

SWEDEN AND THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE YEAR 1975

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ABSTRACT In Sweden, the European Architectural Heritage Year 1975 (EAHY 1975) rather confirmed and reinforced than initiated the new views of the heritage and conservation of the latter part of the 20th century. Still, the many activities had a great impact on public awareness and strengthening the position of conservation.

1. BACKGROUND IN THE 1960s

The extensive demolitions in Swedish cities and towns in the 1950s and 60s were severely criticised and had led to a growing interest in conservation and the starting-up of various schemes for rehabilitation of older buildings. In many places local groups protested vigorously. The central areas and many of the traditional, small-scale wooden towns were badly hurt and around 1970 a major study, called the *Nordiska trästaden* (the Nordic Wooden Town) was carried out, with a long series of reports concerning individual towns and traditional wooden building techniques. In Sweden this was accomplished by the School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (*Kungl. Konsthögskolan*). Parallel to this development there was a general interest in alternative ways of living, in line with radical ideas following the protest movements of 1968 and enforced by the repeated energy crises in the early 1970s. The booming Swedish post-war economic development was coming to a cease and the existing building stock had to be reevaluated and seen as a resource.

This reorientation of Swedish society was underpinned by central government initiatives, and step by step conservation became part of the community planning system. Originating in the late 1960s, the *Fysiska riksplaneringen* (Physical National Planning) investigated what is called *riksintresse* (Area of National Interest) for various sectors of society, and in 1972 a comprehensive catalogue of Areas of National Interest for heritage conservation was published. A bill on cultural policy in 1974 established conservation of cultural environments as an important task, which enforced the role of conservation in physical planning. This was based on the wish of saving buildings from more human aspects, as sources for personal safety and identification, as well as environmental interest and the preservation of historic buildings and historic values. A major shift in building conservation theory and practice had come into play already at the end of the 1960s, emphasizing the use of original materials and techniques. The pioneering work was carried out by the architect Ove Hidemark at the 17th century Skokloster Castle in 1967–1976. Through his many restoration projects and as a teacher and professor, Ove Hidemark became very influential.

2. PEAKING CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT AROUND 1975

Since 1965, a public inquiry had investigated the restructuring of the regional heritage administration. On the national level the *Riksantikvarieämbetet* (National Heritage Board) had its roots as far back as in 1630 and the legislation partly dates back to 1666. On the regional level, County Museums existed since the 1920s and 1930s. This inquiry resulted in the creation of posts as Inspectors of Antiquities at

the County Administrative Boards in 1975, which later developed into Cultural Heritage Sections. Thus the decision-making role of the County Museums was handed over and instead the role as adviser and for moulding public opinion was strengthened. Also in 1975, the *Riksantikvarieämbetet* was reorganized to adjust to this. And at the same time a commission started an investigation on state allocations for building conservation grants, which resulted in a large increase some years later.

The wider views on the cultural heritage were demonstrated when Sweden in 1978 hosted the third international conference on industrial heritage. On this occasion the *International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage* (TICCIH) was formally founded.

3. THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE YEAR CAMPAIGN

The overall responsibility for the European Heritage Year (EAHY 1975) was given to the *Riksantikvarieämbetet*. A special secretariat was set up for this. "Let the buildings live!" was the motto for the year (Figs. 1, 2).

Three particularly important people should be mentioned – Margareta Biörnstad, at the time Deputy Director-General and later Director-General of the National Heritage Board, the already mentioned architect Ove Hidemark, who later became the first professor of the Architectural Conservation Course at the Royal Institute of Art, and the researcher and later Professor Marie Nisser, who was instrumental in bringing in the industrial heritage and for many years president of TICCIH. The main activities were, however, carried out by the County Museums. There were exhibitions, conferences and publications. In many places this was

Fig. 1: Presentation of the EAHY 1975 and the pilot projects

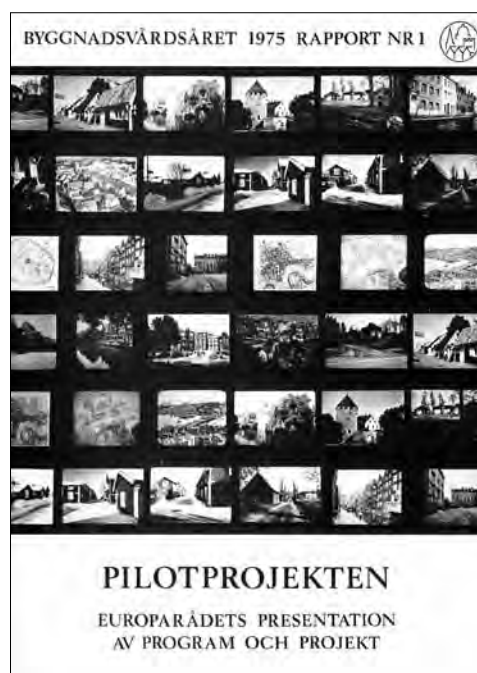
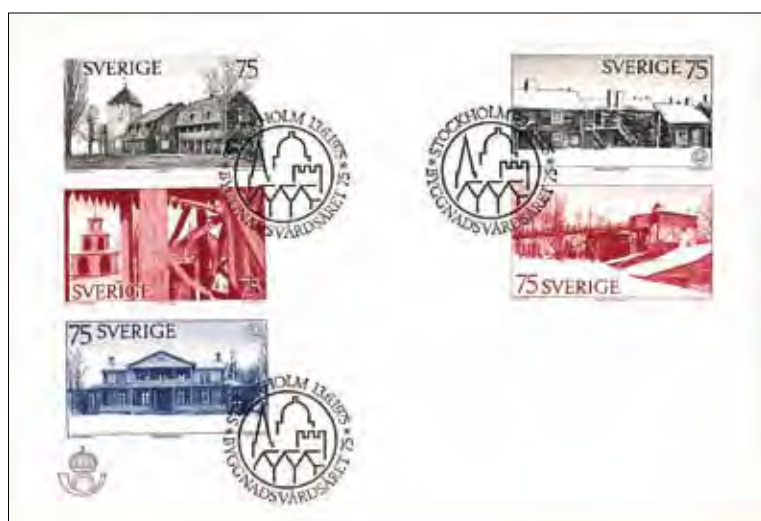


Fig. 2: Stamps of the EAHY 1975 in Sweden (Personal archive Ernst-Rainer Hönes)



the start of permanent information centres and advice to the public. More and more building inventories were produced for the local councils as well as information leaflets and larger publications. A strong group of directors of the County Museums was headed by Sten Rentzhog at the County Museum of Jämtland. There were three national pilot projects, clearly demonstrating an ambition to widen the understanding of heritage and conservation – Engelsbergs bruk, Falun, and Visby. All three of them are now World Heritage sites: Engelsberg Ironworks (Fig. 3a), Mining Area of the Great Copper Mountain in Falun (Fig. 3b), and the Hanseatic Town of Visby (Fig. 3c). In the counties, regional committees designated their own pilot projects. An important initiative was the founding of the *Svenska föreningen för byggnadsvård* (presently *Svenska byggnadsvårdsföreningen*, The Swedish Association for Building Preservation). This is today the leading Swedish association for conservation of the built heritage, with conferences, seminars, guided tours, restoration camps and other activities throughout Sweden and a periodical which is published four times a year.



Figs. 3a, b: Engelsberg Ironworks,
Mining Area of the Great Copper Mountain
in Falun

Fig. 3c: Hanseatic Town of Visby
(Fredric Bedoire 1975)

4. EVALUATION OF THE CAMPAIGN

Thanks to the EAHY 1975, the general public, property owners, planners and decision-makers got a better understanding and increased interest in and awareness of conservation and heritage values. Conservation plans were produced and conservation was integrated in the planning system. Rehabilitation projects were often initiated by the inhabitants of the buildings. International contacts and cooperation developed through a series of conferences and studies and through international organizations. For quite a long period conservation of the built environment held a strong position. The legislation and the administrative resources were gradually reinforced. However, in the late 1980s the cities and towns saw a first wave of tall buildings and iconic buildings. This calmed down around the turn of the century, but has since grown even stronger. Another important result is the development of training and the higher education. Conservation courses have been established at a number of universities and there are training courses in traditional crafts. The major, general importance of the EAHY 1975 is probably that the concept of *byggnadsvård* (building conservation or conservation of the built environment) became better known to the public at large, and the availability and use of traditional material, such as the *Falu rödfärg* (Falu red, the deep red used on wood), linseed oil paint and lime mortar. The years around the mid-1970s mark a paradigmatic shift from the industrial era and post-war belief in the future to the ideas of resource management and sustainable development. In Sweden the EAHY 1975 was rather a manifestation of this than the cause of it.

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