

III The City of Helsinki and “the Urban Question”

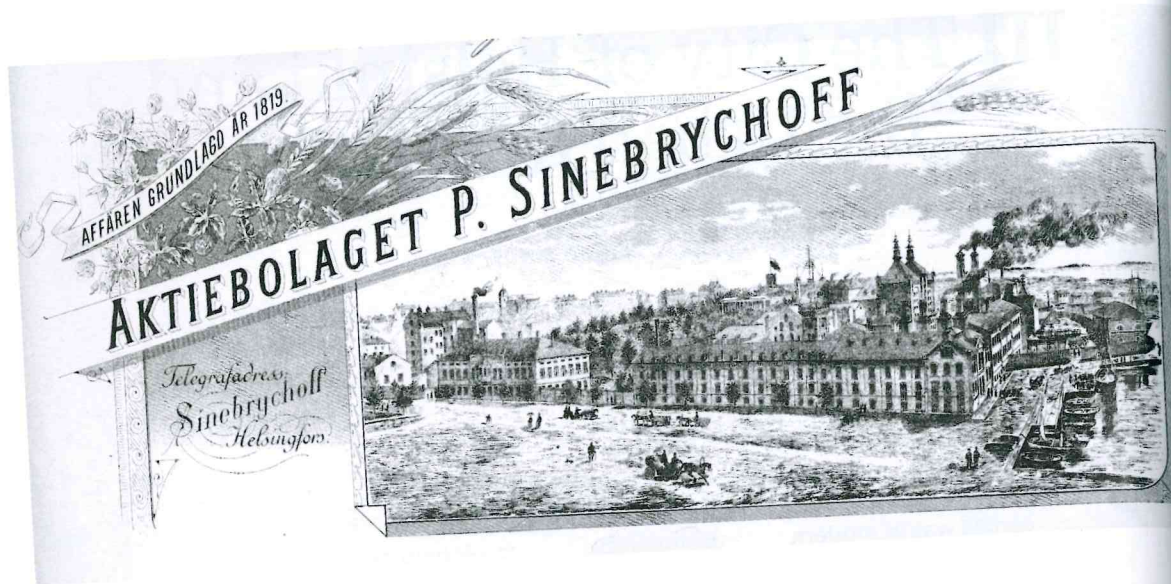
The Background to the Progress of Finland's Economy

According to many indicators Finland in the mid-1850s, as was mentioned earlier, was in modern terms comparable to a developing rather than a developed country (see Appendix III). Indeed, at the beginning of the 1860s Finland's gross domestic product per capita was about 25% lower than the average level of the rest of Europe. In the following decades economic development accelerated significantly and just prior to the outbreak of the First World War Finland's GDP per capita had already caught up with the average level of European countries.

This rapid development was made possible by the economic and industrial exploitation of the forestry resources of the northern European hinterland due to the demand generated by the expanding of the world economic system led by western Europe. Already at the end of the 19th century, the relation of foreign trade to GDP was almost 50%, which is very high even for small countries at that time which integrated previously self sufficient and closed economies into the network of international trade. During the second half of the 19th century the vigorously expanding western oriented timber exports were joined by an export trade in paper and pulp, which in its early stages linked the Grand Duchy of Finland to the rapidly expanding economic area around St. Petersburg.

The view in the 1930s from Erottaja looking up Heikinkatu (later Mannerheimintie). On the right is the Swedish Theatre (Svenska Teatern). Finland had to keep pace with more developed countries. Parks and boulevards were an integral feature of European cities. (Helsinki City Museum)





The Sinebrychoff brewery in the late 1800s. On the left is the family home of the Sinebrychoff who became one of the richest families in Finland through their brewery and distillery interests. The home is now an art museum, part of the Finnish National Gallery, and a bequest by Paul and Fanny Sinebrychoff in 1921 formed the core of the museum's foreign art collection. (Helsinki City Archives)

When it came to large-scale investments in the infrastructure to open up economic bottlenecks and stimulate activity, the financial resources of private capitalists and entrepreneurs gave way to state capital. The railways and canals also demonstrated that the government of the Grand Duchy had adopted a strategy of modernising the Finnish economy and promoting industry. The strong nationalist movement (Fennomania) helped in this modernising project. Improving transport conditions and the opening of the western markets meant that both imports and exports increased.

During her autonomy Finland enjoyed formal customs autonomy. In Russia Finnish goods had a favoured tariff treatment with no or low tariffs. It has been estimated that this was favourable for Finland's industrialisation, particularly for the paper industry together with the consumer goods and metal industries.¹ Bearing in mind that Helsinki as a capital was also becoming Finland's financial centre the city itself was experiencing an economic boom. So far as Helsinki was concerned, its first major period of growth began in the 1870s continuing until the 1930s,

and during that time the city's economic life became more active and varied. Big banks and insurance companies were located in Helsinki. New hotels and restaurants opened their doors. This prospering of business life was facilitated by the construction of a railway to Hämeenlinna in 1862, and then in 1870 to St Petersburg, which provided a major market place for Helsinki industries. Thus by the 1910s Helsinki was no longer a mere administrative town and university centre but also a major commercial and financial centre with flourishing industries of its own although it could not be compared with Stockholm, where one quarter of the working population gained their livelihood from commerce.² By 1910 industries and services had become the biggest employers in Helsinki.

Helsinki City Administration 1875–1917

In just over two decades Helsinki has grown from a big small town into a small metropolis," commented the city treasury as they pondered accelerating municipal expenditure in the early years of the 20th century.³

The period from the 1870s to the First World War was one of brisk development in almost all fields of life, and urbanisation was then at its liveliest in Central Europe so that it was felt that new hierarchical concepts should be developed to handle the phenomenon. To be regarded by experts as a major city at the turn of the century a municipality had to have a population of at least 100,000. Helsinki was thus Finland's only city in this category. Its growth rate had been extremely fast as between 1860 and 1910 its population had increased from 22,228 to 133,150 – an average annual growth of 3.6%. This was almost on a par with that of leading German cities. In the Nordic countries only the yearly growth figure of Kristiania (Oslo) (4.1%) was similar between 1850 and 1900 while the equivalent rate for Stockholm was 2.3% and for Copenhagen a mere 2.1%.⁴

By 1907 the population of Helsinki exceeded 100,000 but the growth had been not only quantitative but also qualitative; the people's expectations and demands had increased. They expected new, higher standards of services from the "metropolis" that Helsinki now appeared to be. The decision-makers were keen to compare Helsinki with "Europe", and with conditions in the metropolises "of civilized countries".⁵ The industrial



Hotel Kämp was a glamorous, continental hotel built in 1887. The interior was commissioned from Berlin and St. Petersburg. In 1965 the hotel was demolished; later on, in 1999 it was reopened in the same place with the same facade and the same name. (Helsinki City Archives)

revolution and urbanisation had by this time effected developments not only in Britain and Central Europe but also in the Nordic countries. These places therefore offered a natural source of experience for Finns who needed to solve the social problems caused by the rapid growth of Helsinki.

- The 1873 Act concerned with Local Government in Towns had somewhat vaguely defined the tasks of the local authorities as the management of the "common affairs of order and economy" of the inhabitants. Thus it allowed the local self-governing bodies freely to adopt new tasks if they so wished to be carried out in the name of the municipality. An increasing number of technical, administrative and moral issues arose with advancing social change well beyond the personal experience of the city's decision-makers and the state legislation did not provide any guidelines. Moreover, like elsewhere in Europe, epidemics, high death rates and high infant mortality were problems well into the

20th century. The local authorities had therefore to seek a lead on certain matters from the solutions adopted in countries that were in a more advanced stage of industrialisation, urbanisation and hygiene. But it was also important to find innovations, which provided the best long-term solutions in financial terms, as alongside the progress of urbanisation Helsinki city's expenditure was rapidly escalating especially in the fields of law and order, health care and education.⁶

Between 1875 and 1917 the Helsinki City administration was very much based on the work of elected officials. The highest authority was vested in the elected City Council and its members also sat on the City Treasury, the executive body, as well as on various municipal boards, the members of which were all elected. In the same period the number of such boards trebled. As most of the matters on the agenda of the City Council were prepared in sub-committees manned by elected council members the influence of elected representatives was even greater. Between 1875 and 1918 a total of over 800 such sub-committees were instituted.

Compared with the old administrative system based on the leadership of the burghers of the town and the highly bureaucratised city administrative court the new municipal administrative system allowed fresh innovative forces to make an impact. The plutocratic voting system (the number of votes varied between 1-25 according to taxed annual income while companies had also right to vote⁷) had a vital impact on the emergence of this cultural, financial and social elite, which was a professionally modern group of people with extreme versatility in terms of its intellectual capacities and the knowledge its members already possessed.

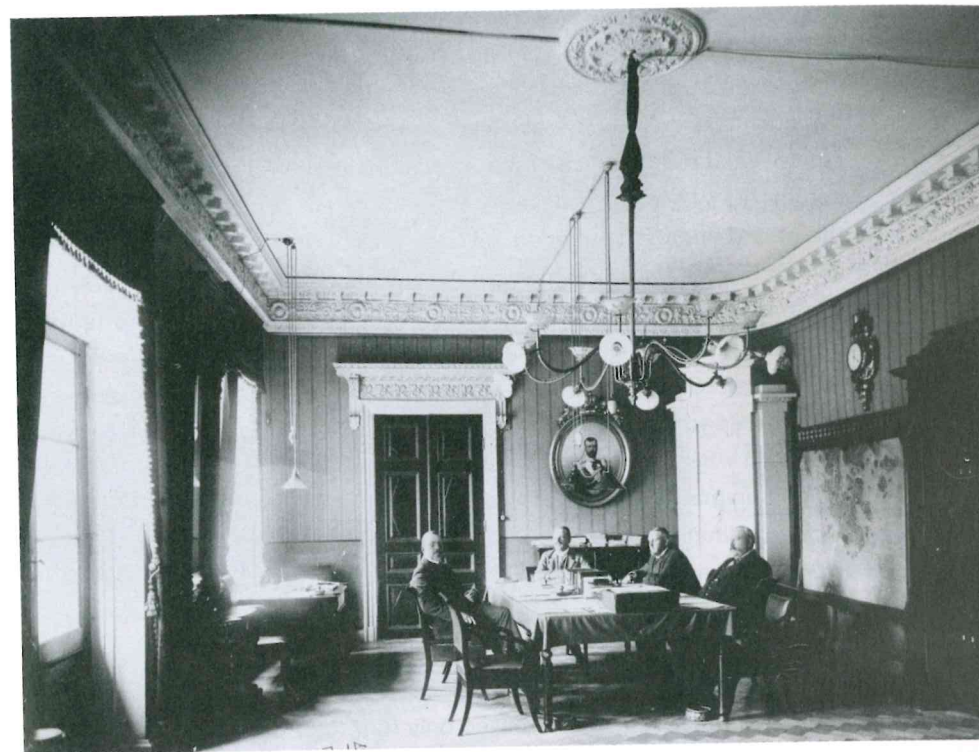
- Of all city councillors perhaps the most typical was Leo Mechelin, the chairman of the City Council in 1875-76, 1878, and 1892-99. A university professor he was also a banker, a member of the Senate and was considered the "most European statesman" in Finland, the torchbearer of liberalism and later of the passive resistance to the russification to be discussed in Chapter Five. It was the initiative taken by him in 1896 in the City Council that led to a breakthrough for modern welfare policy in the Helsinki municipal administration during the next few years, and it was he who in 1905 introduced into the government programme the development of welfare laws in Finland. Subsequently the most influential decision-makers on Helsinki's welfare policies soon took over the key positions in the national administration in order to force through a

number of welfare reforms. Apart from Mechelin himself this "mafia" included K. J. Ståhlberg, the future first president of Finland and Leo Ehrnrooth, the influential chairman of the Finnish Municipal Association. They were all lawyers by training.

Indeed, it was the educated classes that dominated Helsinki City Council from the very beginning and of the total of 359 councillors two thirds (246) were university graduates including 74 PhDs. Four fifths of the councillors also belonged to the highest social category. Unlike the schoolmasters and post office officials who were to be found leading the councils of Finnish country towns and rural communes the City Council in Helsinki thus included in its ranks top experts and opinion leaders at national level. They included 37 university professors, 28 members and high officials of the Senate of Finland while the heads of National Boards of Construction, Health Care and Education were joined by the editors-in-chief of the major newspapers, the directors of the most important banks, insurance companies and major industrial and transportation companies.

■ It was also typical all through the period that a great number of high-ranking civil servants and national politicians were to be found in the self-governing municipal bodies of Helsinki. Thus by 1918 one councillor in two (from a total of 154) had been a member of the Finnish parliament, the Diet or the *Eduskunta* (the new parliament in 1906) that succeeded it, while one in eight had also been a member of the government of Finland. As a result among the highest level of state authorities there was a continuing knowledge of the municipal planning in Helsinki while these personal links also benefited the city, as its decision-makers were well aware of the ways of thinking and planning of the national bureaucracy and politicians. This interrelationship was particularly important as the capital could act as a source of inspiration and experiment for the innovative policies required to solve the problems and satisfy the reform needs resulting from its having the fastest growth rate in the whole country.

Consequently, between 1875 and 1917 the network of know-how available for the city administration of Helsinki embraced the international links established by the top ranking representatives of learning, business and state administration in the whole of the Grand Duchy. The leading civil servants in the services that were expanding most were physicians, engineers and architects representing professions where at that time professional further education abroad was almost *de rigueur*. In the City



Council they also formed a significant group so that there might even be 8–9 physicians among the elected councillors. Of the total of 359 councillors elected between 1875 and 1918 the physicians numbered 30 along with 27 engineers and 15 architects, totalling 20%.

The professional experience of these men, coupled with their international connections, was available to the City during the decision-making process as well as in the preparatory stage in the sub-committees. They also often debated issues related to the development of the city in meetings of learned bodies, such as legal, economic, medical and technological associations. Moreover, these decision-makers had trained, in their professional capacity, the architects, engineers, lawyers and physicians, who as municipal officials prepared and executed these decisions.

Before the Helsinki City Council was formed in 1875 the City Administrative Court had a significant role in municipal decision-making. The picture shows a City Administrative Court meeting in 1912. (Helsinki City Museum)

■ Various opinions have been put forward concerning the input of the educated classes in municipal life. In 1885 one critic lamented that the “bourgeois business-like running of affairs” had been replaced by “eloquence acquired from academic life or the formality of the civil service” and that the lack of practical experience and the municipal committee system were delaying the handling of complicated issues. On the other hand the councillors belonging to the educated classes adopted an unprejudiced attitude towards the solving of new emerging problems and this was helped by their capacity to seek help from abroad, often from countries where they had studied.

The limited nature of the franchise which favoured the wealthier classes helped to facilitate in practice the ideas promoted by the better educated while it did not allow the great masses to take part in decision-making on matters closely related to their own life. Some thirty years later such an administrative model based on the active involvement of elected representatives was no longer adequate for the needs of “the small metropolis” and the municipal bureaucracy grew steadily after the early 1890s with this becoming an escalating growth after 1908. In total the consequent increase of bureaucracy was five fold between 1885 and 1918 while the population had increased only four fold. The areas where the numerical growth of municipal employees exceeded that of population growth were the education and cultural services, poor relief and above all the health care services where the number of employees increased by a staggering thirty fold. One must also bear in mind that the establishment of services such as water, gas and electricity plants clearly marked a development in the municipal administration not anticipated in the framework delineated by the law.

The political parties were also evident in the City Council of Helsinki. The franchise and the election system guaranteed that Swedish-speakers held absolute dominance in the municipal life of the city as in the elected council there were only some 20% Fennomen, i.e. promoters of the Finnish language and the finnification of public life in Finland. The early Labour movement, which from the beginning had established good foreign contacts, also maintained good relations with the Helsinki city administration though once it adopted a more social radical line with the formation of the Social Democratic Party in 1898 it became increasingly isolated. Socialism as well as the bourgeois welfare policies, devised to



During the second half of the 19th century, improvements to street lighting and expansion of the gas distribution network were recurrent items on the agenda of Helsinki City Council. Gas was first used in Helsinki for lighting, then for cooking. The picture shows gas lamps being cleaned at Konstantininkatu 10 (Meritullinkatu since 1928). Gas lamps had to be regularly cleaned to ensure they functioned properly. Photo from 1912. (Helsinki City Museum)

The Introduction of Public Utilities: Gas in the 1860s...

A high standard of expertise and contacts were certainly needed if Helsinki was to acquire all the modern utilities that were being launched all round Europe and were considered now the indicators of the progressiveness of a city. The introduction of gas demonstrates well the problems Helsinki had to face before this service was launched there in 1860, that is more than forty years after gas had first been used for street lighting in Europe.⁸

The first experiments in using gas as a source of lighting were made in 1804 in the works of Boulton & Watt near Birmingham and gas for

lighting the streets was first used in London in 1814 by a private company; within a few years some 26 miles of pipes had been laid under the London streets for this purpose. The use of gas then spread rapidly so that by 1850 the number of companies in Britain totalled 200. The Americans, too, were quick off the mark in the adoption of this new technology. The city of Baltimore was lit by gas in 1816 and by 1870 it was being used in 46 cities and towns as the method of lighting.

It was also British companies which first established gas in continental Europe, and they were soon followed by native firms. Thus the first gas plants operating in Germany were established in Hanover and in Berlin in 1826 as concessions of the Imperial Continental Gas Association, though native German firms had already established the gas plants in Dresden in 1828 and Leipzig in 1838. The number of plants expanded rapidly. While in 1850 there were only 35 gas plants in Germany by the 1870s their number had increased to 551 and by 1908 to 1,250.

In Sweden a gas plant started to operate in Gothenburg in 1846, another in Norrköping in 1852 and the first actual gas lighting plant a year later in Stockholm. Compared with Scandinavian countries Finland was not too far behind: the first experiment took place in 1842 in the Finlayson



In Finland, as in the other Nordic countries, gasworks were initially privately owned but in the 1870s they began to be taken over by towns. Gasworks were established in Finland ten years later than in Sweden, first in Helsinki and Viipuri in 1852. The City Gasworks was taken over by the city in 1870.

cotton mill in Tampere under the direction of its British technical director John Barker. However, it was not until 1860 that concessional private gas plants were providing street lighting in Helsinki and Viipuri while Turku streets were not lit by gas until two years later.

Thus in Finland the adoption of gas lighting was delayed for forty years in industrial plants and for nearly fifty years as a source of street lighting. Such a delay was not caused by ignorance. When visiting St Petersburg high-ranking Finnish civil servants and military men must in the early 1830s have seen there some examples of gas street lighting, as had the young Gogol.⁹ Certainly during their travels abroad private individuals had become familiar with this innovation and had spread information to their circles. In a letter to his wife J. V. Snellman, for example, writing in August 1847, described the gas lighting of Berlin. Finnish newspapers had also reported foreign applications of this innovation. In early 1860 *Helsingfors Tidningar* noted that about hundred gas companies were being established abroad each year

"... even in the smallest foreign towns and in recent years even in Sweden... But here in Helsinki there seem to be personages who think it more profitable to acquire Russian oil and Russian candles for their old miserable lighting..."

According to Jaakko Pöyhönen, the resigned tone of this comment reflects two of the major reasons for the delay in applying gas lighting in Finland. An unwillingness to take financial risks, due to the lack of venture capital available, was the major one. The other reason is hinted at in the article's words "the smallest foreign towns". The towns that even the largest Finnish towns, including Helsinki, were following as a model were, indeed, small foreign towns and thus it is clear that the Finnish towns had a very peripheral reference group. A third factor was the lack of interest shown by foreign companies in the business opportunities provided by Finland. As early as 1824 the Imperial Continental Gas Association had offered to construct a gas plant in Stockholm, and the same company had established gas plants in many continental European cities including Copenhagen. However, in the 1820s none of the Finnish towns could provide markets interesting enough for the company.

These three indicators thus reveal that in European terms Finland, and Helsinki, in the first half of the 19th century appeared to major foreign entrepreneurs a hopelessly small market.

■ It was not until 1856 that the use of gas for street lighting was first proposed at the City Administrative Court and it took four years and a visit by a foreign expert invited from Britain, before the municipal authorities decided to acquire gas lighting for Helsinki. Following the example of Stockholm, and using that city's contract as a model, the city in 1860 granted a private company a 40 year concession to establish a plant for gas lighting. The actual planning and constructing of the plant was in the hands of German experts and engineers and its first director was also a German engineer formerly employed by the University of Helsinki.

The other Finnish gas plants of the early 1860s, in Turku and Viipuri, were also packages from abroad. They were planned by foreign experts using foreign technological systems and installed by foreign technicians. The only Finnish novelty in the Helsinki and Turku plants was the replacing of coal as the fuel with the domestic raw material, timber.

■ This transplanting of a ready system to Finland soon proved problematic, however, and the early years were spent in rectifying planning mistakes. Due to the limits of private capital and the small population in each town at the time of the establishment of the plants, they were also relatively small and could not cope with the later expansion of the towns with all their new streets that needed lighting.

Thus it was the hapless task of the new Finnish director of the Helsinki gas plant, Edvin Bergroth, to adapt the system to Finnish circumstances and expanding needs. Bergroth was eminently suited to his job as he had studied engineering in the Hanover College of Technology graduating in 1860, and after taking up his post in early 1862 he almost immediately travelled to Augsburg and Zürich to investigate gas production technologies and their financial yields there. During his six month stay he also took part in the construction of a gas plant in Eisenach before returning to Helsinki in the summer.

During his term of office Bergroth subsequently made several study tours abroad especially to investigate the use of coal as a fuel and the equipment required. It was difficult for him, however, to convince the company that coal could prove better and it was not until 1882 that it was introduced as the gas plant fuel in Helsinki after the Finnish Senate had provided a low interest rate loan. The annual report of the plant could

considered to have the development potential required by a capital city," and indeed, during the first two decades of the existence of the plant the population of Helsinki had doubled from some 22,000 to nearly 42,000 inhabitants.

In spite of such a massive increase in the potential customer base the company appeared to be more interested in providing high profits and in creating reserves than in further developing its services for domestic customers. Some researchers have even pointed out that the company deliberately started to slow down this development as the license of the company was drawing to an end in 1900. Thus the introduction in 1892 of Auerlamps, known since 1885 and already being successfully used abroad in domestic lighting, did not have any major impact in Helsinki. Similarly, although experiments abroad and in Turku in using such lamps for street lighting had proved successful, the gas company in Helsinki only started slowly to switch to these gas saving lamps after pressure from the city authorities. By the autumn of 1900 only half of over 1100 street lamps had been fitted with the Auerlamp. These delaying tactics meant that, even if the invention of the incandescent mantle in 1895 increased the efficiency of gas lighting, the gas company eventually lost its position as the provider of lighting to electricity, which was introduced in Helsinki in 1880.

... Electricity and the Telephone in the 1880s

In contrast to the late adoption of gas, Finland emerged as one of the pioneering countries in the whole of Europe in the adoption of the electricity and telephone technologies.

In fact a Finnish interest in electricity had already been manifested in academic dissertations published in the 18th century while 19th century publications included not only scholarly treatises on the measuring of electric currents by the internationally renowned physicist J. J. Nervander, but also popular works on the various forms that the applied use of electricity could take.¹⁰ As early as the 1840s the phenomenon had already been given the specifically Finnish name *sähkö* rather than some form of the Greek word *elektron* as had happened in most European countries.¹¹ The 1870s saw the first electrical experiments in Finland

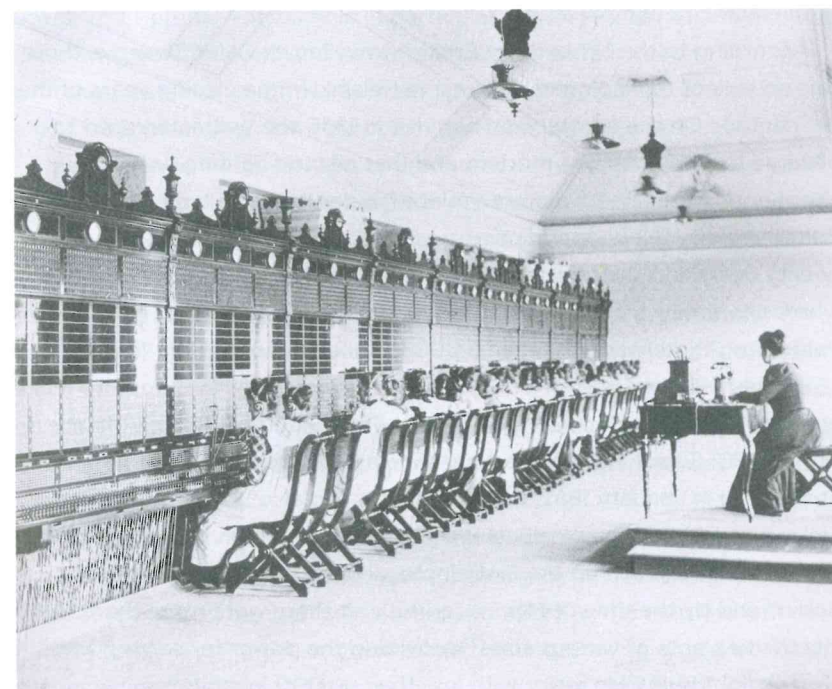


Poster Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft Berlin by Lous Schmidt, 1888.

carried out by a Helsinki University physics dozent (later Professor) Karl Lemström and the German mechanic Martin Wetzer¹², who had earlier come to Finland to install gas plants. Both had contacts abroad and especially in Paris, which in the 1870s was one of the leading cities in Europe in the field of electricity. The first demonstrations of its use for lighting took place in 1877 in the mechanical works of the State Railways in Pasila and at the Kaivohuone restaurant. During the summers of 1880 and 1881 the Kaivopuisto Park was also lit by electricity, and the first electrical retail outlet was opened in the capital in 1880.

Similarly the telephone was introduced to Helsinki in 1877, only two years after its invention by Alexander Graham Bell.¹³ Four years later Tsar Alexander III gave his consent for the Finnish Senate to grant loans for establishing local telephone lines and within a couple of years similar loans were made available for long distance lines. The Telephone Act of 1886 was in force for the next hundred years¹⁴ giving a major boost to the establishment of local telephone companies. Consequently private telephone companies were established in 1882 in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Viipuri, and within the next three years such companies were operating in 19 Finnish cities and towns, and banks and entrepreneurs in particular found the telephone very useful for running their business. The Union Bank of Finland, for example, had telephone links with its branch offices in Hämeenlinna and in Viipuri by 1890.¹⁵

■ The arrival of the telephone was just one of the electricity related developments that created a real interest in such matters and in the men behind these new innovations. The best known among the Finnish general public was the American Thomas Alva Edison and he was sometimes erroneously given credit for being "the noted inventor of the telephone" as well as more accurately "of the phonograph and the microphone". Without exaggeration he was the most popular American in Finland in the last quarter of the 19th century and hardly a month passed without at least one news item on Edison appearing in the Finnish press. When he was developing his incandescent lamp, which was to revolutionise the use of electricity for indoor lighting, the Finnish papers reported almost every step of his progress in experiments with filaments of various materials. What was also significant was that news of these reached the Finnish public only a few days later than newspaper readers in Britain, Germany



The telephone and post office offered employment opportunities for single women. The photo shows the Helsinki Telephone Exchange, about 1900. (Helsinki City Museum)

and Sweden. In effect this meant that unlike in these countries such news reached virtually the whole adult population in Finland given that the literacy rate was already almost 100%.¹⁶

Such news items were bound to create enthusiasm among Finnish would-be inventors and one of them was the 17 year old schoolboy Gottfrid Strömberg (1863-1938) from Central Finland, who managed in 1880-81 to construct a DC-dynamo of 65V and 8Amp with the help of his little sister on the basis of assorted snippets of information collected from Helsinki newspapers. This dynamo, the first ever made in Finland, was used to light the porch of his family house to the great astonishment of the villagers. After studying in Helsinki at the Polytechnic Institute and gaining a degree in electrical engineering in Berlin Strömberg became the first lecturer in electrical technology at the Helsinki Polytechnic Institute in 1887.¹⁷ Two years later in 1889 he established in Helsinki his own company, Oy Gottfr. Strömberg Ab, for the production of generators for local electricity companies.¹⁸

According to the 19th century English traveller, Mrs Alec Tweedie, there was no lack of technological interest in Helsinki in the closing years of the 19th century. On the contrary, on her visit in 1896 she was astonished to observe that the city was modern and that electric lighting and telephones were already commonplace.¹⁹ Indeed, by the time Mrs Tweedie visited the city telephone apparatuses had been on sale there for some twenty years and the network with nearly 4,000 subscribers covered the whole city area – a considerable number bearing in mind that in St Petersburg there were less than 5,000 installed telephones in 1901.²⁰

Similarly Finland had been among the first countries in Europe to make practical use of electricity. Following the Paris Electrical Exhibition of August 1881 Edison lighting had been installed in London, Paris and Strasbourg in January 1882, but by March it had also reached Tampere in Finland. In Helsinki the small plant of D. J. Waden began to operate in late 1884, the same year that the first electrical plant began to operate in Berlin²¹ and by the time of Mrs Tweedie's visit there were more than thirty electricity plants of various sizes²² providing the power for some 20,000 electric light bulbs²³ in a city with less than 80,000 inhabitants.

■ The first electrical plants were established in Finland, like elsewhere in the world, by private initiative. Compared with the case of gas, the delay in the arrival of electricity in Finland was reduced from several decades to a few months.

Therefore, so far as the establishment of electrical plants was concerned, Finland found itself among the pioneering countries. According to Jaakko Pöyhönen there were five reasons for this the first one being that the readiness to take business risks was much greater than twenty years earlier. Moreover the total of capital available had increased significantly after the banking reforms. The second reason was the strong growth of the towns, which in turn meant the growth of potential markets in Finland. Consequently foreign companies were keener to approach prospective customers, industrialists and the city fathers, through their agents and with their tenders. The third significant factor was the emergence of native technical expertise. That was increasingly available as more and more people studied at what was first the Helsinki Technical Realschule (established in 1848). This became in 1872 the Helsinki Polytechnic School and in 1879 the Polytechnic Institute, but Finns also studied at foreign technical institutes, and in many cases they also worked abroad for a few years. The Helsinki Polytechnic in particular was highly appreciated in the German-speaking world and its representatives were invited to the centenary celebration of the German-speaking Polytechnic universities by a group representing many European institutes of higher education.²⁴

Instruction in electrical studies started as early as 1885 at the Helsinki Polytechnic, which was again upgraded to become the Helsinki University of Technology (From the year 2010 part of Aalto University) in 1908. Fourth, and certainly a major reason, was the much lower costs of establishing an electrical plant compared with those of a gas plant. Finally, the Finnish towns based their calculations of the benefit of use of electricity on static consumption thus avoiding time-consuming debates on the potential capacity for satisfying future needs, something that had often arisen as a central issue in many cities before the final decisions were actually made.

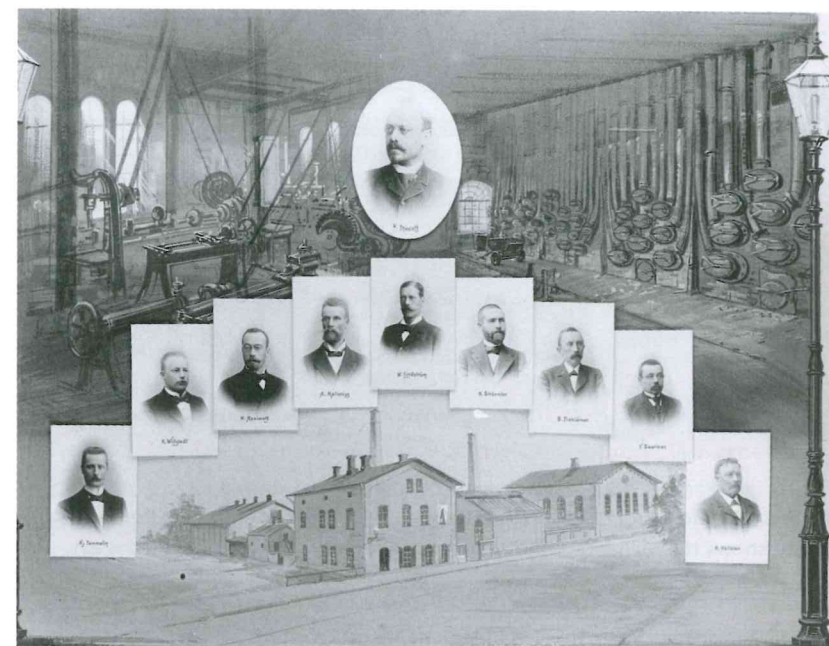
The introduction of electricity involved four possible courses of action: the employment of foreign engineers, the employment of Finnish engineers working as agents for foreign companies, the employment of Finnish firms with Finnish engineers and the undertaking of the work by the municipalities' own engineers. In the case of Helsinki German, American, Swedish and Finnish engineering companies were all involved. By the turn of the century more than 30 independent electrical plants were in operation in the city and it was not until such plants had been in operation for more than twenty years that the city established its own electricity company, which gradually took over the whole operation.

Private or Public Services

To begin with the City Council had not taken any part in the operations of electrical companies,²⁵ but the great number of electrical plants meant that it had to get involved in the debate on whether utilities should be publicly or privately run, a question also very topical elsewhere in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. The arguments presented in different countries were essentially quite similar. The opponents of the municipally owned public utilities used the arguments of the British Lord Avebury who spoke disapprovingly of “municipal socialism” while the supporters pointed out the positive results of municipal enterprise achieved in a number of big German cities.²⁶

In Helsinki the matter had become topical in 1896 when the licence for operating the gasworks was running out. After lengthy deliberations the city decided to acquire the plant in 1898, probably encouraged by a Swedish example for in Stockholm the gasworks had been municipalised as early as 1884. In Helsinki the gasworks started to operate as a municipal enterprise from 1900 onwards. Its new managing director, Victor Emanuel Montgomery, immediately introduced a considerable cut in tariffs, and by the end of 1907 the consumption of gas had trebled according to the Annual Municipal Report.

In spite of these apparently promising developments the issue of whether to municipalise electricity production was hard to settle. In memoranda submitted to the City Council by a number of working parties and committees between 1901 and 1907 the main issue, whether or not to establish a municipal electricity company was invariably discussed in terms of foreign experience using as examples Stockholm, Copenhagen and a number of big German cities. The first report noted that Stockholm and Copenhagen both had municipal lighting companies and exclusive rights for the establishment of cable networks. In Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig electrical companies were given concessions on the basis of sharing the annual profits with the city. On the other hand such German cities as Cologne, Munich, Frankfurt am Main and Dresden had opted for municipal electrical companies, which had proved quite profitable. The same report also pointed out that the city could run the public utilities better than private companies, as it could co-ordinate the construction and maintenance of various cable and piping networks and would also be more successful in securing advantageous contracts. Moreover, it could



The Director of the Helsinki Gas Lighting Company, Wilhelm Thesleff and some of his colleagues. Included in the painting is an old gasworks. (Helsinki City Museum)

also regulate the power supply for the benefit of local industries, and the private citizens would benefit from ensuing tax reductions.

The fighting over the question of municipal enterprise in electricity carried on for some years and with such intensity that the 1905 municipal elections in Helsinki were called “the electricity elections” and the issues raised were so complex that the Swedish Party was divided into three separate factions. Nevertheless their official list of candidates which strongly opposed “monopolies and municipal socialism” in the end carried the day.

Before these elections a long battle over the issue of municipal enterprise had been going on since 1901 in the pages of *Teknikern*, the important trade journal of the engineering profession. At odds were V. E. Montgomery, the managing director of the Municipal Gas Plant and Hugo Mäklin, the managing director of a private Electricity Lighting Company in Helsinki. Interestingly, Montgomery, who had been born and educated in Sweden where he had also worked for several local gas boards, was an ardent defender of municipalisation, whereas Mäklin, who after graduation from the Polytechnical Institute had trained in a Massachusetts



The first electric light in Helsinki was lit only six months later than in Berlin. The picture shows the billhead of the Albion lamp factory. (Helsinki City Archives)

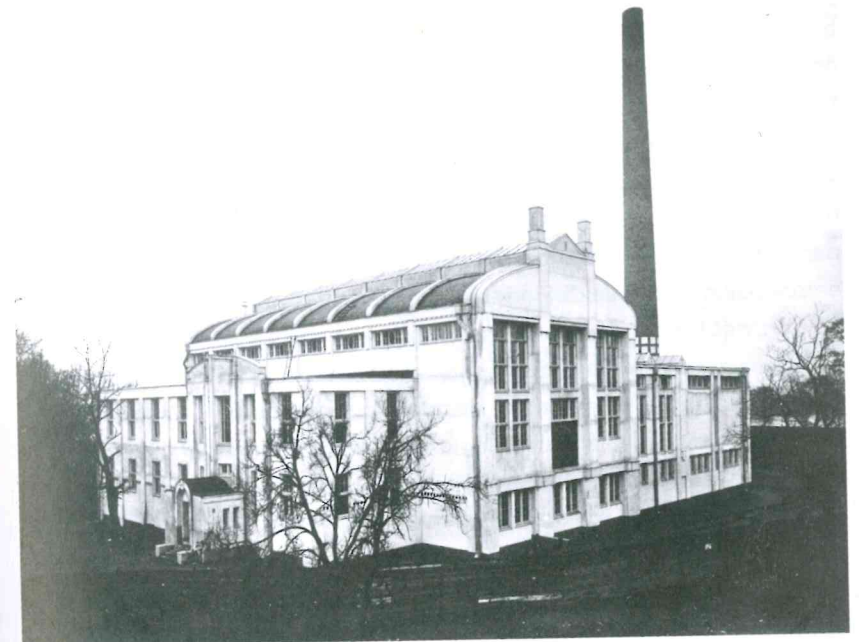
electrical company, was just as fearless a spokesman for private utility companies.

■ The subsequent debate over many years engaged not only Montgomery and Mäklin but also a board member of the Jönköping Gas and Water Company in Sweden. *Teknikern* which appeared to sympathise with Mäklin's case, published in 1903 a series of anti-municipalisation articles taken from *The Times*, published in London. Referring to a number of examples ranging from the size of the municipal workforce in Birmingham and Glasgow to municipal rabbit hutches in Torquay and municipal fireworks in Harrogate, these articles pointed out that once public utilities gained a monopoly status in their localities they killed all entrepreneurship, and this in turn would have a detrimental effect even on the nation as a whole. On the other hand it was quite proper that municipalities were responsible for efficient drainage systems, well-maintained roads and streets and that they organised health care and an adequate supply of good quality fresh water, as all these were services needed by the whole population and therefore indispensable. Naturally the *Teknikern* also published an article on the thoughts of Lord Avebury, who was then perhaps the most prominent opponent of municipalisation in Britain. According to Avebury very few municipal decision-makers were able to run complicated business ventures as their membership changed

too often and could not therefore gain adequate competence in what were increasingly technical issues. Moreover, municipal officials running monopolies would be the last ones to undertake major reforms in a municipally owned firm while private entrepreneurs, who had to survive in competition, were on the constant look out for improvements in running the business according to the most modern methods.

The debate continued among Helsinki's decision-makers and technical experts with the issues ranging from technical problems to the question of the role of Finnish expertise in planning and development. It also involved the issue of a planning perspective and the decision-makers' vision of the future of their city. In order to clarify both the technical issues and possible future developments the City approached experts in Stockholm and Gothenburg and commissioned detailed plans from the Allgemeine Electricitäts Gesellschaft and Siemens & Halske.

■ However, it became quite obvious that any system should be adapted to meet Helsinki's special conditions thus making the native Finnish experts invaluable. As Hugo Lindeberg, an engineer who had studied in



The Helsinki electrical plant, designed by the architect Selim A Lindqvist was inaugurated in July 1907. (Helsinki City Museum)



Bernhard Wuolle, the chief resident engineer of the Helsinki City Electricity Plant and its first managing director and a supporter of municipal enterprise. After graduating from Helsinki Polytechnic Wuolle studied for some years at the Charlottenburg Technical University in Berlin and simultaneously worked at Siemens Schuckert Werk. Wuolle made several study tours and business trips abroad making personal contacts with foreign electrical engineers and the managing directors of electric plants in other cities. Later Wuolle would use his contacts for the good of Helsinki. (Helsinki City Museum)

the Polytechnic Institute under Gottfrid Strömberg, pointed out in 1905 the reading of foreign statistics did not require any particular training background nor did the straight imitation of foreign systems. However, in order fully to benefit from the new innovations in electricity technology the city should definitely engage Finnish electricity engineers. They were well qualified not only to take into account the Finnish climate and other special circumstances and to adapt foreign systems accordingly but also to maintain and develop these systems in the future. Indeed, on this particular issue Finnish and Swedish-speaking engineers joined forces by emphasising the value of Finnish expertise and the need to employ more Finnish, not foreign engineers in Finland.

Obviously Helsinki's decision-makers followed this advice as the municipal electricity committee decided to send Bernhard Wuolle on a long study tour in Europe meeting experts in Gothenburg, Munich and Zurich as well as Berlin. Following his report the City Council finally decided in July 1907 to establish a municipal electricity plant in Sörnäinen and to adopt the mixed system of three-step alternating current, which would be transformed to DC power in substations. Thus Helsinki adopted a system which was becoming increasingly popular in large German cities. However, from Wuolle's report it is possible to read between the lines some concern about whether Helsinki could adopt the models of German,

Swiss and Scandinavian large cities and omit some of the earlier development stages or whether it should use Warsaw and other East-European cities as its reference group. Interestingly, once established, the Helsinki Municipal Electricity Works in 1907 joined the *Vereinigung der Elektrizitätswerke*, an organisation of municipal and private electricity companies in German cities. However, a quarter of its members were Austrian, Swiss, Hungarian, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Spanish, Dutch, Belgian, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and Finnish electricity companies. Thus in principle the expertise of the whole of Europe was at the Helsinki electricity company's disposal.

What is also interesting is the almost total omission of references to Russian expertise during this discussion on private – public utilities. After all, St Petersburg had municipalised its water-distribution system in 1893 and other municipal enterprises there included municipal gasworks, trams, city markets, cemeteries, wharves, a slaughterhouse and even a municipal bank, and in 1901 the city municipalised the telephone system with a consequent eightfold increase in subscribers. By the turn of the century more than half of the St Petersburg city income was actually derived from these municipal enterprises.²⁷

The main reason for this omission may be the fact that the discussion on private versus municipal ownership of public utilities was carried out mainly in connection with a debate on the provision of electricity. Although St Petersburg reservedly enjoyed a high international reputation as a major centre of expertise in electrical sciences, Helsinki Polytechnic Institute was fortunate to have Gottfrid Strömberg as the first teacher of electricity. Being himself an inventor and industrialist he could implant a tradition of practical application alongside theoretical instruction. Moreover, while Helsinki was one of the pioneers in Europe in the use of electricity, it also had access to St Petersburg expertise for example through Hugo Lindeberg, mentioned above, who had worked in St Petersburg for five years, while other Finnish engineers customarily worked at some point in their career for Russian based companies. That the Finns did not let concern over the russification of Finland or potential health hazards prevent them from travelling to Russia in search of major innovations is evident from the trip made by representatives of the Helsinki Telephone Company (which is still a private company!) to Moscow in 1905 to see one of Europe's most modern telephone exchange systems installed there by a Swedish company.²⁸

IV The Quest for International Know-How

When urbanisation was at its liveliest at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th it became extremely clear that cities and towns had started to form their own ever-expanding network. The municipalities were in the process of establishing mutual co-operation which transcended national frontiers and oceans. It started on a regional and then on a national basis and developed soon into an international phenomenon. Contributing to this process were the emergence of ever more specialized groups of experts and professionals, the pressure of keeping up with developments and the improvement of communications. European and American cities competed in demonstrating how progressive they were and how far they had adopted modern technology.¹

This process manifested itself at town congresses and meetings where municipal officials discussed common economic, social and cultural questions while city exhibitions provided a forum for demonstrating the progress made in various sectors of municipal life and in the implementing of public utilities. Such events were the products of a growing self-assurance among municipal officials and of their wish for collaboration with their counterparts in other cities. The Municipal

Esplanade Park. By European standards, Helsinki remained a small town until the 1880s, when it began to grow rapidly. The outward symbols of metropolitan life, i.e. the wide boulevards and the Art Nouveau buildings, are indications of the ambition to make Helsinki a continental city. The Grönqvist house on the left, designed by architect Th. Höijer and completed in 1882-83, was at the time the largest residential building in Scandinavia. (Helsinki City Museum)





Henrik's Esplanade, also known as Heikinkatu (later Mannerheimintie) in 1916. All age groups enjoyed the comforts of the area. (Helsinki City Museum)

Exhibition at Dresden in 1911 was generally accepted as unique and the first in this field.² In his studies of urban planning Anthony Sutcliffe has called this increasing internationalism of the cities and towns "creative internationalism."³ Civic pride and inter-city rivalry provided the motivation, the increasingly efficient development of statistics provided the useful tools and improving communications and travel connections provided the means. Helsinki was among the first cities to take advantage of these developments by sending its first officials to study urbanisation and the urban infrastructure in other European cities as early as the 1870s.

Professionals – the Agents of Urbanisation

Like elsewhere in Europe professionalisation was an essential part of the process of modernisation in Finland, and Helsinki as the capital was the hub when the renewal of state administration and industrial development created a demand for various new professional categories at national level. Moreover, in the 19th century as the need for professionalisation also became increasingly urgent in municipal operations, Helsinki, as the biggest city, was again in the forefront of these developments. Both the political and economic sectors needed efficient experts in specialist



A public well in the centre of Helsinki. It was dug in 1869 and first provided spring water and later mains water. (Helsinki City Museum)

fields, who in turn secured the status of highly trained professional groups. In Germany, for example, the number of officials increased from 1.6% of the actively working population in 1882 to 6.1% in 1907.⁴ Similarly in the city of Helsinki the total of people employed by the state, city and church, 4.% in 1870, had become 10.1% by 1910.⁵ In short, both the state and the city became dependent on an elite of officials, and in Finland this professionalisation was, in its early stages, essentially a Helsinki based phenomenon.

In the second half of the 19th century many new professions emerged as society was modernised and new laws, statutes and regulations were enacted requiring supervision by trained professional groups while the expanding paper work inevitably called for an increase in the number of clerical personnel. Consequently a great variety of inspectorates requiring special knowledge was created, such as inspectors of health, kindergartens, buildings, gas and smoke. Similarly many of the new professional groups formed in the 19th century answered the urgent needs resulting from rapid changes in the occupational structure and from the growth of population in urban centres. They included social workers and school doctors as well as district nurses and Municipal Officers of Health. Energy questions, traffic problems, water supply and drainage difficulties were all a challenge to municipal technicians and engineers. The widening technical sector in particular provided work for new, highly trained professional groups.

■ Efficiency and rationalisation required a special degree of skills in certain medical fields and among teachers in schools for retarded children, as well as among architects responsible for town planning and statistical experts in various branches. However, the drive for efficiency often led to the control of others belonging to the same professional group, and when any professional field became more scientific, those with special training and/or experience in their trade controlled the admission of others to the relevant group. Such supervision was to be found among doctors and lawyers, for example. Along with the emergence of new tasks for the highly trained officials in state or municipal administration, the difference between them and those with less training in the same profession became more sharply defined.⁶ The professionals also had working hours and salaries fixed on a regular basis in contrast to labourers, from whom they aimed to detach themselves not just at work but also in their way of life.

The passing of examinations for professional qualification linked members of the same professional groups together, and the establishment of professional associations further strengthened professional identity. This process, which took place parallel to the development of industrial capitalism, urbanisation and improving educational services, was first witnessed in Britain and the USA, where industrialisation had also started early. In Britain 13 professional groups each launched their own specialist organisation between 1825 and 1880 while in the USA 11 such organisations were established between 1840 and 1887. The associations strengthened their members' professional identity as well as the credibility of the group in relation to outsiders and society.⁷ Such associations and organisations often developed further into real pressure groups, and their influence was even stronger as many represented professional groups essential for the development of the welfare society. In Finland it was the medical profession that was the pioneer in organising itself by establishing the *Finska Läkaresällskapet* in 1835. This medical society as well as, from 1881 onwards, *Duodecim* (the association of Finnish-speaking physicians) both provided an excellent forum for discussing the latest innovations. A much discussed topic at the end of the 19th century was, for example, hygiene ranging from housing and disinfection to health conditions in the women's correction institute in Hämeenlinna and the teaching of hygiene in schools. The impact of such professional societies was twofold: they strengthened professional identity and were sources of professional

information. For the latter purpose the *Finska Läkaresällskapet* systematically collected medical literature. Its library, by 1885, had established an exchange of publications with 17 medical societies and as a result regularly received 71 different medical journals, of which 62 were foreign – a telling indicator of the society's extensive foreign contacts. Similarly *Duodecim* also maintained its own library. The language of the abstracts in such journals is another indicator of the nature of the international links. So far as the publications of the *Finska Läkaresällskapet* were concerned, French was the language used between 1879 and 1901 in the abstracts of articles published by the society, while *Duodecim* started to employ the German language from 1902 onwards.⁸

■ However, on the whole, it was in the 1880s and 1890s that the founding of professional societies began to become commonplace. The society of technologists, the *Tekniska Föreningen för Finland*, was established in 1880 and in Helsinki teachers organised themselves in 1887 into the *Helsingfors folkskolors lärare och lärarinne föreningen* while the pharmacists founded the *Suomen farmaseuttinen yhdistys* two years later. The 1890s saw the establishment of, for example, the *Arkkitehtiklubi* as a sub-division of the *Tekniska Föreningen* in 1892 and the *Teknikkojen seura* for the Finnish language engineers in 1896. In 1910 the Finnish Library Association was established. Without exception all these professional bodies were based in Helsinki.⁹

The level of professionalisation may be roughly measured not only by the number of different associations but also by the number of professional periodicals and bulletins. Often the establishment of both took place concurrently, and between the early years of professionalisation in the 1830s and 1917 when the country became independent, a total of 81 professional journals and periodicals were established in Finland. Their foundation accelerated in pace during the 1890s and reached a high point in the first and second decades of the 20th century. Bearing in mind the major concerns in the 19th century, it is hardly surprising that the most numerous were the journals in technology (30%), health care (27%) and schooling (22%) whereas there appears to have been less need to establish professional journals in matters related to social policy or adult education. Many Finnish professional newspapers and journals also functioned as the mouthpieces of particular organisations with consequent implications for the decision-making process.¹⁰

Sources of Information

When there was a clear need in Helsinki for some renewal or change, models and systems from various countries and cities were investigated and compared from a range of written sources while a fact-finding tour provided an opportunity for personal observation, often the most important stage in the Finnish system of finding facts about new innovations and their application.

Such tours were normally based on thorough preliminary investigation involving the careful study of the published materials available. One of the essential sources of information was the comparative municipal statistics, which emerged towards the end of the 19th century following the principle of openness, which could not only provide a boost to civic pride but was also an efficient means of spreading information on innovative practices. In Germany most cities had established municipal statistical offices as early as the 1860s, and by the end of the century such bureaux were functioning in almost all cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, and from 1879 onwards their heads held annual conferences for deciding priorities in the gathering of statistical data at any given time. This provided the basis for the comparative municipal statistics published annually from 1890 onwards for German cities with over 50,000 inhabitants. With this German statistical publication being used as a model comparative municipal statistics were also published in Austria from 1893 onwards and in Italy from 1906. A single volume of *Comparative Municipal Statistics* was published by London County Council for the year 1912–1913 but the outbreak of war in 1914 put an end to any further publication.¹¹

In Finland the value of comparative statistics as the basis for decision-making was fully recognised by the early 1860s, and a modern statistical office for compiling information at the national level was established in Helsinki in 1865 following especially Belgian models.¹² By 1910 it had become obvious that the City of Helsinki itself could no longer manage with statistical information generated by a variety of municipal offices, and in September of the same year the City Council decided to establish a centralised Municipal Statistical Office with quite wide terms of reference. Under the supervision of the City Treasury the office had the duty not only of collecting, organising and publishing statistical and other information on the municipal administration but also more extensive surveys of the

city's population, economy, social conditions and culture. Consequently the city's affairs can now be explored in the extensive annual reports on municipal administration from 1875 onwards¹³ as statistical data had been collected from very early on in many sectors. For example Johan Rabbe, a Doctor of Medicine, analysed mortality statistics in Finland in the mid-19th century publishing annual reviews and comparing the figures with foreign statistics.¹⁴ As a result municipal officials could participate in the international exchange of statistical information and the *Statistical Yearbook for Helsinki* first appeared in 1905.

■ Other sources of information used in preparing study tours were the leading encyclopaedias and handbooks, which were available for Helsinki municipal officials as were reports on municipal congresses attended earlier by colleagues as well as the follow-up publications of such meetings. Yet, by far the most important documents to consult were the professional journals and periodicals as they reflected the latest achievements of different municipalities in relevant specialist fields.

In Central Europe and in Britain special periodicals were published for municipal officials and decision-makers, which provided information on developments in various sectors of municipal life. They included the German *Städte-Zeitung*, *Kommunales Rundschau*, and *Kommunale Praxis* and in Britain *The Municipal Journal and Local Government Review*, and they especially focussed on making comparisons between different countries and cities. The *Yhteiskuntataloudellinen aikakauskirja*, established in Finland in 1905, followed the same principle.¹⁵

Regular congresses and civic exhibitions in turn provided a more detailed survey of the pertinent issues. As in the case of municipal statistics, the provision of open information was the standard practice. In the Victorian era progress was a definitive goal, and the aim of the municipal congresses and civic exhibitions was to show others how advanced and skilled the management of civic affairs could be. This in turn strengthened feelings of civic pride creating a motivational environment for the spreading of innovations. Therefore attending some of the most important national and international municipal congresses was essential also for the development of Helsinki. At these meetings Helsinki city officials were not only able to get the latest data for comparing the Finnish capital with other European cities but also to forge the useful personal links needed for later fact finding tours.



Postcards sent home by travellers depicted the multiformity of the European metropolitan culture. The picture shows postcards sent to Finland from Berlin at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. (National Board of Antiquities, the Archives for Prints and Photographs)

City renewal exhibitions were specially numerous in the early 1900s. Examples include the Düsseldorf city exhibition of 1909 and the Berlin exhibition of construction held in 1910, which presented the results of the planning of Greater Berlin. The City of Helsinki sent participants to Berlin in 1910 as well as to the Royal Institute of British Architects Town Planning Conference in London in the same year as well as to the Municipal Exhibition held in Dresden in 1911.¹⁶

■ In Finland also it was civic pride, the need to keep up-to-date with the developments taking place in your reference group that was one of the major motives of many fact-finding tours. For Helsinki this meant attempting to develop in the same direction as other capitals, bearing in mind that different municipal sectors had their own model cities. Attending municipal conferences and making fact-finding tours were another important part of the development of professional competence. Thus by financing such travel the city embarked, in modern terms, on investment in human capital and the further training of staff. It was understood that such investments had to be made to secure the

availability of trained experts whether generalists or specialists. Therefore the Finnish Senate, central administrative boards and educational establishments, notably Helsinki University and the Polytechnic, together with the cities, gave grants and travel assistance for the acquisition of the latest knowledge.

In the central boards and administration of the city of Helsinki there were many experts who had themselves studied abroad and appreciated the application of the latest knowledge. They understood the importance not only of acquiring other countries' experience but also taking regard of local conditions in the application of innovative ideas as opposed to merely directly imitating solutions used elsewhere. Therefore those planning to travel abroad for study or in order to attend a conference normally had no difficulty in obtaining leave of absence. Individual experts, for their part, naturally had a great interest in acquiring the latest knowledge in their specialist field and had often privately followed foreign developments in order to maintain their professional skills by acquiring, during their travels, professional literature and periodicals.

Improving Communications and Travel Conditions

The undertaking of such tours had become much easier with improvements in international communications. By the end of the 19th century Helsinki was connected with the rest of Europe both by telephone and telegraph. The telegraph, which had been used during the Crimean War for military purposes became more widely used from the 1880s onwards and in the 1890s the telegraph network covered the whole country. We have already seen that Helsinki was well advanced in the field of telephones, and that it was as early as 1877 that a civil servant or a businessman was able to use it in Helsinki for the first time. By 1900 all Finnish cities and towns had a telephone company linked to some 2,000 kilometres of telephone lines, and by 1916 the density of telephone networks in Finland was higher than in Russia.¹⁷

At the same time improved postal links facilitated the speedier availability of background material, newspapers and professional journals.¹⁸ While in 1860 there had been a mere 37 post offices in the



The Baltic Sea has always been a busy sea route and ships have brought merchants and entrepreneurs from Central Europe and Britain to Finland. The introduction of regular steam boat services in the end of the 19th century was revolutionary facilitating the mobility not just of scholars but also of the general population. This advertisement of the Finnish Steamship Company, in both English and German, dates from 1913. (Archives of FÅA)



Icebreakers were first introduced in Finland in 1890. The picture shows delegates at the first international port congress in Finland (22-23 January 1923) visiting Helsinki's harbours aboard the icebreaker "Herkules" bought by the City of Helsinki. (Helsinki City Museum)

whole country normally located in towns, in the following decades their number grew rapidly so that by 1900 there were 700 post offices operating in Finland. In the early 20th century this expansion of the post office network continued at accelerating speed so that by 1920 there were 1,161 post offices and nearly 1,300 sub-post offices round the country.

■ However, it must have been the improving travel conditions that most helped the undertaking of foreign fact-finding tours. From the mid 19th century onwards people travelling from Helsinki to continental Europe had three alternative routes to select from. The oldest was the southern route by sea across the Baltic to Stettin or Rostock and from there by train to different European cities. The second, the western route led first to Sweden from where the journey could be continued by boat and by train. The third, eastern route from Helsinki through St Petersburg to Berlin, became an all-year round alternative once the railway link between Helsinki and St. Petersburg via Riihimäki was completed in 1870.

The western route was the cheapest but also the longest. In 1867 a journey from Helsinki via Stockholm and Lübeck to Paris took 4–5 days. In 1871 a trip by train using the eastern route via St Petersburg reached Berlin in 68 hours and 15 minutes including a 13 hour long wait in St Petersburg. Ten years later, in 1885, it was possible to travel from Helsinki to Vienna in 70 hours including a five-hour long wait in St Petersburg and a 90 minute wait in Warsaw. These travel alternatives were all compared in the Finnish press especially before the world fairs, which certainly attracted visitors from Finland. Moreover, steamships also shortened journey times so that one could sail from Helsinki to Travemünde within a few days, and soon it was also possible to travel by boat to English ports, such as Hull¹⁹ even if the ships primarily transported butter and timber to Britain and passengers were of secondary importance²⁰ According to Mrs Alec Tweedie who arrived in Helsinki in 1897:

*"... The first impressions on entering the Finnish harbour of Helsingfors were very pleasing; there was a certain indefinable charm about the scene as we passed in and out among the thickly-wooded islands... (and) the arrival of the Hull boat once a week (was) one of the great events in Helsingfors life, and everyone who could went down to see her come in."*²¹

The introduction of the steamship in the 1850s and the railway in 1870 was followed by the launching, in 1883, of a shipping line, the Finnish Steamship Company, to Stettin, Bremen, Rotterdam, Antwerp and many English seaports. The introduction of ice-breakers in the 1890s finalised this development. Finns now had all the year round access by sea not only to the Scandinavian capitals and the capital of the Empire but above all to the European continent and the British Isles. All this improvement in travel possibilities was clearly a major factor in the further widening of horizons evident in all fields of life in late 19th century Helsinki.

The Active Search for Foreign Know-how

Helsinki was quick to take advantage of these improving travel connections, as the first fact-finding tours by city officials were made as early as the 1870s, and between 1870 and 1917 officials and employees

of the city of Helsinki (doctors, chemists, elementary school teachers, progressive librarians, architects, engineers and promoters of adult education and social work) carried out a total of 390 journeys in search of foreign expertise and know-how.²²

The duration of these travels varied from a weeklong journey to a specific congress or exhibition to a year-long study tour. The longest journeys in terms of time and distance were often carried out by senior figures in a particular field, who undertook tours up to a year length round European cities in order to get an overall picture of the latest developments. There was also a great number of visits around Europe, exploring the operations of institutes, hospitals, schools and education systems with the aim of solving specific Finnish problems.²³ This recalls Vogel's account of how the Japanese collected knowledge as they rebuilt their country after 1945. The method used was participant observation and those sent abroad were people with long working experience on whose power of evaluation great reliance was placed.²⁴



Oy Nikolajeff Ab's vehicles outside the premises in 1914. At the end of 2000, there were around 2.5 million vehicles registered in Finland. Cars accounted for almost half of this figure. Motoring got off to a slow start in Finland and there were only 170 registered vehicles in Helsinki in 1915. By 1991 this figure had grown a thousandfold. (Helsinki City Museum)

The reasons for travelling abroad also varied. Of the 390 journeys mentioned 99 involved attending international congresses while the main aim of eleven was to visit important exhibitions. Occasionally the initiative came from foreign sources in the form of invitations to attend international exhibitions or scientific congresses. But the journeys could also be initiated out of private interest and they were in many cases financed by private funds, as a form of professional further education. A great many of the journeys were initiated, financed and even made obligatory by the city itself, which funded 158 of the trips. The state was also a very significant source of funds, and a number of physicians in particular travelled on Senate grants.

- The number of journeys was naturally small in the early years of the new municipal administration system established in 1875 but with the increase in the economic prosperity of the country the number escalated.

Thus three quarters of all fact finding tours for the benefit of the city of Helsinki during the period covered took place in the early years of the 20th century, as economic growth provided an increase in the number of travel grants available. In relation to the gross national product one can observe that its volume index and the number of travels both peaked in the same years of 1890, 1897, 1900 and 1913. However the fact that the number of journeys grew two and half times faster than the growth of the economy²⁵ indicates the feeling of urgency in finding solutions for the escalating problems caused by the urbanisation process.

Apart from economic growth the political situation also had an impact on travel. During the second period of oppressive Russian policies in Finland between 1906-1914 it was difficult to make progress by means of legislation as many measures were being delayed for political reasons. Consequently state civil servants and municipal officials prepared many reforms either individually or within committees. The Chairman of the Association of Finnish Towns, Leo Ehrnrooth, even stated in 1912 that when the state did not wish to facilitate any progress the municipalities were to take on the

Table 1. The study tours of Helsinki municipal officials and experts

1870-79	3
1880-89	33
1890-99	73
1900-09	146
1910-17	135

Sources: Printed papers of Helsinki City Council 1875-1917. Annual Reports of the Health Committee 1888-1917, Reports of the Municipal Elementary Schools in Helsinki 1902-1917.

role of supporting economic, cultural and social development.²⁶ Increasing resources were therefore directed to gaining the latest know-how from abroad and it was the norm for all such committees to include an extensive survey of relevant foreign developments in their report.²⁷

- Matters concerning elementary education were the concern of almost half of all journeys and they were the topic of over two thirds of the conferences attended by Finns (see Table 2).

Travel related to health care amounted to some 30% while town planning, poor relief/social welfare and workers' education some 5-8%. Lighting accounted for less than 5%, perhaps because Finland itself had been a pioneer in the field of electric lighting. The main emphasis was on fields where growth and change were then most rapid.



Leo Ehrnrooth, LL.D. (1877-1951) became a member of the Helsinki Board of Workers' Affairs in 1905 and, in 1911, of Helsinki City Council. In addition, between 1911 and 1917 he was the chairman of the Helsinki Board of Workers' Affairs, later the Helsinki Board for Social Welfare, and, from 1912 to 1917, the director of the Association of Finnish Towns. (National Board of Antiquities)

Table 2. The Nature of study tours

Service sector	Total	Including	
		Congresses	Exhibitions
Health care	115	16	2
Elementary schools	187	67	3
Town planning	20	3	4
Social services	21	5	1
Adult education and Training	31	-	1
Lightning	16	8	-
Total	390	99	11

Sources: See table 1

Although it was very common for the traveller to visit several countries, cities and institutions during one single fact finding tour,²⁸ bearing in mind Finland's position as a part of the Russian empire, it is somewhat surprising that only eight out of 390 study tours included Russian destinations. The major targets were the Scandinavian countries (a total of 292 journeys) and Germany (148). The popularity of Sweden (154) including Stockholm (124) can partly be explained by the old cultural and linguistic links, partly by the fact that Stockholm was en route to the Continent and partly by the fact that a considerable number of elementary school conferences were held in that city. Denmark (93) and Copenhagen (78) were also a quite normal part of any itinerary. Germany was another major destination lying as it did on the way to the rest of Europe. Even so, its capital, Berlin, was only visited in 71 cases out of a total 148 journeys to Germany (see Table 3). Normally the capital of a country was a major destination but in the German case the comparative neglect of Berlin may reflect the fact that many Finns already had knowledge of other major locations of expertise in that country having spent some or all of their study years in German institutions, so that they had no need to seek guidance in the capital.

Table 3. The study tours of Helsinki municipal officials 1870-1917

Total visits		Visits to capital	
Sweden	154	Stockholm	124
Germany	148	Berlin	71
Denmark	93	Copenhagen	78
Norway	45	Kristiania	44
Switzerland	34	Bern	9*
Austria	22	Vienna	19
France	22	Paris	22
Great Britain	21	London	15
Belgium	18	Brussels	8
Holland	17	The Hague	6
Russia	8	St Petersburg	6
Hungary	7	Budapest	7
USA	6		-
Canada	1		

*Tours to Zurich totalled 16; note also that the destinations total more than 390 as one tour could include a number of countries and cities.
Sources: See table 1.

It is evident from the travel reports that the Nordic capitals, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Kristiania, as well as other large European cities formed the reference group for the Helsinki municipal officials and experts and that such metropolises as London, Paris and Vienna held special attractions for them. Nevertheless over the years they also visited a number of other cities and locations. The wide range of destinations is illustrated in Table 3.

The main aim of the comparatively few trips to Russia was to attend health care and hygiene exhibitions as experts in order to give talks. Albert Palmberg, for example, who was an internationally famed expert on hygiene and had received an important international award at a hygiene exhibition in Paris, was the head of the Finnish section at the 1893 hygiene exhibition in St Petersburg and chairman of the organising committee of an international medical congress held in Moscow in 1897, where he also gave a talk on school children's physical education. He had become a much sought-after expert in hygiene as far afield as Argentina and was invited to become a member of numerous foreign scientific societies.²⁹

It may be that at that time Russia was considered less developed than Finland with no significant innovations of interest to those who wanted to develop their urban infrastructure. In fact St Petersburg, which in the early 19th century had been safer and more orderly than the Paris or London of the day³⁰ was now facing the near collapse of its municipal administration, which could not cope with the escalation of its population after the emancipation of the serfs, and the city suffered from chronic epidemics, a soaring crime rate, abysmal housing conditions³¹ and very high infant mortality.³² In addition it is worth bearing in mind that the cholera epidemics arriving from Russia³³ and the Tsar's conscious Russification policies in Finland from 1899 onwards with the consequent creation of anti-Russian feeling also coincided with the peak decades of study tours before the First World War.

■ When relating the destinations of the journeys to the services that interested Helsinki officials one can detect the following broad outlines:

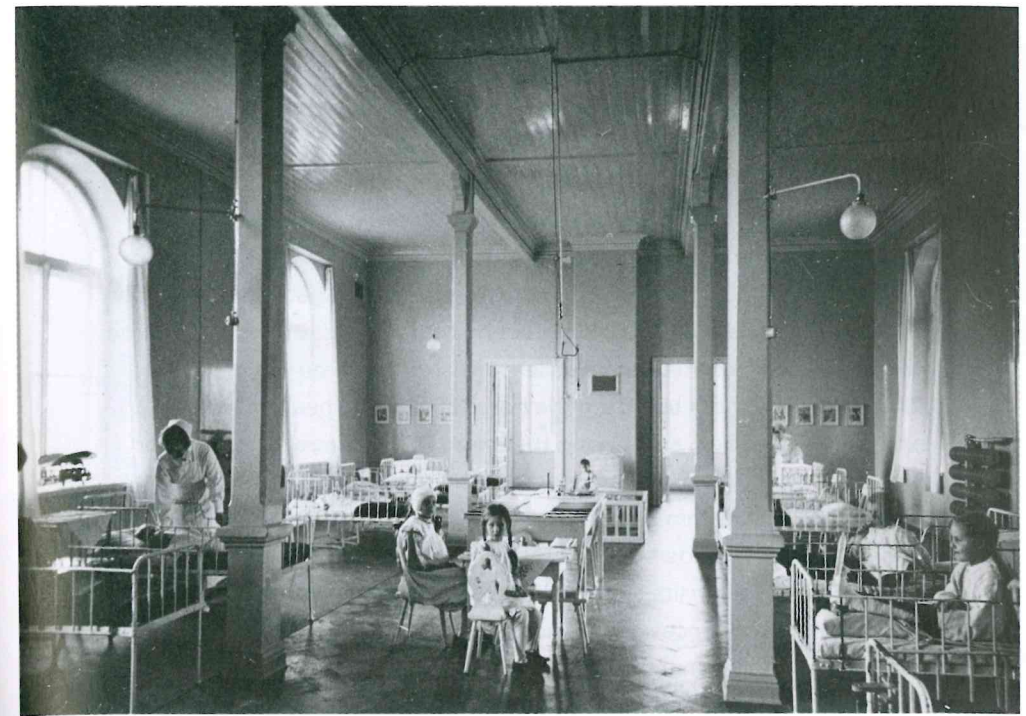
- Sweden was particularly interesting for teachers, physicians, engineers and other town planners as well as developers of social welfare and adult education;
- Germany attracted physicians, teachers, engineers and town planners as well as adult educationalists, teachers, developers of



- welfare policies and town planners;
- Denmark was an essential model for those interested in hygiene and milk control as well as an important source of information for welfare politicians and town planners;
- Norway was important for primary school teachers and developers of health care;
- Switzerland for developers of the primary school system as well as for adult educators and engineers;
- France was important for those interested in food inspection, hygiene and the education of the labouring classes;
- Belgium was important for the hygienists; and
- The Netherlands for those interested in water supply management.³⁴

Several of the experts, as we have already noted, had been abroad in their study years including many of the Helsinki doctors, who until the mid-19th century had often studied in Paris, and later in Germany. Between 1900 and 1914 a total of 102 veterinary surgeons gained their professional qualification in German institutes of higher education in Hanover and Dresden, as at that time it was not possible to study this field in Finland. At the same time there were in Berlin alone a hundred Finnish students, half of whom were studying medicine. Thus international contacts were often the result of these study years spent abroad during periods of specialisation, but they were also the result of attendance at scientific congresses, or of time spent working abroad or making study tours. The co-operation between new professional groups knew no language barriers. Personal contacts facilitated the exchange of information and could make international contacts more readily accessible to colleagues.³⁵

■ This was particularly striking in the case of medicine. The collection of statistical data on infectious diseases and mortality rates in Finland provided an opportunity for instant comparisons and when news about the revolutionary treatment of tuberculosis by Prof. Koch reached Finland by way of foreign medical journals such as *Medicinsk Tidskrift*, the Grand Duchy immediately sent dozent Richard Sievers to Berlin to investigate. Sievers's report was duly published in 1890 in *Finska Läkaresällskapet Handlingar*, the professional journal of the Finnish Medical Association and in the following year Sievers also described the effects of this



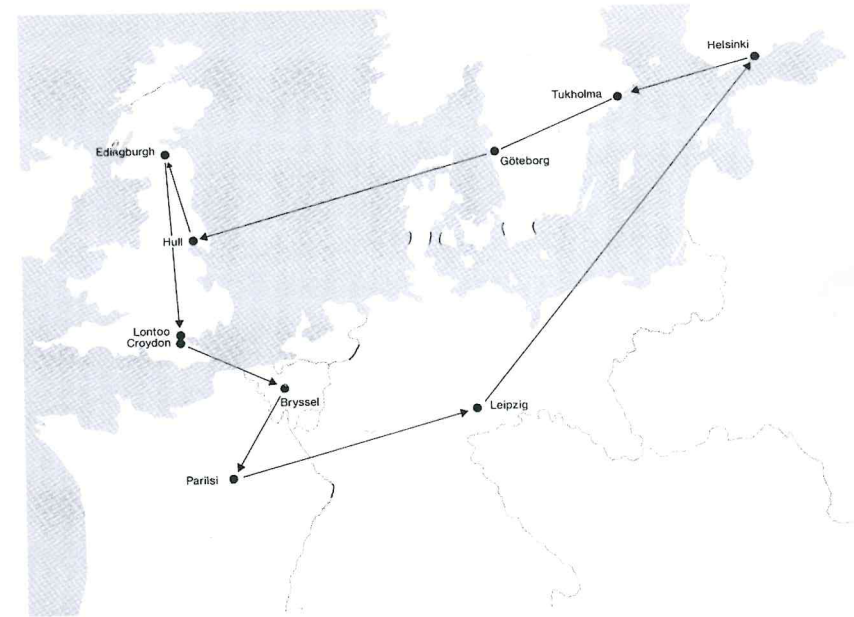
A children's ward at the Surgical Hospital. Fresh air and sunlight were regarded as important elements in the care of the sick and convalescents and were taken into account when designing hospitals. (Helsinki City Museum)

medicine in *Tidskrift för Hälsovård*, a magazine for members of the general public interested in health care.

The travel by Sievers to Berlin was no exception. In health care matters Germany was clearly a leading country and the attraction of Berlin unquestionable. Between 1875 and 1918 out of 58 German fact-finding tours carried out in medicine as many as 38 included visits to Berlin. Sievers, the head of the Maria Municipal Hospital in Helsinki, was himself a frequent participant in international medical and scientific congresses and had since 1884 regularly travelled to Germany to visit not only consumption institutes but also spas and to investigate the latest developments in medicine, as in 1890 when he had a state grant to do so. In the spring of 1903 he carried out investigations in Berlin, Hamburg, Copenhagen and Stockholm. He was also a regular contributor to the *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift* and *Hygienisk Tidskrift*.

But the Maria Hospital had also a number of other staff members with international connections in addition to Sievers. The assistant doctor in the infectious diseases' department, Dr Herman Viktor von Willebrandt, travelled in 1910 to Stockholm, Copenhagen, Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, Marseilles, Vienna, Budapest and Odessa to investigate the state of epidemiology in those cities. A year later the head of the same department, Dr Max Björkstén, travelled with a grant from the Finnish Senate to the Nordic countries and Germany to investigate the prevention of infectious diseases and the disinfecting of dwellings. During this trip he visited a total of 32 cities and smaller towns. In the same year a delegation of four doctors from the hospital visited a health care exhibition in Dresden, and among them was Dr Jarl Hagelstam, another director of the hospital, and a veteran in the establishing of international connections. Hagelstam had studied in Leipzig in 1881-82 and subsequently had made by 1912 a total of 19 study trips including eight visits to Berlin, four visits to Paris and two to the USA. He reported on his trips and the experiences gained not only in Finnish medical and learned journals but also in a number of foreign publications such as the *New York Medical Journal* and the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Nervenheilkunde*.³⁶

We have already mentioned Albert Palmberg, Helsinki District Medical Officer, and his career well illustrates the Finnish search for medical expertise. As a young man he had undertaken his first fact-finding tours, once foreign travel had again been made possible after the Crimean War. He visited Paris, Berlin, Edinburgh, London and Brussels, collecting experiences that were later to be of vital importance in the planning of the Finnish health care system. When embarking, at the age of 55 years, on a half year long tour to Stockholm, Edinburgh, London, Brussels, Paris and Leipzig in 1886-87 he had already published his major scientific works and made several earlier tours to European cities. He published a 95-page report³⁷ on this tour in which he described the standard of health care in the various countries. He had, for example, heard lectures in Stockholm given by professors Heyman and Wallis. Through Heyman's lectures on public sanitation systems, illustrated with maps, models and statistics, Palmberg first became acquainted with the British health care system and became convinced of the excellence of a wide-spread system of water closets. He was also impressed by Stockholm's health care regulations, its health police and its health care association, which according to Palmberg, placed that city in the first rank in Europe. Yet, it



The map shows a study tour of Dr Albert Palmberg, District Health Care Officer, later Professor of Hygiene in Helsinki, to Stockholm, Edinburgh, London, Brussels, Paris and Leipzig 1.9.1886-1.3.1887.

was in Britain that he was able to observe the impact of health care on everyday life believing that there health care principles were second only to religion in their impact on the public mind. He wrote,

"As soon as I had stepped on the shores of England I could not fail to notice the difference that there was in life style compared with that of continental Europe."

He was especially impressed by the English tiled bathroom, and in his report he gave a detailed description of its fittings and decoration. Similarly he wrote of English housing, eating habits and the composition of meals. He even discussed England's boarding-house system.

Palmberg's extensive study tour to many universities and institutes was made possible by the fact that in different countries the medical teaching staff knew of each other and wrote letters of introduction for their students or colleagues wishing to study at the recipient's university or institute. Thanks to a Swedish letter of introduction Palmberg was able to

attend the lectures in Edinburgh of the Chief Medical Officer, Littlejohn, and his assistant, Charles Stewart Hunter, as well as those of Professor Rutherford. With the help of Hunter he was also able to investigate the treatment of consumptives and diabetics, while Littlejohn guided his examination of Edinburgh's public sanitation and water purification systems.

In London Palmberg was particularly interested in the pavilion system as it was operated at St Thomas's Hospital whereby patients suffering from the same illness were isolated in buildings or annexes separated from the rest. On a recommendation by Prof. Heyman from Stockholm he was able to visit the communal health care carried out by Dr Wynter-Blyth in St Marylebone where the latter had started the renovation of working class slums with good results. In London Palmberg also visited cattle markets, disinfectant plants and other working class areas. Air conditioning systems, especially those using Boyle & Son's method were an innovation that Palmberg had already found useful in Stockholm, Edinburgh and London. So far as health care regulations were concerned he considered Belgium a model country very much admiring the tidiness and cleanliness of Brussels,

"This city which has applied British models has a well-organised health care administration including a separate laboratory for inspecting foodstuffs."

In Brussels he also met Dr Janssen, a world famous hygienist, who had developed a medical and demographic register (*Annuaire démographique*), which was later to be a model for Prof. Vilhelm Sucksdorff, the first Medical Officer of the City of Helsinki. Internationally an even more important Belgian publication was the *Bulletin hebdomadaire*, which provided information on existing diseases and illnesses for public administrators and physicians. This publication later evolved into the *Moniteur internationale de la statistique sanitaire du globe*, which contained information on 81 Belgian cities and towns as well as on 105 other cities including Stockholm, Copenhagen, Kristiania, St Petersburg and Warsaw.

"Only data on Helsinki is missing. Let us hope it will not be too long before Finland is included among these international statistics. After all there is no better way of defending our status as a nation than to keep abreast of scientific progress."



English municipal experts visiting Helsinki were especially interested in the Nordic elementary school system in the municipalities. Education was compulsory and open to all. The photograph shows Töölö Elementary School in Helsinki in the early 1900s. The German map on the wall tells of the close links between German and Finnish teachers. (Helsinki City Museum)

Therefore Palmberg was delighted to hear that Dr Janssen knew the publications of K. E. F. Ignatius, the head of the Finnish Statistical Office. Moreover, during his tour Palmberg also noticed that Finland was, indeed, now being represented under its own name at international congresses and welcomed the fact that Finland sent participants to such congresses. According to Palmberg it was due to the fact that the Finnish Statistical Office had an active international presence that Finland was now presented under a separate heading in the general statistics. He hoped that Finnish physicians would have the same visibility, for "each scientific congress may be an epoch making event."³⁸

Palmberg's itinerary was partly followed, some ten years later, by Dr Konrad Relander, the District Medical Officer of Oulu and later of Helsinki. Following the common practice his tour was financed by a Senate travel grant, and letters of introduction opened doors for him to Central

European hospitals and institutes where he could investigate health care and various aspects of hygiene. Relander produced a 600-page long report on his tour³⁹ describing the latest innovations. Everybody who received such a grant from the Senate had to submit such a report that could be used later as a source of information by those planning their own study tour.

Such tours had a multiplier effect evident at two different levels. On the one hand they provided information and know-how for the decision-makers and on the other hand the information was disseminated in a popular form for ordinary people to read in such magazines as *Terveystoimikunta* and *Tidskrift för Hälsovård*. The former was established by Relander, who, as Editor, followed intently such foreign publications as the *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* and *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Öffentliche Gesundheitspflege*. It took only a few months for the most interesting articles and findings in these publications to be made available in a popular form in Finland.⁴⁰

It should be emphasised that even if the great majority of Finnish doctors who travelled abroad were men, they also included some women. Thus Dr Alma Josefina Rosquist, a woman specialist in tuberculosis at the above-mentioned Maria Municipal Hospital travelled in 1907 to Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, Davos, Paris, Lille, Douai, Antwerp, Brussels and Liège to study methods of treating tuberculosis.⁴¹

■ Nor were the study tours just the prerogative of the leading municipal officials and doctors in Helsinki. Elementary-school teachers travelled widely at both their own and the city's expense and imported new ideas from the Nordic countries, Germany, Switzerland and England. Indeed, many reforms that were carried through in the 1880s and 1890s owed their existence to the initiative and inventiveness of the teachers. In the late 19th century, both the elementary school board and the school inspectors were still rather circumspect about foreign influences, and so if the teachers wanted to reform the elementary school system, they themselves had to import and develop new ideas and put them into practice. For example, in 1882 women teachers set up an extension course for girls who had completed elementary school. These teachers taught the course without remuneration until 1885, when the municipality finally took over the running of the course.⁴²

At the turn of the century, the elementary school board reconsidered

The teacher, Dr Maikki Friberg (1861–1927) was assiduous in touring Europe looking for new ideas on the teaching of geography and on the reform of girls' continuing education. In addition, during her longer stays and tours in central Europe, her interests extended from teaching methods to the women's and peace movements. (National Board of Antiquities)



its stance and adopted a more favourable attitude to foreign examples. The change opened up new opportunities for teachers who were interested in importing new ideas from abroad and in developing the elementary school system. Not less than 27% of the teachers who worked for the Helsinki elementary schools in 1902–1914 made one or more study trips abroad.⁴³ Their travel reports formed a central part of the 'knowledge' on which decision-makers in Helsinki built the new curricula in the early 20th century. This curriculum development stood as evidence of the teachers' commitment to follow the lead of the most 'progressive' countries. The reforms also reflected the determination of the teachers to consolidate their own position. Study trips, high-profile conferences and contacts at home and abroad were all important in building up the prestige of the teachers and that of the elementary school.⁴⁴

Women teachers from girls' vocational schools were also keen to make study tours, because in the Helsinki Vocational School, established in

1904, the shortage of suitable textbooks was an acute problem. Such schools had already been operating in Paris and Linz during the last years of the 19th century, and between 1908 and 1916 eight members of the staff of the Helsinki Vocational School for Girls made a total of eleven study tours normally spanning several countries. Thus the teacher of dressmaking, Ms Anna Pulkkinen, spent the autumn term 1912 visiting Parisian vocational schools and also used the opportunity to visit similar schools in London, which had been established on the Paris model. This detour may have proved more useful than anticipated because, as pioneers in the field, the Parisian schools and ateliers themselves had been so overbooked by foreign visitors that it was very difficult to gain adequate information and guidelines from them. Ms Pulkkinen also regularly visited Mme Guerre-Lavagre's atelier, learning there the pattern making, which she used as the basis for her own text-book on the subject which was later published in Finland.⁴⁵

Similarly the speedy establishment, in the autumn of 1899, of the Boys' Vocational School in Helsinki was inspired by one specific fact-finding



Jonathan Reuter (1859–1947), head of Helsinki Technical School and Editor in Chief of *Teknikern*, made several fact-finding tours abroad and his expertise proved remarkably useful when the occupational training system in Helsinki was being planned. (National Board of Antiquities)

tour of a Municipal Engineer Jonathan Reuter round European vocational schools in the previous year. Importantly his expertise acquired on several similar tours also proved of good use nationally when he became a member of a committee planning an occupational training system for the whole country.⁴⁶

■ In addition to the establishment of public services the developers of Helsinki also paid attention to the ways such services operated in practice and examining this was often the aim of foreign tours. A good example were tours made by Uno Therman, an early developer of public libraries in Helsinki. His enthusiasm took him to the USA, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, as his aim was to develop a proper municipal library, which could meet the needs of all Helsinki people whatever their social class. Consequently the building of the Branch Library in the working class area of Kallio, inaugurated in 1912, contained not only the customary library facilities of the day but also a newspaper reading room as well as a children's department. The librarians were also authorised to acquire books in foreign languages, and thus books in German, English and French became available to the people in Helsinki.⁴⁷

■ Finnish municipal officials and experts were certainly not the only ones who travelled in Europe. Significant channels for the spread of innovations were the visits of English and German municipal officials in search of information, and Günther Hollenberg has studied how political development affected public opinion and the tours in England and Germany. Anglo-American co-operation at the municipal level was mainly limited to the period 1905–1914⁴⁸ but the British were especially active in studying other countries' municipal activities. The British Committee for the Study of Foreign Municipal Institutions had Henry S. Lunn, a former missionary doctor and journalist, as secretary and Lord Lyveden as chairman. The Committee made visits to Switzerland, Germany, the United States and the Nordic countries visiting, in Finnish fashion, Stockholm, Kristiania and Copenhagen. The English municipal experts were especially interested in the elementary school systems of municipalities in Norway and Sweden, where schooling was obligatory and open to all. In addition to the school system the visitors were interested in Stockholm's telephones and its gas and electricity works. In Copenhagen health care and the homes for the aged were admired.⁴⁹



During the 1930s, Aleksis Kivi Public Elementary School was described by international visitors as the most modern school in Helsinki. The picture shows a woodwork class. Woodwork was on the curriculum of elementary and vocational schools in Finland from the late 19th century and was something every man was expected to master. Later, during the 1970s and 1980s, woodwork became an optional subject. (Helsinki City Museum)

In France Pierre-Yves Saunier, inspired by the project "Tietoa, taitoa, asiantuntemusta, (Helsinki in international development)" led by Marjatta Hietala, studied how the city of Lyons strove to establish international contacts. In 1906 the newly elected mayor, Edouard Herriot, inaugurated an active policy of seeking international information. One of the early tours in the same year was a weeklong trip by a delegation to Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, which proved to be a milestone in the development of Lyons' international relations. The city's earliest attempt at such fact-finding had been much less successful, however. In 1873 the Chief Engineer of the city's Board of Works had visited London to study cesspool-cleaning machines. However, not only was it badly timed, taking

place between Christmas and New Year, but the visitor did not speak English, had a bad interpreter and found that the English leaflet he was using for guidance was already twenty years out-of-date. In fact London had already abandoned cesspools in favour of modern sewers!⁵⁰

That the city of Stockholm was actively seeking foreign knowledge is evident from the great number of travel reports kept in the city archives.⁵¹ However, the great public interest shown by Swedes in improving the city's services is demonstrated by the fact that in 1912 the newspaper *Aftonbladet* felt it worthwhile to send a special correspondent on a tour of European cities to study how problems that were seen as the most relevant for the city of Stockholm could be solved. He investigated tramways (public, private or concession based), traffic between the suburbs and the centre and the distribution of foodstuffs in various European cities for a year and submitted a total of 36 articles, published in the paper between November 1912 and August 1913.⁵²

■ But what was perhaps not so common was the scale of the foreign travel undertaken by Finns, who were arguably among the most eager people in Europe to embark on such foreign fact-finding tours – an assumption easy to accept given that three-quarters of a century later Finns were, apart from Britons themselves, the biggest single national group to visit the British Open University at a time when the Finnish open university system was in the process of development. Secondly, their systematic preliminary preparation for tours enabled them to avoid the disappointment of the Chief Engineer of Lyons. The provision of letters of introduction, the careful reporting at the end of the journey and the public financing of such travel were all characteristics of a well-established system of international fact finding which may not have been so common a practice at that time elsewhere in Europe. The third striking feature is that, while the Germans or the English sent committees or deputations to investigate interesting innovations,⁵³ the Finns, probably at least partly for financial reasons, sent one or two experts to familiarise themselves with specified innovations in their field; for example when building a modern hospital was in question a doctor and an architect would make a fact-finding tour together. Strikingly a remarkable number of private individuals were enthusiastic enough to dip into their own pockets and these included elementary school teachers, who never had too much to spare.

Helsinki Reaches a European Level of Services

Certainly this drive by Helsinki officials and other professional people was rewarded. Through the application of the results of extensive fact-finding, by the early 20th century Helsinki had in most fields reached the level of other European cities, to which it had aspired and, during this process, had developed and institutionalised a solid system of fact-finding that was no longer simply dependent on casual enthusiasm and the personal contacts of private individuals.

Indeed, as we saw earlier, in the first half of the 19th century, before the period of publications, statistics, congresses and exhibitions, the spread of information had been relatively sporadic and taking personal initiatives and using personal contacts were of decisive importance, as in the case of the Borgströms, father and son. Later, however, the growing circulation of periodicals and the developing system of comparative statistics, exhibitions and congresses kept up a continuing flow of information on the rate of progress in relation to various issues and matters. These channels for the spread of information were complementary and formed an interrelated whole, which changed and developed along with technological advance and progress. Thus the spread of innovations became institutionalised. However, during the decades before the First World War these merely supplemented – and did not replace – study tours, which provided an opportunity for personal observation, further investigation and the creating of useful professional networks for the future.

In Helsinki the information gained by such means resulted in development at unprecedented speed, especially in urban technology, hygiene, training and popular education as the application of foreign know-how was normally carried out quite speedily. Examples of the rapid application of foreign know-how can be found in the case of electricity or drainage, where the German model was followed as well as in the fields of public libraries and education, just to mention a few examples. Public services were provided with new premises built to provide the Helsinki cityscape with new landmarks. Schools built at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century looked like small castles while libraries and theatres erected then became public monuments. Everyday life had been improved by replacing wells with municipal water mains and sewage pits



Architecture reflects the importance given to schools and teaching. In the early 1900s, Finnish teachers and architects visited schools in Sweden and Germany. These schools were fine buildings and soon handsome buildings with special classrooms and collection rooms began to appear in Helsinki. The photo shows Cygnaeus School, which was designed by Karl Hård af Segerstad and built between 1909–1912. (Helsinki City Museum)

with a public sewerage system. The municipal inspection of milk and meat and the establishment of covered markets had reduced health risks, and modern hospitals, also often based on German models, provided a better chance of speedy recovery for those who did fall ill. At home the work of the housewife (or the maid!) was made much more convenient by the use of gas for cooking and electricity for lighting while the telephone revolutionised communication not only within the city but also far beyond its boundaries.

Admittedly some time lag might occur if the innovation was initially found to be unsuited to conditions in Helsinki, if the demand for it was still insufficient, if the infrastructure was not ready or there had not been time to train experts. The main cause of delay, however, could often be active political resistance, for example, when defenders of economic liberalism and enterprise opposed municipal monopolies and socialism, delaying social reforms or plans for the use of land.⁵⁴



The Esplanade was a popular place for promenades. In the picture children in the Esplanade Park in Helsinki in the 1910s. (Helsinki City Museum)

In many fields, such as engineering, the aim of replacing foreign expertise with native talents was gradually achieved, so that Finnish engineers directed the construction work while foreign firms acted merely as sub-contractors. This did not mean any diminishing of foreign contacts. On the contrary, in many professional fields there were so few specialists in Helsinki or even in Finland, that links with colleagues in Germany, for example, did provide many Helsinki-based professionals with the peer group that they were seeking for active up-dating of their professional standards. Indeed, on the basis of the number of foreign periodicals, congress reports and other professional publications with

subscribers in Helsinki, it is possible to conclude that the highly trained professional groups and educated classes did still feel a considerable need to strengthen their identity⁵⁵ by using international professional networks especially in cases where there were few if any experts working in the same specialized field in Helsinki itself.

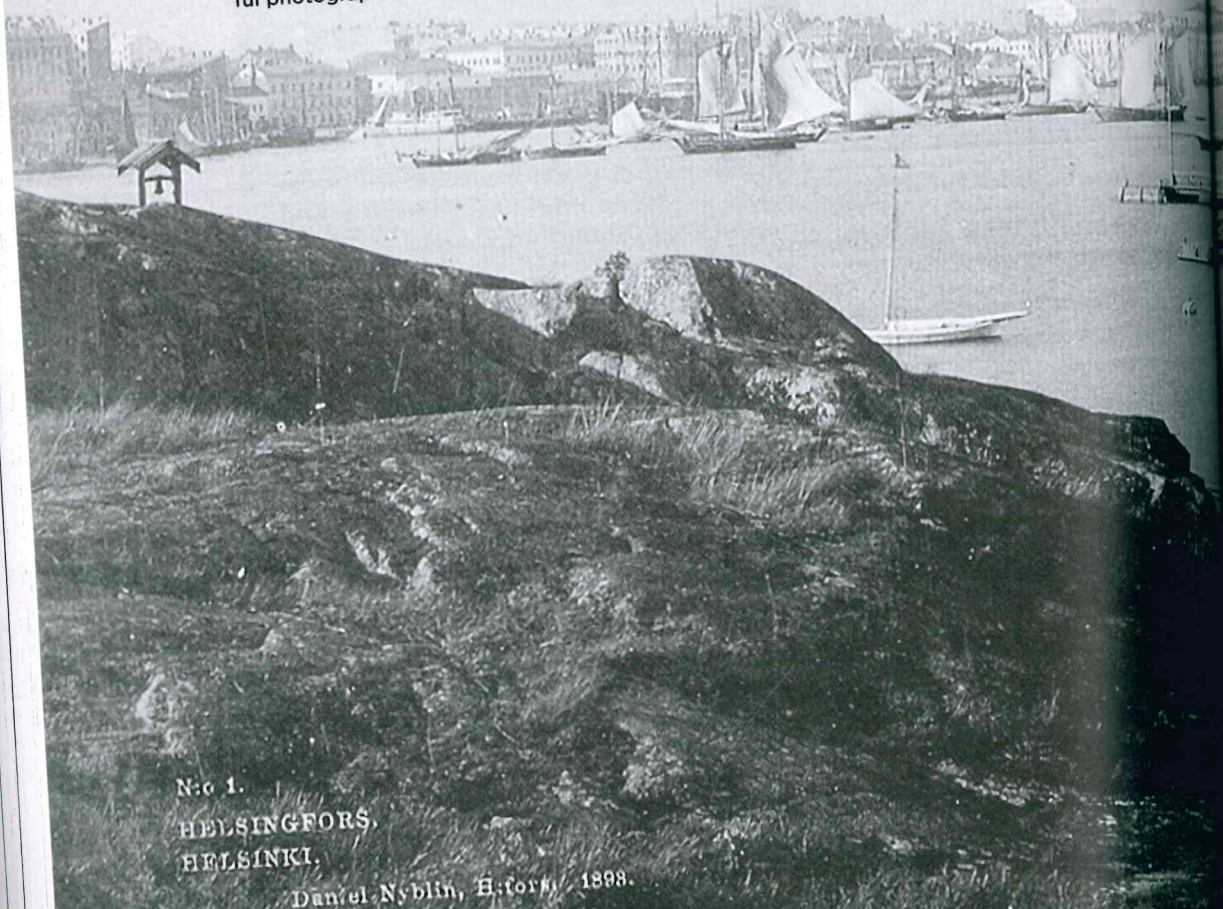
■ For many a Finn an official position provided not only a much sought-after career but also the opportunity for foreign experiences and a valuable entry into an international community of professional colleagues. It is interesting, therefore, that in spite of extensive study tours and periods of working abroad, Helsinki professionals did normally return to Finland. Many believed in the future of Finland and had a clear ideological reason to return in order to contribute to the building of the fatherland. For others the dissemination of useful information to the general public was seen as the major task while some believed strongly in the power of self-development and human capital. Many received strength from religion, some from the working class movement or from the temperance movement. The common aim was to keep Finland in the ranks of civilized countries and to keep Helsinki at the same level as other European capitals.

This often demanded personal sacrifice and unprecedented zeal. But officials accepted that this was so and as a result they succeeded. The knowledge acquired was for the good of both the individual and the community.⁵⁶

V A Metropolis of Modest Proportions

That all this effort in developing Helsinki to meet European standards was a clear success is obvious from the reports of two European travellers, the English Mrs Alec Tweedie, who has been mentioned earlier, and the Spanish consul, Angel Ganivet. Both had arrived in Helsinki in 1896 and after extensive travels Mrs Tweedie wrote of her experiences in *Through Finland in Carts* while Consul Ganivet's *Cartas finlandesas* were first published in the news-paper *El Defensor de Granada*.

Helsinki harbour in 1898 as seen by Daniel Nyblin, one of the capital's most successful photographers. (Helsinki City Museum)



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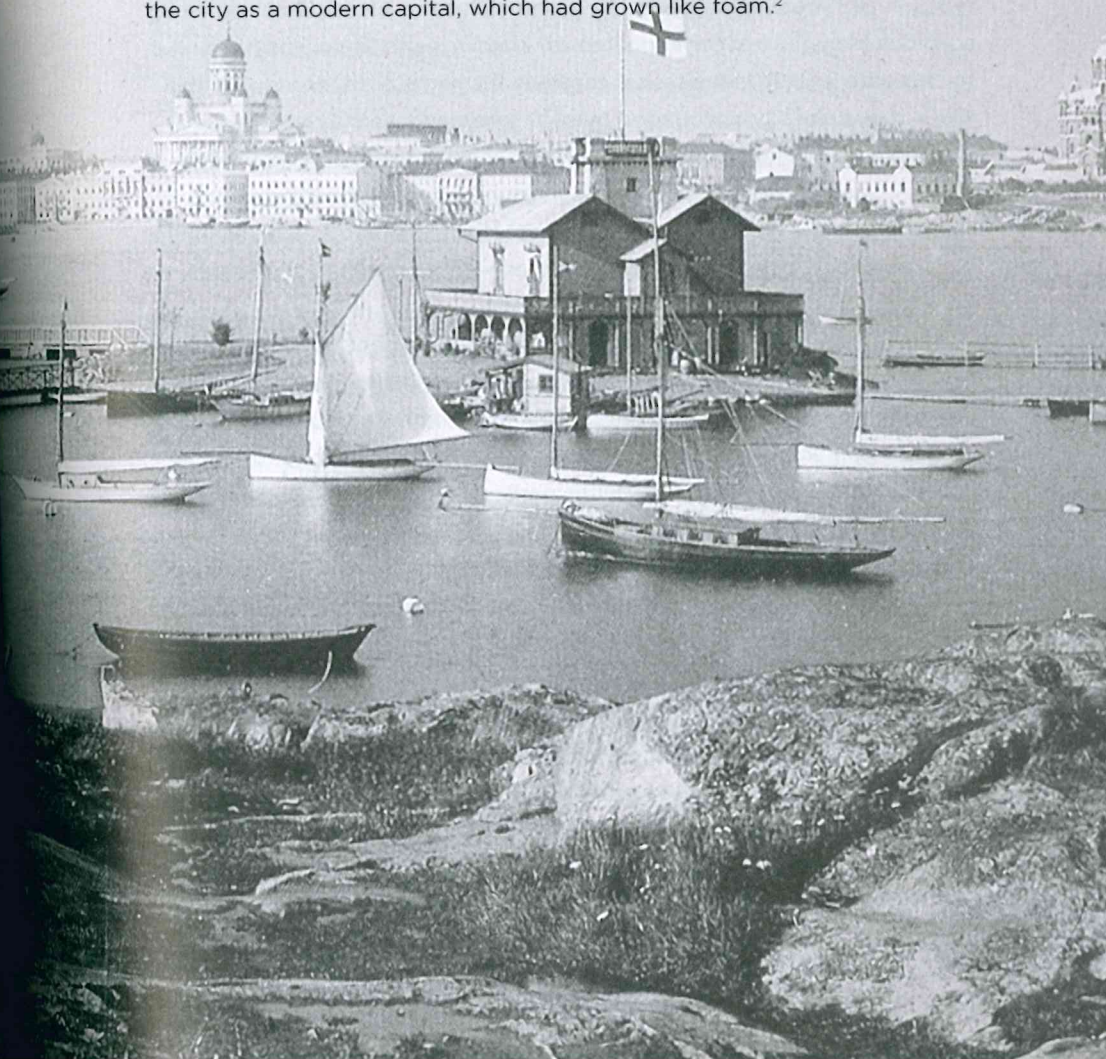
HELSINGFORS.
HELSINKI.

Daniel Nyblin, H. torn. 1898.

To both of them Helsinki was above all a modern city. Approaching by steamboat from Hull on a brilliant sunny morning early in June 1896 Mrs Alec Tweedie discovered

"... a town with its fine Russian church of red brick with rounded dome, the Finnish church of white stone, and several other handsome buildings denoting a place of importance and considerable beauty,"¹

while in his first letter to the Spanish paper Consul Ganivet described the city as a modern capital, which had grown like foam.²



■ Undoubtedly Helsinki had a modern air. In addition to the new hospitals, schools, covered markets and utility plants erected in the city, the central area had begun to change from an idyllic garden city into something much more modern and dynamic. The Neoclassical wooden family houses in the centre of the town had been replaced by four and five storey high apartment blocks in the Art Nouveau style that had been so much in evidence in major European cities since the middle of the 19th century. Like the municipal decision-makers, who had taken their models from such cities as Berlin, Paris and Vienna,³ the general public had begun to demand a new continental image for the city. According to art historian Sixten Ringbom, as early as the beginning of the 1880s people in Helsinki had become increasingly embarrassed by the fact that one of its central public venues, the Esplanade, was still lined with wooden buildings.⁴ However, unlike in continental European cities, Helsinki's town plan was conveniently spacious enough to accommodate new buildings and there was no need to demolish Engel's Neoclassical centre in the name of modernity. By the 1890s it was already surrounded by such landmarks as the National Archive and the House of Estates in Kruununhaka, and the *Ateneum* in Railway Square. Hotel Kämp and the massive Grönqvist building on the North Esplanade were also already in existence along with many recently built banks and insurance company offices⁵ while European style cafés gave the city an extra continental elegance.⁶

Tweedie and Ganivet recognized in Helsinki a number of other features typical of a late 19th century European metropolis. Although the city was still quite small by European standards with no more than 70,000 inhabitants it was already the site of several public museums and galleries. It had many pleasant public parks as well as a multitude of restaurants and there was a full range of lively theatrical and other public entertainments with the city benefiting from a steady stream of visits by international artists and performers en route to St Petersburg. According to Ganivet Finns were passionate about music in general and especially passionate about singing.⁷

Both visitors also noticed the keen interest of Helsinki people in technological novelties including bicycles, which already totalled 3,000.⁸ But they seem to have taken for granted the progress in building arrangements⁹ and the development of shops and department stores. Nor were they apparently surprised by the city's conservatoire and art school, its orchestra and annual art exhibitions.¹⁰ These were obviously things

they expected to find in any self-respecting modern city. But the really noteworthy discovery that made the feminist Mrs Tweedie describe Helsinki as "very advanced in its ideas,"¹¹ was the extent of its educational development and, even more important, the position of women, a subject to which both writers dedicated a full chapter.

Advanced Ideas on Women and Education

Unlike Consul Ganivet, who found Finnish women too thin, lacking in passion and a bit masculine,¹² Mrs Tweedie was full of admiration for them and considered their active role to be one of the factors most likely to give Finland a great future and one from which her fellow Britons could learn a great deal. For her

*"... it was remarkable that so remote a country, so little known and so unappreciated, should thus suddenly burst forth and hold the most advanced ideas for both men and women. That endless sex question is never discussed. There is no sex in Finland, men and women are practically equals, and on that basis society is formed."*¹³

Obviously Mrs Tweedie's comments tell us as much about the situation in Britain as about Finland. Although emancipation of women and the family as an institution had been extensively discussed in the Helsinki press as early as the 1840s the reforms of family law were in many respects behind Sweden not to mention France.¹⁴ However, when stating that Finnish women were treated by their husbands as equals Mrs Tweedie may have had in mind the number of young married couples in Helsinki sharing intellectual, political and artistic interests within the "Nuori Suomi" (Young Finland) group and the academic circles of the 1890s.¹⁵ She probably also based her comments on the increasingly evident drive not only for political and social equality but also for the promotion of greater equality within the family.

■ One of the champions of such equality in Helsinki from the 1880s onwards had been Valfrid Vasenius, a librarian at the University Library and later a professor of Finnish and Nordic literature. Unlike his father Gustaf Otto Wasenius, the founder of the Wasenius bookshop, who had organised the life of his family and his business on traditional authori-

tarian lines, Valfrid Vasenius called for improvements in the status and legal rights of labourers, women and children. To him despotism in a family or in a society was equally indefensible; women and the common people had the right to play a direct role in public life as legally competent citizens and not merely indirectly, through their fathers and husbands or their employers. In Helsinki the women's issue had become a hot topic following the landmark performance of Ibsen's *Doll's House* in 1880 and this had paved the way for the development of women's education and their emancipation in Finland. Vasenius, who had made a doctoral dissertation on Ibsen defended the play; to find happiness in a marriage, he believed, people had first to find their own independence. Subsequently his own daughter Herta got the same opportunities as her brothers. She was sent to a Finnish-language co-educational school, gained a university degree and became a teacher of mathematics.¹⁶

■ When reading Mrs Tweedie, it is quite obvious that what impressed her even more than their education were the working opportunities available for women, a topical issue from the 1840s onwards as the number of unmarried women started to increase. While providing detailed statistics of women employed in the civil service, the public utilities, and various trades and industries she points out that

*"... one cannot travel through Finland without being struck by the position of women on every side. It may, of course, arise from the fact that the Finns are poor, and, large families not being uncommon, it is impossible for the parents to keep their daughters in idleness and as no country is more democratic than Finland, where there is no court and little aristocracy, the daughters of senators and generals take up all kinds of work. Whatever the cause, it is amazing to find the vast number of employments open to women, and the excellent way in which they fill these posts. There is no law to prevent women working at anything they choose. ... Instead of work being looked upon as degrading, it is admired on all sides, especially teaching, which is considered one of the finest positions for a man or a woman in Finland. And it is scientific teaching, for they learn how to impart knowledge to others, instead of doing it in a dilatory and dilettante manner, as so often happens elsewhere."*¹⁷



Members of the Amateur Photographers' Club dining at Hotel Kämp in the early 1890s. Mrs Tweedie was amazed that women in Finland could join associations on equal terms with men. The first photographs taken in Finland date from 1842. Some women also became professional photographers and probably best-known was Signe Brander, who systematically recorded the streetscapes of Helsinki in the early 1890s. (Helsinki City Museum)

According to Ganivet this meant that in Helsinki a Don Juan had to turn into a schoolmaster and be prepared to argue like a Sophist as the Finnish Doña Inez usually had a pile of study certificates. These she had often gained at co-educational establishments and might even have taken a university degree, and she was now working in order to earn money, which provided her with an opportunity to enjoy personal freedom with the right to visit theatres and restaurants independently.¹⁸

Although it is perhaps exaggerated, Ganivet's picture nevertheless demonstrated the wide opportunities for women to study in Helsinki. By the autumn term of 1892 the city had a total of twelve secondary schools, five for boys, three for girls and four co-educational establishments.¹⁹ It had been the site of one of the two girls' schools established in Finland in 1844 as a result of the 1843 School Act; as well as of the first entirely Finnish-language girls' school established in 1869; and, in 1883, of the first co-educational school in the country. – Co-educational schools were a

cost-efficient way of education. In a small and sparsely populated country and between 1883 and 1899, following Helsinki's example, a further 31 co-educational secondary schools were to be established elsewhere in Finland.²⁰ As secondary schools received state subsidies, they also managed to keep their annual tuition fees low and this same low-fee policy was also to be found in the University, Mrs Tweedie noted.²¹ Between 1870 and the time of her visit a total of 251 Finnish women had enrolled to study there²² while others had entered the Polytechnic Institute.²³ Thus Finnish women were able to study the full range of subjects available at the higher educational institutes to a degree level including sciences, medicine and architecture.²⁴ In the early years of the Drawing School in Helsinki of the Finnish Fine Art Association women even formed a majority of the students and by the late 1880s a total of 249 Finnish women had studied at that school while the number of male students had amounted to only 99. Both sexes were also given the same teaching, and women embarking on the career of professional artist were usually given travel grants to study abroad in the same way as their male colleagues, and this resulted in the emergence of a particularly strong group of Finnish women artists from the 1880s onwards.²⁵

■ It is fair to say, however, that the inspiration for all this came from outside Finland. Catherine the Great of Russia had already promoted women's education and consequently the girls' schools in Russia were famously of a high standard. Significantly it was a Russian, Maria Tschet-schulin, the daughter of a well-to-do businessman residing in Helsinki, who was the first girl to take the matriculation examination. Similarly the idea of co-educational education at post elementary level was probably based on American models arriving via Sweden where two such schools had been founded in the 1870s. It is therefore worthwhile to explore the flow of foreign ideas and how they arrived in Helsinki, a city of many languages where Swedish, Russian and Finnish were used not only on street signs but also regularly in everyday communication, as both Tweedie and Ganivet immediately discovered.²⁶ As late as 1870 among the upper classes Swedish speakers had formed some 75% and Russian and German speakers were in fact three times as numerous as Finnish speakers in this top group. Of the total population in 1870 people with Finnish as their mother tongue still made up only a quarter. However, the growth in the number of Finnish speakers had accelerated considerably from the 1880s onwards so that by 1890 the two major language groups had become equal.²⁷



In the late 19th century Helsinki became an increasingly international city. Russian military men strolling along the Esplanade were a common sight as Helsinki was also a garrison town with several large barracks. In the background is the Wase-nius Bookhop, which was noted for its large stock of foreign language books. It was the forerunner of the present Academic Bookstore. (Helsinki City Museum)

Cosmopolitan Capital

A telling example of the extent to which the Helsinki of the 1890s was a mixture of linguistic and cultural assumptions was to be found at a rehearsal in 1892 of Sibelius's new *Kullervo* symphony. Here the composer-conductor had to use German to address the professional musicians of the orchestra, Swedish when speaking to the members of the amateur male choir and Finnish to the student organists acting as tune leaders for the choir. On the other hand his Russian proved inadequate in a discussion with an English enthusiast, who had studied music in St Petersburg, and they had to revert to a mixture of French and German.²⁸ Such multilingualism was obviously the result of history, but it had also developed both as a result of Helsinki people working and studying abroad and of the interaction with the many foreign incomers increasingly to be found in the city. (See a note on Innovative Immigrants, page 73)

■ The journey of foreign ideas on their way to Finland could be quite complex. The founder of the Finnish national school system, Uno Cygnaeus, for example, had learned from the German School of St Petersburg of Pestalozzi's methods and had later investigated them further in Switzerland.²⁹ Many Finnish soldiers, engineers and commercial representatives worked in the Russian Empire³⁰ and a few had married Russians or members of St Petersburg's own very cosmopolitan community. These people also brought new influences to Helsinki. General Alexander Järnefelt, for example, had married Elisabeth Clodt von Jürgensburg, a member of a Baltic-German titled family in the Russian capital. She had introduced to the cultured circles of Helsinki the artistic ideas of Russian realism and the works of Turgenev, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy;³¹ moreover, she was the mother of some of Finland's leading artistic figures. The Ramsay family of Munkkiniemi Manor had received a daughter-in-law from the well-established English community in St Petersburg,³² thus strengthening the links with English culture maintained in Helsinki not only by the English-born Baroness Elisabeth Ramsay but also by the Anglophile Borgströms and their two British daughters-in-law.

Similarly, in the 1890s a number of upper-class families still maintained very close contacts with their relatives in Sweden,³³ where many new ideas arrived earlier than in Helsinki. Thus the women's movement and the temperance movement, which both originated in the USA, came to Finland via Sweden in the 1880s,³⁴ although Alexandra Gripenberg, the leading Finnish feminist, herself made several trips to America and Topelius had direct links with the USA, corresponding with Longfellow and Harriet Beecher-Stowe.³⁵ Obviously foreign literature also was one of the major channels of ideas. Certainly Sweden remained the most important source of such literature throughout the second half of the 19th century³⁶ and according to some estimates up to one third of the latest fiction published in Sweden was actually sold in Finland.³⁷ However Anglo-American authors also figured prominently in the field of translated literature.³⁸

From the 1860s onwards the Finnish newspapers had been allowed to report foreign news quite freely. Thus they had made their own impact on industrial development, for example by reporting Edison's progress in the matter of electricity, as was already seen in Chapter Three. The papers had also increasingly published informative letters from Finns living abroad thus spreading interesting new ideas to a much wider circle than

was the case in the 1840s when Snellman was only able to communicate by letter with his family and a close circle of friends.³⁹ After the Crimean War foreign travel had become more and more common after graduation from the university while artists had continued their studies in Rome, Düsseldorf and, from the 1870s onwards, in Paris where they had become numerous enough to form their own artistic colony by the early 1890s.⁴⁰ Through them ideas topical in the "new France" of the Third Republic, such as Darwinism, liberalism and women's rights also found their way to Helsinki.⁴¹ Coupled with the extensive study tours and travelling undertaken by doctors, engineers and city officials one must conclude that by the turn of the century Helsinki people had forged more cosmopolitan links than ever before in the history of the city and that they were also increasingly eager to cultivate them. Yet it was ironic that this internationalism coincided with and actually complemented the growing fervour of Finnish nationalism.

The Decorations in Unioninkatu in Helsinki for the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra on 28 May 1896 show that before the russification period people in Helsinki celebrated major imperial events in the same manner as did loyal subjects of the time in other European countries. (Helsinki City Museum)



of Innovations

As we noted in Chapter Two this new growth of nationalist sentiment was not peculiar to Finland. Such movements were found in many European countries but in the Finnish case, a further impetus had been provided by a change in Russian attitudes. This change resulted in part from an intensifying Pan-Slavism, which had led many Russians to adopt a far less tolerant attitude towards the other nationalities in the empire but also in part from the changing geopolitics of the Baltic region following German unification in 1870. Consequently acts of deliberate russification had become more and more common in the Baltic countries from the mid-1880s onwards.⁴²

The Grand Duchy of Finland had usually been considered a favoured province under the Tsars.⁴³ However, the developments south of the Gulf of Finland inevitably spurred the Finns into safeguarding their position and looking for ways of further strengthening their own national identity. In Helsinki a number of groups were to carry out significant innovative actions in support of this goal. The most important and oldest of these bodies was the University while the early 1890s also saw increasing activity by *Helsingin Suomalainen Klubi* (the Finnish Club of Helsinki), a society of younger academics and university graduates, and by *Nuori Suomi* (Young Finland) a group of Finnish artists, writers and journalists whose endeavours resulted not only in the music of Sibelius but in what has been termed the Golden Age of Finnish Art.⁴⁴

University Teachers as Innovators

In the life of Finland the position of the university had been of crucial importance for the whole of the 19th century. When Mrs Tweedie enquired about its role in the national life she was astonished by the reply:

*"You see, we have no court here, no great wealth, but few nobility, and, therefore, every one and everything is centred round our University."*⁴⁵

In this apparently glib answer there was certainly an element of truth. Since J. W. Snellman, professor of ethics and the structure of sciences, had got involved in the government and financial reforms of the 1860s,

university professors had become increasingly influential in Finnish public life. Even if one of Snellman's opponents had suggested that "one should pray God to preserve us from professors in Government,"⁴⁶ this had not prevented professors from taking a considerable part in the political and cultural life of the capital as well as in its municipal administration where their professional expertise and contacts proved very valuable as we saw in Chapter Three. Furthermore during the last decades of the 19th century it was the professors, who not only laid the foundations of successful Finnish design, so crucial in the following century, but established also a number of prosperous commercial ventures and even launched a co-operative movement, which was later to grow on such a scale that by 1997 its annual turnover was equal to that of the electronic giant Nokia.⁴⁷

These professorial initiatives had been very much in tune with many general developments in the Helsinki of the 1870s and 1880s as the new ideas of the temperance, labour and women's movements along with a new enthusiasm for sports had sparked off an "association fever," and the number of societies in the capital had increased tenfold from 25 in 1875 to 246 in 1900.⁴⁸ Although a great majority of these organisations had been meant to serve the whole country, their headquarters were in Helsinki and they contributed a great deal to the corporate life of the city.

■ What is surprising, however, is the fact that quite frequently the professors' personal academic expertise bore little or no relation to the innovative public ventures which they undertook. Why, for example, did professors of Sanskrit, surgery, astronomy or history become the founding fathers of insurance companies and why did professors of botany, Nordic literature, pedagogy or Greek become so deeply involved in the establishment of the co-operative movement?⁴⁹ Of course friendships within the relatively small university staff at that time⁵⁰ and an aptitude for getting involved in organisations⁵¹ played some role. However, a more important explanation is probably to be found in the Finnish academic ethics of the period, which required that professors and students should be active as citizens promoting Finnish nationalism through cultural activities while also working to improve the people's economic condition.⁵²

Significantly the first book published in Finnish by the Finnish Literature Society (a body not only of professors but of academics who worked in the civil service, journalism or banking⁵³) had been not the



The Finnish National Theatre in Railway Square. Among the earliest cultural buildings in Helsinki was a theatre erected in 1827, and in the second half of the 19th century when plays were increasingly seen as a major tool for developing the Finnish language there was a demand for a national theatre. Its eventual national-romantic building, designed by Onni Tarjanne, was completed in 1902. (Helsinki City Museum)

national epic the *Kalevala* but *Kultala*, a book on dairy co-operatives by the Swiss J. H. Zschokke and it had proved to be an early bestseller with 4,500 copies printed.⁵⁴ However, subsequently the *Kalevala* was published along with the *Kanteletar* (a selection of folk poems) and other collections of Finnish folklore. In fact the Society had concentrated on developing a cultural infrastructure in the Finnish language and as early as 1866 it had been able to claim that through its efforts there were now available all the books necessary for studying in Finnish at the secondary school level.⁵⁵ At the same time the Society had begun to lay the foundations for theatrical activities in Finnish, which were then considered vital for the further development of the language and they published a number of original Finnish dramas together with translations of plays by Molière, Schiller, Lessing, Sheridan and Shakespeare, and this was followed by a systematic translation into Finnish of other major works of world literature.⁵⁶ Dictionaries and books on such specialist subjects as

law, seafaring, history, botany and so forth had helped to develop specialist vocabularies in Finnish⁵⁷ and similar work was later undertaken by professional organisations and a number of new commercial publishers.⁵⁸ Due to such systematic work Finnish, which had been short of conceptual terminology, had been elevated within a mere fifty years into a language of high culture served as early as the last decade of the 19th century by its own literature and press.

■ But, as indicated earlier, the professors had also been keen to launch ventures aiming to strengthen and widen the economic base of Finland, which within the three years, 1866–68, had lost over a quarter of a million people, i.e. over 13% of the total population, due to famine and subsequent disease,⁵⁹ with thousands of beggars roaming the streets of Helsinki.⁶⁰ For both Topelius, professor of history, and C. G. Estlander, professor of aesthetics, nationalism most definitely involved modern industrial life and not just language and folk poetry. In his pamphlet *Den finska konsten och industrin utveckling hittills och hädanefter* (The development until now and from this onwards of Finnish art and industry) the latter had promoted the strengthening of Finnish industry in order to safeguard the national standard of living and had declared it a national duty to produce industrial products of a very high standard:

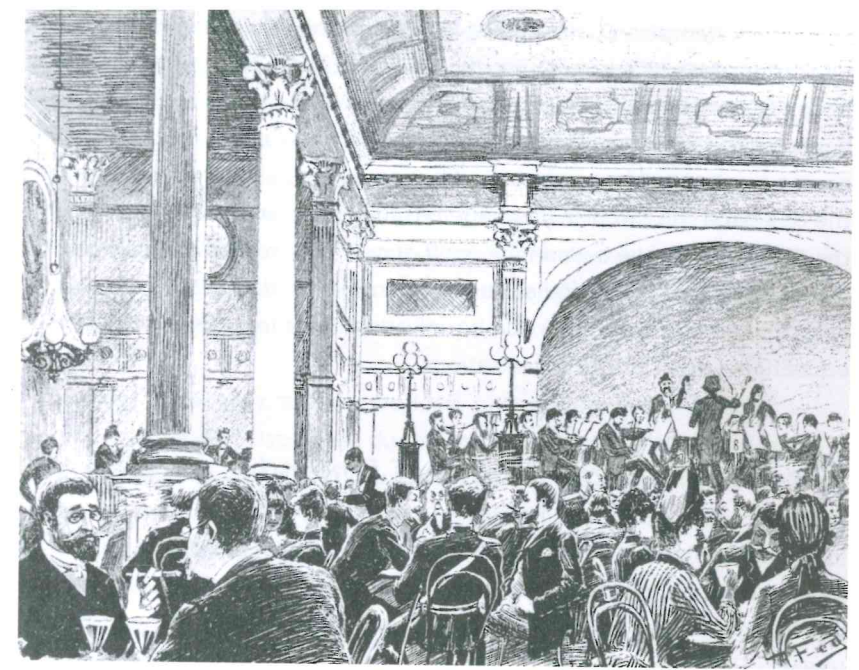
*"We have unavoidably been drawn into the mighty stream of modern industrialisation, and it would appear more dignified and more fitting to our claims for a place among nations if we stepped forward with determination instead of being dragged along after the others... We must, therefore, abandon once and for all that opinion that we are a neglected people who can hardly achieve anything else but provide raw materials and operate at the elementary level of further processing"*⁶¹

Models had been taken from abroad. As early as the 1840s Sweden had established, as a part of their industrialisation programme to overcome rural and urban poverty, a Society of Crafts and Design and a Slöjdskolan (a Craft School) to assist in the creation of products fit for European markets.⁶² The 1851 Great Exhibition in London had also very clearly demonstrated the importance of the quality of design of industrial products. Therefore Topelius, Estlander and others had decided in the autumn of 1870 to establish a training institute in Helsinki to develop the

artistic and technical skills of young people working in the fields of crafts and industry. The *Veistokoulu* (the Craft School), later to evolve into the present Helsinki University of Art and Design, had opened its doors in January 1871⁶³ while another brainchild of Estlander's, the Finnish Society for Crafts and Design, had been founded in 1875 in Helsinki to support the school. The Friends of Finnish Handicraft had been established in 1879 (also following a Swedish model) "to promote Finnish handicrafts and to further develop these in patriotic patterns and materials,"⁶⁴ and the opening of the *Ateneum* in 1887 on a site donated by the city of Helsinki⁶⁵ had completed this setting up of an infrastructure for the development of Finnish design.

That the *Ateneum* provided premises for the training of both fine and applied arts under the one roof had been due to the influence of Estlander. In his pamphlet he had also stressed above all the importance of close co-operation between the fine and the applied arts⁶⁶ – an idea which was to become increasingly popular also in Germany.⁶⁷ To this seminal concept was added in the 1890s the second fundamental ingredient for the early success of Finnish design, the search for an artistic inspiration based not just on Finnish traditional crafts but also on the modern ideas brought by Finnish artists who had studied in Paris and other European centres. Their efforts were aided by two foreigners, the Swedish-Italian Count Louis Sparre and the British-Belgian painter and ceramic artist A. W. Finch, who both came to be recognised as the founders of modern Finnish ceramic design as well as early practitioners of the graphic arts in Finland.⁶⁸ The ultimate aim was to develop "a genuine Finnish style" as an antidote to the standardizing influence of international trends,⁶⁹ but, as became evident in the preparation of the Finnish pavilion for the 1900 World's Fair in Paris, the Finnish style was only acceptable once it was blended with contemporary international trends.⁷⁰

■ Apart from the University another forum for the development of economic life and especially for those speaking the Finnish language was the *Helsingin Suomalainen Klubi* (The Finnish Club in Helsinki), a society of professors and university graduates which was probably based on a model adopted from Prague, where one of the young Fennomen had met leaders of the Czech nationalist movement.⁷¹ In its first year it had enrolled 84 members whose average age was only 34⁷² and it had soon become involved in the establishment of a number of voluntary organi-



A popular concert at the Seurahuone assembly rooms in the late 1880s. Twice-weekly concerts, conducted by Robert Kajanus, were part of Helsinki people's social calendar until the late 1910s. Since its opening in 1833 the Seurahuone had been the venue for a wide variety of events ranging from "picnics" and imperial balls to meetings of eminent businessmen and industrialists. The first performances by Cinématographe Lumière took place there in 1896. The Seurahuone is now Helsinki City Hall. (Drawing by A. Federley, 1888, Helsinki City Museum)

sations such as the *Finnish Women's Association*. It was two of the club's young members, Otto Stenroth, 27, and Lauri Kivekäs, 36, who had first put forward the idea of launching financial institutions based on the Finnish language⁷³ and the club was the forum where suggestions for such enterprises were first discussed.⁷⁴

The first of these ventures was a life insurance company *Suomi* launched in 1890 and taking its place alongside the *Kaleva* company. The latter had been established in 1874 and operated in the Swedish language. Both aimed to counteract the dominance of foreign companies, which at the end of the 1880s had still been collecting over 60% of new insurance premiums in Finland.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the year 1890 saw also the founding of two further key Finnish-speaking institutions, the commercial joint-

stock bank *Kansallis-Osake-Pankki* (KOP) and the publishing house *Otava*.⁷⁶ Professors had been much involved in these four ventures⁷⁷ and both KOP and *Otava* were to become major players in their respective fields. From these developments grew up the peculiarly Finnish system of having two parallel language based business groups centring round on the one hand the Swedish language based *Union Bank* and on the other the Finnish language based KOP, a situation which was to continue until the late 20th century. A similar duplication of institutions based on language emerged also in a number of other fields including professional, educational and cultural organisations.

The Arts Create the Identity of Finland

In the 1890s signs of a threatening change in Russian policies towards Finland became ever more frequent. The growth of Pan-Slavic Russian nationalism was clearly influencing Russian government and the attitude towards Finland of the Tsar. The Post Manifesto of 1890 had linked the previously independent Finnish postal system to that of the rest of the empire, and other signals of systematic unification could have been seen in the appointment of civil servants and in demands for an increase in the use of the Russian language in administration and in schools.⁷⁸ That Finland survived this process of russification was, perhaps unexpectedly, due in part to the innovative work of a colony of young Finnish artists and writers who had opted to live and work during the winters of the early 1890s in the building of the Kaivopuisto Spa.

In the First Chapter we saw how the Spa had been the fashionable hub of Helsinki's summer season up to the time of the Crimean War but had then suffered a decline. In 1883 the lease had run out and the city had taken over the park and the buildings. Until the turn of the century the premises continued to be used by the city for spa activities in summer while in wintertime the building was rented out to students, writers and artists. In the early years of the 1890s it thus had become a base for a young cultural elite, people who had studied abroad but had not yet established any permanent home in Finland. This new generation of writers, painters and composers were accompanied by their wives and occasionally also by their children, who were each given their own

parents shared a big living cum sleeping cum working room. The awareness that there were others on the same corridor working with dedication behind closed doors in their chosen creative field was in itself inspiring. Venny Soldan-Brofeldt, a painter and her writer husband Juhani Aho had their quarters on the upper floor, where, she recalled⁷⁹

"... in the quiet room divided by a huge old wardrobe into sleeping and working quarters we enjoyed undisturbed working peace at a partners' desk, longing at the same time for the wider world, where Paris and Italy were enticing."

In order to secure peace for working, pianos were forbidden but singing was allowed especially during the get-togethers attended by close friends, many of whom were members of the informal cultural group "*Nuori Suomi*" (Young Finland).⁸⁰ Apart from the Spa customary meeting places included the offices of the liberal newspaper *Päivälehti*, the predecessor of *Helsingin Sanomat*, as well as the restaurants Kappeli and Kämp. In his memoirs the journalist Santeri Ingman recalled how⁸¹

"We frequently got together, sometimes in the small offices, sometimes in the ateliers, sometimes round restaurant tables. We discussed movements and trends – as the art movement was in a transitional stage in the great wide world – and we argued about the main objectives of art, practised atelier criticism, but above all constructed plans, big, ambitious plans based on our home country."

■ The ever intensifying russification had already been causing concern among the colony of Finnish artists working or studying in Paris during the winter of 1890–91, and in spite of the earlier call for an "opening of the windows to Europe", so frequent in the 1880s, this strong patriotic concern had led almost all members of the Finnish artistic community to return to Finland. Following the example of Akseli Gallén-Kallela, who had travelled to Karelia, the home of the *Kalevala*, for his honeymoon in 1890, artists and writers all made journeys in search of the roots of their Finnishness. What had made these tours so important was that the urgency to counteract the pressure from russification produced a rich and rapid flourishing of Finnish art. The new enthusiasm might also have drawn confidence from the opinion prevalent in Paris in the late 1880s and early 1890s that the next cultural boom was to come from the Nordic countries.⁸²

In the visual arts the year 1892 had been the peak year of Karelianism and the autumn exhibition of Finnish Artists had demonstrated the extent to which all of them were working in a national spirit. In full seriousness artists and writers had sought definitions of Finland, and this process continued throughout the 1890s although many had moved from Helsinki to ateliers in the country to find a more peaceful working environment.⁸³ The project of defining the identity of Finland involved practically all of the younger generation of journalists, writers and visual artists. Thus in the late 1890s Eliel Saarinen, an up-and-coming architect somewhat younger than the rest, joined in the get-togethers of artists, men of letters and musicians and composers drawn from both sides of the Finnish-Swedish language divide. Sibelius was one of the leaders of the group and according to J. S. Sirén "The time was characterised by a forceful release of creative power, born of daring and unrestrained conviction"⁸⁴ and gradually it adopted a tone of passive political resistance.

One of the vehicles for promoting the new image of Finland was the yearly publication *Nuori Suomi*, an album modelled on Estonian cultural calendars and circulated as a Christmas supplement to *Päivälehti*.⁸⁵ Its purpose was to present the best and most modern in Finnish culture as evidence of the independent spiritual strength of the nation.⁸⁶ Due to the adoption of technical innovations in printing introduced into Finland by Ferdinand Tilgmann in the early 1890s⁸⁷ it also reproduced the works of Finnish artists that had been exhibited the same autumn in Helsinki. The general public round the country was now able to follow the development not only of Finnish art and writing but also of Finnish music, as *Nuori Suomi* also published works by Sibelius and Oskar Merikanto, a composer of popular melodies.⁸⁸ This certainly changed the standing of the arts for the older generation of Fennomen had largely relied on the power of the written word for spreading their message. Now with its supplement *Päivälehti* was the first Finnish-language newspaper to pay serious attention to the use of pictures as a means of communication.⁸⁹

■ Recalling the excitement of this period Louis Sparre, who had befriended Finnish artists in Paris in the 1880s and lived in Finland from 1891 until 1908, remembered that

"It was magnificent to be allowed to take active part in that tremendous upswing of national culture. Our circle of friends included all the major talents of the time: Sibelius, Järnefelt, Gallén-Kallela,

and for him moving to Finland had "opened a new world of enthusiasm and patriotic pathos."⁹¹ This national drive of Finnish artists was also to inspire colleagues in the Baltic countries, and both Estonian and Latvian artists were influenced especially by Gallén-Kallela's works.⁹²

Diaghilev and Mir Iskusstva Come to Helsinki

One of the major ironies of the situation was that amid the growing menace shown towards Finland by an increasingly Pan-Slavic Russia, a surprising new development took place. In 1898 Sergei Diaghilev and other leaders of the Russian avant-garde art movement *Mir Iskusstva* (*the World of Art*) came to Finland to seek the help of the Finnish artistic community in modernising Russian art!

Early in the 1890s Diaghilev had already declared "I want to nurture Russian painting, clean it up and, most importantly, present it to the West, elevate it in the West."⁹³ For that purpose he had not only travelled widely in Western Europe, but had also organised in the autumn of 1897 a highly successful exhibition of Scandinavian art in St Petersburg. A year later in the autumn of 1898, Diaghilev attended the Finnish Artists' Exhibition in Helsinki bringing with him his close friends the writer Dimitry Filosofov, the painter and theatrical designer Leo Bakst and others associated with the *Mir Iskusstva* movement. On the basis of what he had seen, Diaghilev had formed a definite opinion

*"Finnish art is not Scandinavian ... neither does it have any Russian touch; it is original, national."*⁹⁴

At the dinner that followed their visit to the exhibition Diaghilev stressed that Russian artists had much to learn from their Finnish colleagues and called for closer co-operation. He obviously was impressed by the Finnish art world with its cultural links to both west and east, while the Finns were flattered by the attention of this cosmopolitan Russian with such a reputation as an art critic.⁹⁵

Diaghilev's suggestion was quite natural. The Russian avant-garde intellectuals and Finnish artists had already started to form links, and one of the very first articles by Diaghilev as an arts critic had been about Albert Edelfelt,⁹⁶ the Finnish painter who in 1880 had won a reputation in Paris and been consequently been elected in 1881 to the Academy of Arts

in St Petersburg.⁹⁷ In 1893–96 Leo Bakst had studied in Edelfelt's studio,⁹⁸ and it has been suggested that it was he who brought Diaghilev and Edelfelt together in Paris in 1895 and that this may have played a part in bringing together the Finnish and Russian movements.⁹⁹ Up till then Finnish art had still been relatively unknown in Russia, and it was certainly an interesting development when a whole group of leading Finnish artists decided to take part in the 1896 All-Russia Exhibition in Nizhny-Novgorod¹⁰⁰ despite the continuing attacks on Finland by the Russian press.

However, it was the major Russo-Finnish art exhibition organized by Diaghilev in St Petersburg in January 1898 that really created a great stir in the Russian capital. The exhibition was perceived as a manifesto of the latest trends, and it shocked some of the Russian public who saw it as introducing decadent tastes into Russian society. People were particularly dismayed by Gallén-Kallela's symbolist paintings on Kalevala themes, *Lemminkäinen's Mother* and *The Defence of the Sampo*, which along with the Russian Vrubel's *Morning*, were referred to as "decadent affectations" and the whole exhibition described as "an orgy of debauchery and madness." Ironically these works are now ranked as classics of their respective national cultures. Certainly the exhibition established Helsinki as an art centre on an equal footing with St Petersburg and Moscow.¹⁰¹

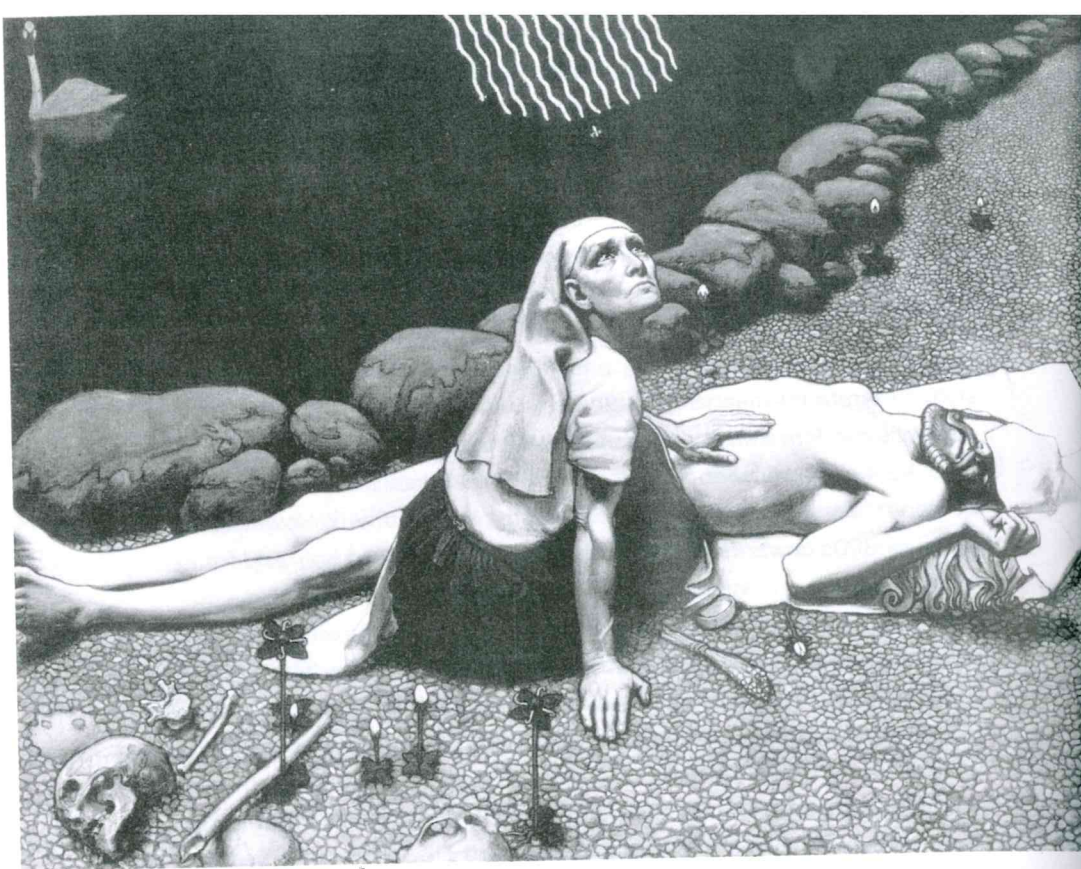
Many of the Finnish artists involved were not just the torchbearers of symbolism but were also members of *Nuori Suomi* with its Finnish nationalist programme. It is therefore ironic, that according to the Russian art historian Vladimir Kruglov the history of the groundbreaking *Mir Iskusstva*, which led to the reforming of Russian art, actually began with this 1898 Russo-Finnish Exhibition.¹⁰² However, this paradox and the attraction of the Finnish artists to Diaghilev becomes understandable if one assumes that his main aim was not to divert Russian art away from nationalist and social issues but to demonstrate, by using as examples the works of Finnish artists with a strong nationalist programme,¹⁰³ that even the most avant-garde western artistic styles can be successfully applied in works of art loaded with nationalist significance.

Up to this point Russian artists had been so much preoccupied with a deeply rooted need to illuminate the social problems of their country that even when studying in Paris they had not paid adequate attention to new artistic styles,¹⁰⁴ and by the 1890s the increasingly wealthy middle-class artists in their country lagging behind

western developments.¹⁰⁵ Finnish artists, who had not normally pursued further studies in St Petersburg,¹⁰⁶ had been more inclined to adopt new art trends from Dusseldorf and Paris. Consequently Edelfelt had developed from being simply a competent painter of historical subjects to being a talented painter *en plein air* and an internationally famous portrait painter, and recently one French critic has described him as the bridge between academic naturalism and impressionism in Finnish art.¹⁰⁷ Similarly Gallén-Kallela, considered radical by the Finnish art critics of his time, had also been quick to try his hand at a number of emerging styles before settling down to executing Finnish national themes in a highly stylized symbolist manner influenced by Japanese art.¹⁰⁸ The move to symbolism in Finnish art had begun in 1891 and gained strength in 1893–1894 when Halonen and Blomstedt had studied with Paul Gauguin, perhaps the most important symbolist artist at that time.¹⁰⁹ However, from the mid-1890s onwards, Finnish artists began to travel to Italy and for many the interest in symbolism was therefore short-lived. Even so, according to Sixten Ringbom it was precisely symbolism with a national orientation that had such an epoch-making effect on Finnish art.¹¹⁰

Thus, following his visit to Helsinki, in the first issue of the *Mir Iskusstva* magazine, published in the late autumn of 1898, Diaghilev provided a wide overview of the Finnish Artists' autumn exhibition¹¹¹ and paid close attention especially to Edelfelt and Gallén-Kallela, whom he called a "champion of the new Renaissance in the North."¹¹² Soili Sinisalo believes that Finnish artists made a prominent contribution at an important turning point in Russian art and that Diaghilev's ambitious plans were initially conceived as involving an alliance with the Finns.¹¹³ A few months later the four leading Finnish painters, Edelfelt, Enckell, Gallén-Kallela and Järnefelt took part in a further International Exhibition,¹¹⁴ organised in St Petersburg by Diaghilev at the end of January 1899 as part of an ambitious attempt to display in the Russian capital the works of leading painters from Western Europe and America.¹¹⁵ Later in the same year *Mir Iskusstva* published another major survey of Finnish art including 47 reproductions of important works. Among individual artists Gallén-Kallela continued to attract special interest and a further issue ran an article on his atelier in Ruovesi including a splendid presentation of the interior of the building.¹¹⁶

But while this 1899 International Exhibition was still on show in St Petersburg, the Governor General of Finland, Nikolai Bobrikov, published



Lemminkäinen's Mother by Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1897) caused a great stir at the Russo-Finnish art exhibition held in St Petersburg in the following year. Some Finns, who a few years earlier had labelled Gallen-Kallela a radical, probably felt quietly vindicated. Nowadays this symbolist picture based on a theme from Kalevala is regarded as one of the great classics of the Golden Age of Finnish Art. (Finnish National Gallery's Archive Collections)

the infamous February Manifesto, which in the eyes of the Finnish people amounted to a breaking of the Finnish constitution. To the Finns it was manifestly a *coup d'état* by the Tsar, and this event meant an end to all official links between Finnish and Russian art circles.¹¹⁷ The attention of Finnish artists had, however, by then already turned in a new direction. They were busy preparing the Finnish pavilion for the 1900 World's Fair in Paris.

The Paris Exhibition of 1900

Given the circumstances the Finns were understandably keen to use the World's Fair as a forum for presenting Finland as a nation in its own right to the widest possible international public. The Tsar had already in 1897 approved Finnish participation in the Fair, but it was only after lengthy negotiations by Edelfelt, who had contacts with the Imperial family, that the Finns finally got permission to have their own pavilion in Paris.¹¹⁸ Foreign observers, however, were not too optimistic about Finland's future. One of the French organisers of the Fair noted:

*"The 1900 World's Fair is without doubt one of Finland's last occasions to retain a semblance of autonomy. We must congratulate ourselves that it is here, in France, that Finland will have the opportunity to do so, and to erect her delightful pavilion."*¹¹⁹

Ignoring or unaware of such misgivings the Finns had organised a competition for the design of the pavilion. This was won by *Gesellius, Lindgren & Saarinen, Architects*, a firm of three 23 and 24-year old partners, which had recently started to attract public attention.¹²⁰ The pavilion was intended to provide a general overview of Finnish society, its culture and science while actual works of art were supposed to be displayed in the Russian section of the Fair.

However, in the end the pavilion also was itself filled to the brim with Finnish art because the leading artists had been invited to produce fourteen large canvases illustrating the life, landscape and economy of Finland. The Paris based Emil Wickström created ornamental sculptures of Finnish fauna and flora for the outside decoration while Gallén-Kallela painted the frescos on the domed ceilings using themes from *Kalevala*. He also produced a Finnish-style interior design complete with textiles¹²¹ and it is interesting to note that Wassily Kandinsky who had a particular admiration for Gallen-Kallela, regarded him as even more original in relation to the applied arts than fine arts.¹²²

The thirty Finnish artists represented in the Paris World's Fair included six leading women artists and fourteen drawn from the Young Finland group.¹²³ Over twenty of them were awarded either a medal or commendation,¹²⁴ and though this might simply be taken as showing political sympathy for the Finns, most of the critics of the time did regard