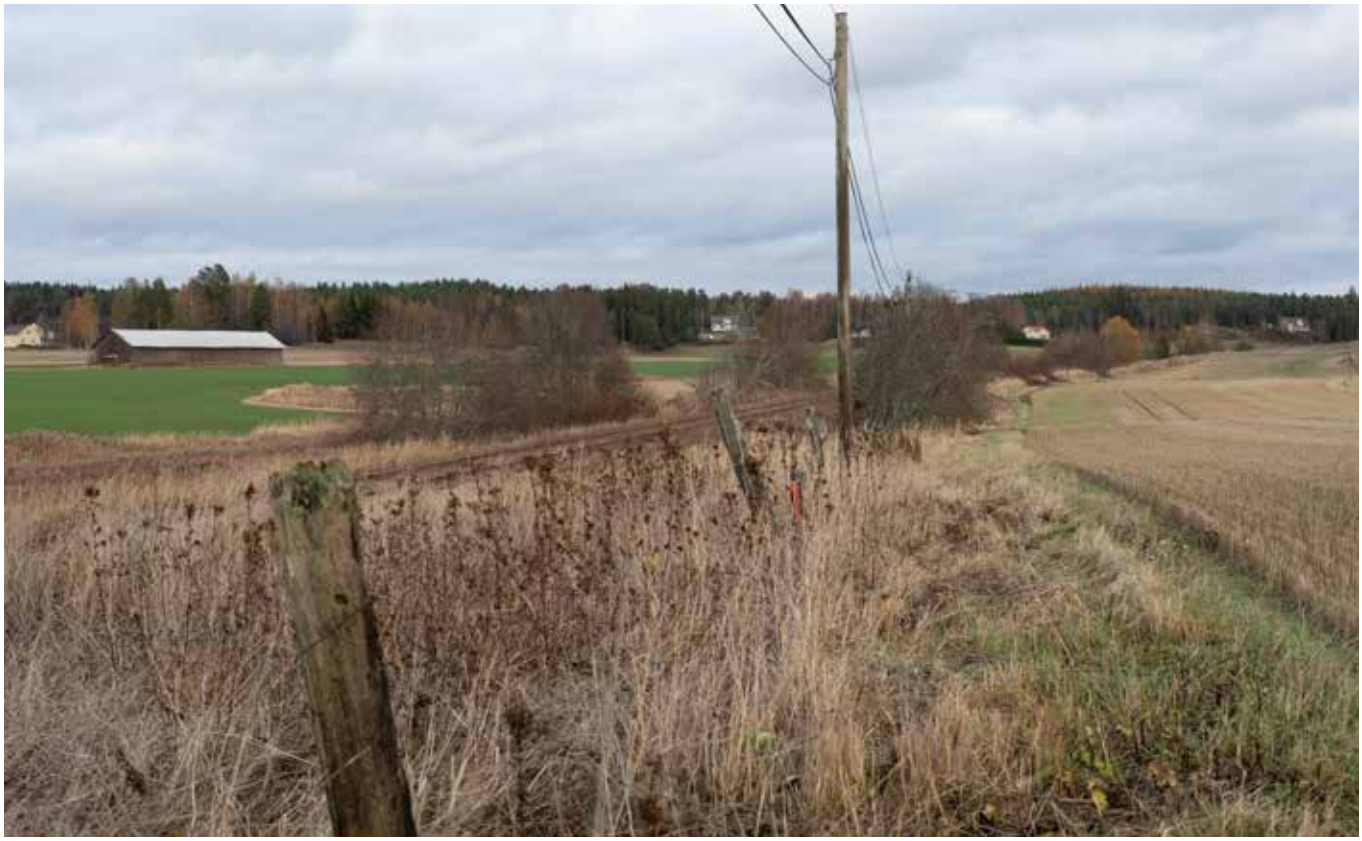


Image 3. A matured railway line introduces diversity and visual variation into the landscape. Porvoon museorautatie / Borgå museumjärnväg, photo Mikko Itälahti autumn 2022.

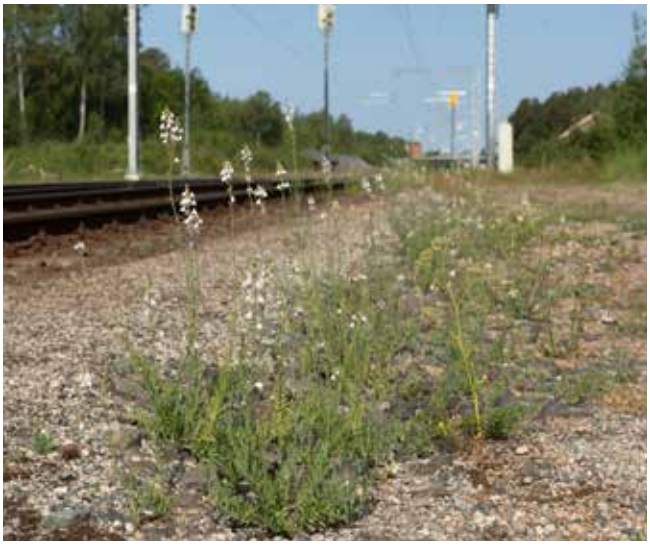


Image 5. Linaria repens growing in the railyard. Uusikaupunki, photo Mikko Itälahti summer 2023.

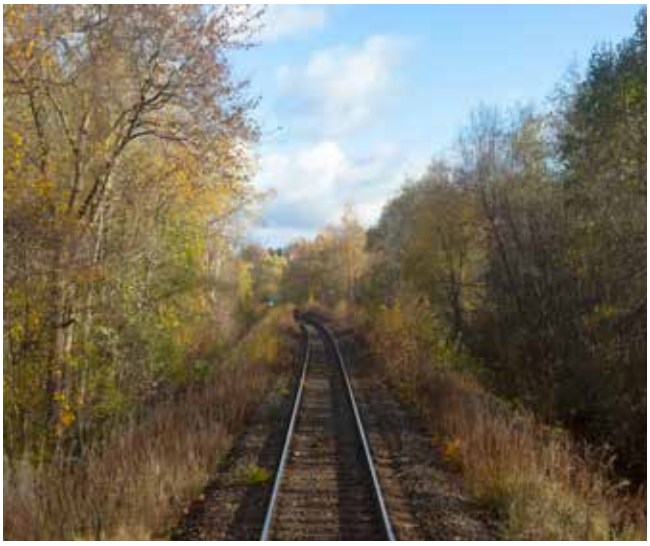


Image 6: Heritage landscape of post-industrial reclamation. Lohja, photo Mikko Itälahti autumn 2021.

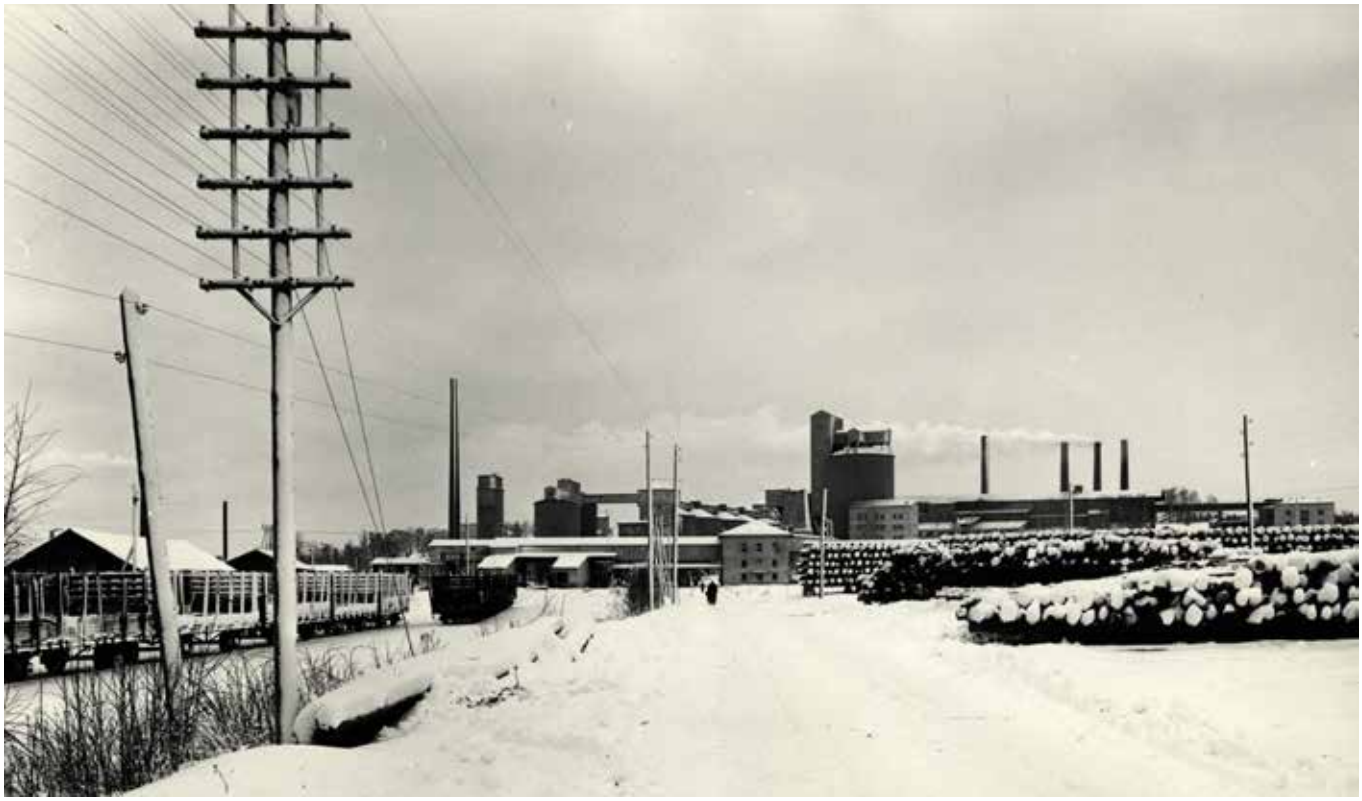
Also from the railway being inherently a stop-centered mode of transport, it interestingly follows that the railway embankment between the stations actually might be one of the most inaccessible and peripheral spots in its influence area, from the human point of view.[40] In areas otherwise subjected to the intensive use of humans, for example agriculture, the railway embankment might form a kind of a reserve, a refuge, for various plant and animal species.[41] According to Matthias Qviström, paraphrasing Eva Gustavsson, the railway forms a hedge-like feature in the intensively cultivated landscape of Skåne.[42] The current geological epoch of Anthropocene, characterized by the omnipresent influence of humanity even in the most remote reaches of the earth left, only emphasizes the diversity value of even small-scale "pockets of wildness".

To use the vocabulary influenced by new materialism, the railway as a material feature has unique "powers" to constrain movements, emergence, and interactions of some (human-borne) entities while, correspondingly, allowing similar possibilities for some (non-human) others.[43] All these emergent properties and agencies, over an extended period, contribute to the emergence of hybrid heritage landscape in a constant state of becoming, across the borders of human and nonhuman regimes.[44] Thus, the heritage landscape of railway is not only something that was created decades ago, but something that is constantly becoming, an evolving outcome of longstanding processes that may be experienced today. This also points to how ruderal heritage is about temporal depth and openness towards change, rather than a "a slice of time", a mere reference to a certain point in the past. For example, the "neat look" of the railway embankments of the 20th century were first achieved through the vast human labor dedicated to the maintenance of the track. Still in the 1930's the track superstructure was weeded by hand, and hay from the slopes was cut for fodder,[45] but by the mid-20th century, the use of chemical herbicides replaced manual labor, which, in turn, were phased out due to environmental legislation introduced in the 1970's.[46]

In consequence, the remaining track beds built of sandy esker gravel (instead of today increasingly more common rock crush), have today re-emerged as preferred habitats for many vascular plant species as well as fauna dependent on them, while their suitable habitats have generally been in sharp decline, especially due to major changes in agricultural production practices. Some species, while contributing to biological diversity, also carry very specific cultural memory. For example, the above image 5. shows a colony of the plant *linaria repens,* that migrated to southwestern Finland along with the ballast unloaded from sailing ships. The only known habitats for this species in Finland are harbors and railyards in the Southwestern corner of the country. These values, however, have thus far been mostly noted by botanists and classified solidly under "biodiversity values". Yet, could they not (in their context) be validly seen as resulting from, and be a memory of, historically changing human– nonhuman relations and, therefore, cultural heritage?

Forest environments along the railways, as well, may also exhibit considerable temporal depth and heritage values. In some cases, due to the dynamics elaborated above, the railway may have contributed to the *preservation* of the pre-existing forest in its vicinity. Or, as in the next example, played a part in the process that has manifested itself as rewilding and as re-introduction of properties already once lost.

The image 6. above shows a broadleaf trackside forest near the southern shore of Lojo Sjö, the largest lake in the continental southwest of Finland. The area is naturally characterized by herb-rich, hemiboreal broadleaf forests, found in Finland only in the very southwestern coastal and archipelago areas. The typical non-human characters of this landscape are, for example, massive oaks and acers, as seen in the image 5 growing next to the Hyvinkää–Hanko (Hyvinge–Hangö) railway. For the most part of the 20th century, this, however, wasn't the case, as the southern shore of the lake Lohjanjärvi (Lojo Sjö) emerged as one of southern Finland's industrial hearths in the late 19th century. A steam-powered sawmill, *Kyrskstads Ångsåg,* opened in 1875 in Virkkala (Virkby), where the



railway aligns with the lakeshore, and was accompanied in 1887 with *Lojo Kalkverk,* a large plant that specialized in the production of cement and agricultural limestone.[47] This industrial development was in the first place, firstly, by the transportation possibilities provided by the Hyvinkää-Hanko railway, opened in 1873, excess, remove the water route, as well as the unique limestone bedrock suitable for the production of cement and agricultural lime. Also, a branch railway to the plants from the Kyrkstad station (from 1906 onwards Kirkniemi / Gerknäs), was opened in 1876. The image 7. shows a view from the mid-20th century, the area still in the height of industrial activity. The viewpoint of that image can be located to some 50 meters left (or north) from that of the above image 6. The trackside forest to the left in image 6 is approximately where the field used for storing logs for the Kykstads sawmill, to the right in image 7, was still located in the 1950's.

In this landscape, the wild traits have been partially able to recover due to changes in economic structure. The Lojo Kalkverk complex was closed in 1994, and the Kyrkstads sawmill already at an earlier instance. Yet, the actual outcome has been also very likely been influenced by the presence of the railway itself, especially perhaps by the barrier effect imposed by the railway embankment on development and other human activities like passage. The forested landscape in image 6 is a narrow stretch of some 50 meters in width, squeezed between a road (also seen in image 7) and the railway. Here, this stretch could be seen as an example of *post-industrial heritage* – perhaps prompting a utopian narrative of *decolonization* of the more-than human world and the possibility of respectful coexistence between humans and other species.

In the above case, the forested stretch left to the railway in the image 6, is still included within the borders of a nationally significant building heritage site *Virkby kalkverk och samhälle* (RKY, Valtakunnallisesti arvokkat rakennetut kulttuuriympäristöt, byggda kulturmiljöer av riksintresse).[48] The description of the heritage site, however, only discusses the historical significance of industry and its building heritage, while remaining completely silent on emergent, more-than human layers of the site.

In contrast to place-specific histories of landscapes like Virkkala, the forest views along the railway do also exhibit more general 'more-than-human' heritage values. I began this essay with a view of the forest from the train window, which arguably should form a particularly important trope of the visual heritage of the Finnish railways. In the passenger's view of the forest landscape, the matured forest along the railway is an emergent feature, that may allow for apprehension of the more-than-human world in an aesthetically powerful way.

It, indeed, appears that the railway has sometimes contributed to the preservation of pre-existing forest environments, if only because private landowners have, for whatever reasons, avoided forest cuttings next to the railway. The very proximate track appears to be often more mature than the surrounding forests. The largest trees are typically found where light has been abundantly available, just on the border of the actual railway property, an opening stretching out 8-12 meters from the center of a single track-line. Consequently, the often narrow, belt-like stretches of forests in the railway proximity regularly exhibit diversity values. For example, in grid-based visualization of the national *Zonation* model, that assesses potential importance of forest-covered areas for

Image 7. Industrial landscape in Virkkala, Lohja, around the mid-1950's. Photo: Olavi Karasjoki / VR, Finnish Railway Museum collections.

biological diversity, the areas in the vicinity of Hyvinkää-Hanko railway, often displayed a pronounced potential for the estimated presence of coarse woody debris.[49)]

Thinking, then, about the railway through the forest as a heritage "site", it appears that the defining characteristic of such landscape is the relatively narrow right-of-way the railway line occupies, which also speaks of a relatively small land-use "footprint" of the railway, in comparison to road transport systems. The railway right-of-way forms an alley-like space amid the forest. The railway and the surrounding forest community may have matured in a dialectical fashion, which contributes to the sense of temporal depth in such a landscape (image 8).

Through a recent shift in the Finnish railway maintenance, the continuity of these forested railway sections as views and more-than-human heritage sites has become endangered. A historically remarkable change has resulted from the establishment of "railway

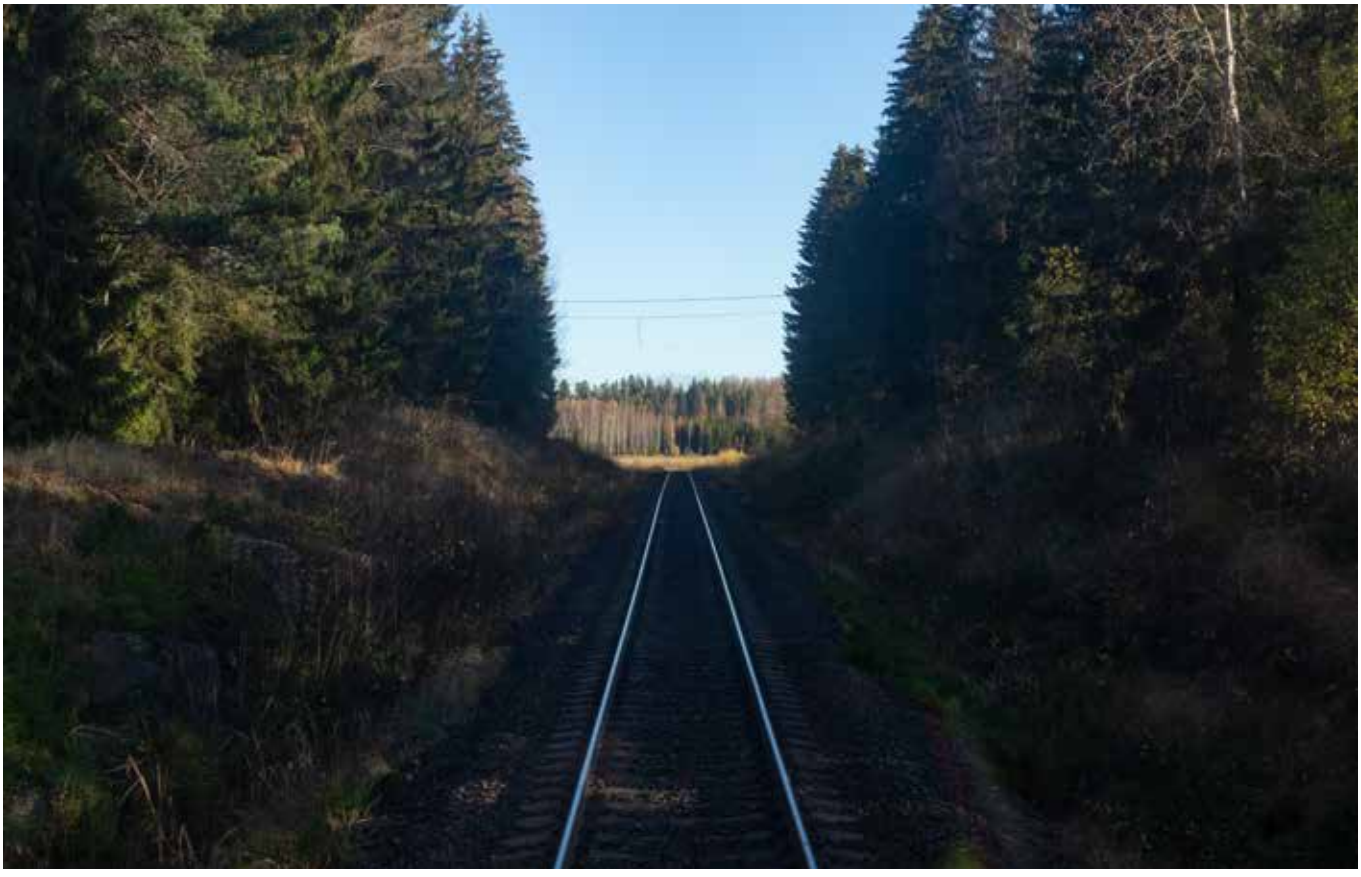


Image 8. The railway alignment through a spruce forest. Hyvinkää-Hanko -railway, photo Mikko Itälahti autumn 2021.

protection zone" in the railway law of 2007, that typically extends to the distance of 30 meters on both sides of a single-track line, measured from the center of the track.[50] The law assigns the railway administrator a right to remove vegetation from the protection zone, when assessed to be a risk factor.

Still in 1987, the State Railways had maintained that "the trees within the falling distance from the track require constant monitoring".[51] In a distinct departure from this selective policy, the complete clearcuts, i.e. elimination of all the wooded vegetation from within the established protection zone, has become a common practice in the 21st century, especially outside of urban areas, in the woodlands typically classified as "economy forests", that overwhelmingly make up most of Finland's surface area (image 9). This shift has resulted in very significant qualitative changes to how the railway relates to the surrounding landscape, and correspondingly, also in the landscape experience of the railway passenger. In the forested sections, the important proximate range of the landscape view now increasingly resembles a managed transportation landscape, that also cuts off the passenger from the vital more-than-human landscape, displaying temporal depth through the longstanding work of more-than-human powers.

EXAMPLES OF LANDSCAPE-RELATED VALUES IN SOME RAILWAY HERITAGE SITES

I will finally discuss the significance of emergent and nonhuman properties for landscape values on some specific sites exemplifying the historical development of the railway infrastructure.

The narrow rock cuttings on the Porvoo museum railway, near Veckoski rapids in the river Mustijoki (Svartsån), some 50 km northwest from Helsinki, can, on the one hand, be seen as examples of "built" heritage structures. As such, to provide an example, they reflect the resources available in the late 20th century, when the branch railway from Kerava (Kervo) to Porvoo (Borgå) was built. Originally, the line, open by 1874, was aligned along the northern bank of the Mustijoki river. The alignment, however, was moved slightly northward in 1890, away from the clay bank that proved to be very unstable already during the initial establishment of the line.[52] The realignment necessitated two rock cuttings, that had been avoided at all costs in the first place. These cuttings on the new line section, when taken into use in 1890, was undoubtedly the largest of their kind on the Kerava–Porvoo branch line (image 10).

In all, a series of three rock cuttings – the westernmost of them still belonging to the original alignment and being the very site where

Image 9. view from a train over a clear-cut railway protection zone, photo Mikko Itälahti.

construction work began in 1872 – form a distinct landmark-like feature for the contemporary museum railway passenger, contributing to the powerful sensory experience of the landscape proximity. Their narrow width retains a distinctively historical character. In comparison with the standards of today, their overall scale appears very modest, even humble. Yet for the contemporary eye, the actual sense of a temporally deep heritage site is greatly enhanced by emergent more-than-human qualities, like the large colonies of common polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*) now thriving on the more shadowy southern wall. The narrow rock cuttings through the rocky masses form a distinctive hybrid environment, kind of a gorge with an authentic cellar-like micro-climate, reminiscent of how heritage values of a site, like the historical sense of temporal depth, cannot be reduced to original design properties.

Another illustrative example of more-than-human heritage values is offered by an orphaned section of a railway embankment on the southern bank of the Raisonjoki river, in the city municipality of Turku (Åbo). The building of the railway between Turku and Uusikaupunki (Nystad) was ratified by the senate of Finland in 1917. Due to large-scale unemployment problem in the city of Turku in the aftermath of the First world war and the newly acquired Finnish independence, the beginning of the construction works was prioritized, even though the alignment within the Turku municipality still remained undecided. Works on an alignment according to an alternative, Proposal III, began in 1918. Yet in the spring of 1921, another proposed alternative, Alignment IV, was ultimately chosen instead (due to the harbour expansion plans by the city of Turku), which resulted in the abandonment of a nearly complete embankment, as well as bridge foundations at the Raisionjoki river.[53)]

As a testimony to the nonnecessity and arbitariness of any technological choice, and reminder of political turbulence of the mid 1910's, some 100 meters of the abandoned embankment, as well as the bridge foundation, has avoided redevelopment and remains clearly visible, surrounded by the lush broadleaf grove (image 11). Today, the green belt surrounding Raisionjoki is an increasingly important recreational area in the Turku urban area, home for some 230.000 inhabitants, which probably will work in favour of preserving the more-than human values in the times ahead.

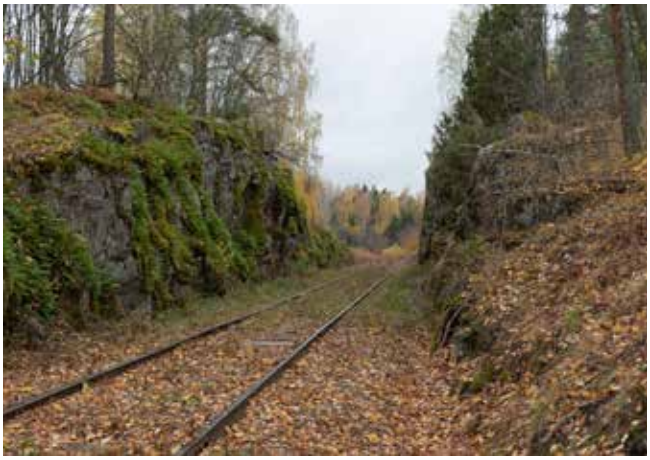


Image. 10 Söderveckoski, Porvoon museorautatie, photo Mikko Itälahti autum 2022.

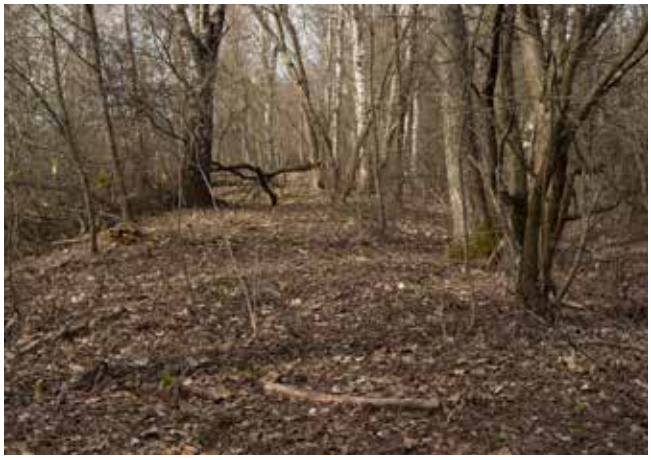


Image 11: Proposed alignment III for Turku–Uusikaupunki railway in the city of Turku, abandoned uncompleted in 1921, photo Mikko Itälahti spring 2023.

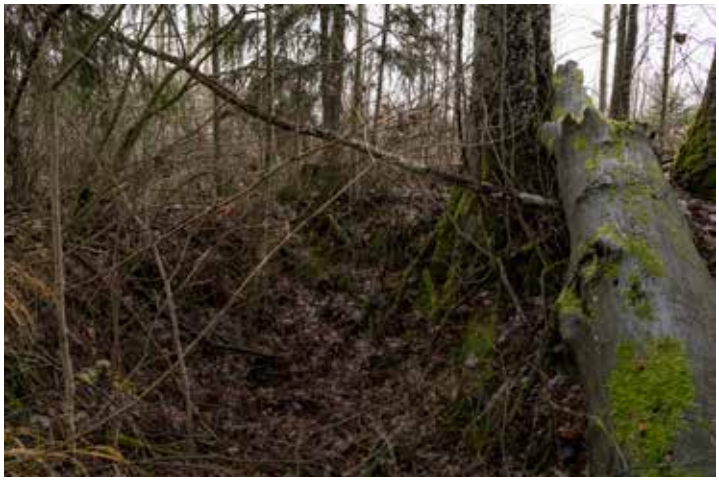


Image 12: Lost heritage? A site of a guard hut abandoned probably over a century ago, Hyvinkää–Hanko railway, photo Mikko Itälahti autumn 2021.

However, in an imagined scenario where the emergent non-human community, like the mighty trees, were to be eliminated from the site, a traditional view within authorized heritage discourses would probably maintain that no harm would necessarily be caused to the heritage values, given the built structure (the embankment) in itself was not touched. Still, it seems evident that the mature forest environment does importantly contribute to the sensory experience of temporal depth and "authenticity" exhibited by the site. Massive birches, bird cherries and oaks are not only testimonials to the most favourable climate found anywhere in the Finnish mainland, but also to a whole century of time, that has been able to pass here relatively undisturbed.

Finally, I have chosen a recurring feature of Finnish railway landscapes, abandoned guards' huts, to exemplimfy Caitleen DeSilvey's (2017) probably most controversial claim, that even ruination could be seen as a contributive process, leading to emergence of the new more-than-human heritage values.

Before draisines came into use in the 1890's, the railway guard's huts on the Hyvinkää-Hanko railway were, on average, spaced by no less than some three kilometers away from each other. However, with the vastly improved mobility the draisines provided for the railway guards, and through the rationalization they enabled, the number of guard huts were deemed excessive. Some of these buildings were directed to be utilized differently, while many, especially in the most remote watershed areas, were demolished and their plots abandoned already by the turn of the 20th century. Yet, to date, these tiny plots of land, with typically spanning only a few hundred square meters, frequently can be found still as part of the railway property, and, mostly due to their negligible size, become ruderal "wastelands" left to their own devices.

One such example was found in the heritage inventory of Hyvinkää-Karjaa (Karis) section, in the north-eastern corner of Vihti municipality, at the northern fringe of Uusimaa (Nyland) province, some 40 km north of Helsinki. In this site, the Hyvinkää-Hanko railway winds through a mosaic of fieldplots and gently sloping hills belonging to a large glacifluvial terminal moraine formation called *Salpausselkä,* that forms a major watershed area separating coastal plains from the inland's lake region.

A humble cavity is all what remains from a ground cellar that belonged to a guard's cottage, on a plot abandoned over 100 years ago (image 12). The cellar probably once had a brick vaulting, but the material has been re-used for unknown purposes already long ago. Other artefacts include a stone foundation of a sauna building, a pile of rocks that probably was the foundation for the baking/heating oven, and a short section of stone wall on the northwestern corner of the site. Even so, can we say that the heritage values on this site have largely been lost, as the standard criteria for evaluating heritage values would suggest?[54)]

In the words of Caitlin DeSilvey, the attitudes towards ruined heritage sites can be roughly classified as approaches seeing the glass as either *half-empty* or *half-full*.[55)] The half-empty side, to date dominating in authorized heritage discourse, tends to see loss and destruction in these sites, with most of the heritage value severely diminished or at least threatened. On the contrary, the more alternative half-full approach favorably directs attention towards decay as new kinds of temporal layers and processes, that may suggest their own productive meanings in relation to the past.

In this fashion, although the architectural-historical value at the abandoned guard hut sites, like the one above (image 12), have been undoubtedly lost, they could be seen as having acuired something (in the domain of more-than-human landscape values) in exchange; these sites, having fallen outside the standard human economic uses as "wastelands", exhibit extraordinary evidence for the passage of time, as well as a *sense* of temporal depth and continuity. Within the temporal-material fabric of the site, the minimal anthropogenic remains, slowly collapsing and being buried under accumulating layers of sediment, remains a testimony to the history of the transport system management and its geographic extent, the partially self-sustaining livelihood of railway guards, amid other, emergent heritage values still genuinely part of the railway landscape. The massive trunk of dead aspen, fallen over a long bygone root cellar, providies an authentic testimony to the passage of time, while also providing a microcosmic habitat for new inhabitants, invisible fungus and insects species dependent on dead wood debris that is largely lacking in industrially managed forest areas. This site that has averted the "normal" fate of Finnish forest habitats,

Image 13: Yard birch on a guard hut site abandoned before 1940, Hyvinkää–Hanko railway, photo Mikko Itälahti Autumn 2021.

practices of streamlined forestry management precisely *because* of it being a former railway guard hut site in a relatively remote watershed area and still part of the railway property.

Tree individuals from older generations are typical characters, regularly met in these abandoned guard hut sites. Theytree individuals from older generations, that began their lives probably when the plots were still inhabited. Silver birches (*betula pendula*) have a distinctive place in Finnish vernacular building heritage as yard trees. Massive branches and a wide crown still clearly indicate that a mighty individual depicted in image 13, found from another abandoned guardian hut site on the Hyvinkää-Hanko railway, once grew in an open environment where light was abundantly available. The feralized yard trees and other vegetation, generally showing surprising endurance, are still a living memory of human-nonhuman co-habitation, while a younger generation of genuine forest characters have also regularly found a refuge among their half-feral peers from these pocket-size microperipheries.

CONCLUSION / SUMMARY

Railway landscapes and their values take various forms: as the views from train, as material assemblages of landscapes, and as special heritage sites, testimoning to their particular histories. Drawing from work developed in critical heritage studies, and especially the cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey's concept of ruderal heritage, it was argued that landscape-related heritage values are also emergent and created by more-than human actors and processes like reclamation by vegetation, ruination and weathering.

New ways of understanding heritage have formed during recent years in the fields of critical heritage and landscape studies; ways that generally question the anthropocentric presuppositions of human supremacy and the role of humans as the sole creators of cultural heritage, which still seem to underlie the standard approaches in authorized heritage discourses. Through a lens provided by these new understandings of heritage, the railway landscapes of today can be understood as having been enriched by more-than-human actors and creations in multiple ways.

Through a selection of empirical examples from Finland, this essay aimed at pointing out how the co-existence of the railway, with its more-than-human surroundings and processes over time, has produced new kind of heritage landscapes with distinctive temporal depth. This is not to defy the significance of built objects and traits of the railway for heritage, but to instead suggest an extended understanding of heritage itself. Through the concepts of emergence, temporal depth, and co-existence, I aimed at highlighting heritage values that do not derive their meanings from the planned intentions of historical human societies.

These emergent properties that were brought about without or even against human intentions, have typically been deemed meaningless in standard authorized heritage discourses. Yet these could be seen as important contributors of railway heritage environments today and their temporally deep quality. These emergent properties, and their possible meanings, still call for further exploration and elaboration. Yet it seems clear that solely for the purpose of widening the anthropocentric view of "culture" it would be useful to develop sensitivity towards the hybrid outcomes, where human creations are intertwined with nonhuman agencies and materialities, producing temporally deep more-than-human heritage landscapes; they could be seen as valuable and interesting outcomes of sustained human-nonhuman interaction, even when the processes they exhibit might work against utilitarian human purposes.

These emergent and landscape-bound heritage properties, however, also seem to call for new kind of attitudes and approaches in heritage stewardship. These more-than-human aspects probably cannot be maintained through traditional conservationist heritage strategies, but rather, they seem to call for a completely new kind of respect and sensitivity towards the more-than-human lifeforms and diversity beyond the anthropocentric evaluations of heritage and landscape.

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